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Religion and the Politics of Development

Edited by Philip Fountain, Robin Bush and R. Michael Feener

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Religion and the Politics of Development

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For Adrian Leftwich, Patrick Guinness, and Merlin Swartz

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Introduction

Robin Bush, Philip Fountain, and *R. Michael Feener*

The past decade has witnessed a remarkable change in the fortunes of academic discussions about the places of religion in relation to both politics and development. No longer considered a rude intrusion into polite conversation, academics across the humanities and social sciences are rethinking the ways in which they talk about, analyse, and assess the impacts of religion across the full spectrum of the most pressing contemporary issues and concerns. A quick perusal of recent academic literature on topics such as poverty, inequality, foreign affairs, environmental change and sustainability, violence, elections and democracy, civil society, and resilience – all decidedly public and political concerns and all very much at the forefront of academic debate – shows that religion is now frequently viewed as an important factor that deserves attention. It is perhaps too much still to say that religion has gone "mainstream," but it certainly is back on the research agenda.

These emerging discussions are, moreover, not the sole preserve of academics. In fact, if anything, scholars have been somewhat slow off the mark. Development practitioners and policymakers across a wide range of governmental agencies, major international development donor organisations, and influential development and humanitarian organisations have exhibited strong interest in whether or how they can engage with religious actors to enhance development outcomes. While the place of religion in development practice remains precarious, vulnerable to shifts in policy focus and fluctuating political interests, it is nevertheless also the case that numerous reports, workshops, and strategies have begun paying attention to religion in ways that would have been considered thoroughly remarkable only a few years ago.

The factors influencing the "return of religion" to the attention of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers are diverse and complex.

As should be expected, they are also contested. For some, there is a raw pragmatism involved in engaging religious actors and leaders: goals to reduce poverty and change health and education standards involve building alliances and establishing broad movements that work together. Including religious leaders in these networks is seen as a means for improving development indicators. Excluding them has the potential of not only sidelining possible partners but also of exacerbating divisions and hostilities as well as facilitating the growth of movements dedicated to different, perhaps even conflicting, goals and interests. For others, these discussions hold the promise of opening up of new and pioneering fields of enquiry. While the question of the relationship between economic growth and religion has been expounded upon since at least the publication of Max Weber's seminal *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* at the start of the twentieth century, what is increasingly becoming clear is that, even with the remarkable growth of thinking about such subjects in the past decade, we know remarkably little about how the relationships between "development" (and associated charitable, philanthropic, humanitarian, and social welfare) processes and diverse religious traditions work in practice in different contexts. New trajectories are fast opening up for exploration, both within academia and the mainstream development industry. These include comparative questions about diverse religious and secular traditions and the ways these differ from each other. The field of religion and development is becoming increasingly exciting, and the arguments that are advanced today have the ability to shape the future of this field.

In August 2013 we convened a conference at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, on Religion and the Politics of Development: Priests, Potentates and "Progress." This conference brought together leading scholars and development policymakers and practitioners to debate the religion–politics–development nexus in diverse contexts around the Asian region.[1] The premise of the conference was that while the "religion and development" field had grown rapidly in the last few years, and while a parallel "development and politics" conversation was also taking place, very rarely were all three concepts brought into conversation together. Yet we felt that such a move was essential. Engaging in the concepts together – exploring the relationships as a nexus – promised new theoretical insights into each key term. It also promised to expand existing conversations in important new directions. The chapters in this volume were selected from among the papers initially presented at the conference, and they

have been revised and reworked in close conversation with the central themes discussed there.

As an object of research, "development" stretches across disciplinary divides, paying little heed to the contingent and often arbitrary ways that the social sciences have been carved up. As a consequence it can and should be analysed using a variety of methodologies and disciplinary perspectives. The issues at stake, and the nature of development itself, demand the attention of diverse scholarly communities. Including in our frame of analysis both "politics" and "religion" only further enhanced our felt need for a cross-disciplinary engagement. Development studies specialists, political scientists, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars, among others, need to be engaged in conversation about these issues, and in this volume they are. Disagreements about methods and modes of argumentation are inevitable, and the following chapters make no pretence at covering over these. But we do not view such disagreements as a distraction or as signalling analytical weakness. Rather, a meaningful and substantive conversation of the kind we envisioned is only possible when rigorous arguments are lodged and differences are articulated.

One forum which is conducive for interdisciplinary research is that of area studies; in this instance, all the chapters share a common focus on Asia. Regardless of how Asia is defined – and its definition is, of course, contested and constantly being reconfigured – it is clear that the region is host to an extraordinary diversity of politics, development experience, and religious traditions/secularisms. The value of "Asia" is not that it carves out a distinct, bounded unit of analysis, but rather that it calls for approaches that take account of this diversity on a scale somewhere between the national and the global. Further, "Asia" usefully broadens analytical frameworks beyond "The West," which all too often remains the implicit norm in scholarship on religion and politics. "Asia" therefore has an important heuristic value in framing the chapters in this volume.

The chapters in this volume interrogate questions that relate to specific locations and/or particular organisations within this broader Asian context. We have not sought a comprehensive coverage of the region, which would in any case be an impossible task. Instead, we have gathered together papers that draw on rich empirical research from diverse sites across the region. The individual chapters, and the volume as a whole, reveal the dynamism and interconnectedness of the politics of religion in a wide range of development activities, both NGO- and state-led.

The volume

The first three chapters in the volume engage in critical provocations with regard to the key terms of debate. In so doing they map out the conceptual and theoretical issues that are at stake. Collectively they lay down a compelling case for the task of further developing sophisticated analytical tools that facilitate comparative analysis while moving beyond generic simplifications. While each of these three chapters has its own "take" on the questions and approaches that are required, they each share a common interest in what Emma Tomalin in her chapter calls "religious literacy." Religious literacy, we would argue, includes familiarity with debates about the contested meanings of "religion" and critical attention to concepts and practices of the "secular." Although detailed and textured knowledge of particular traditions is absolutely necessary, the task of religious literacy is less a matter of encyclopaedic knowledge than it is a critical capacity for locating the discourses and practices of religion within their specific social and political contexts. A vital component will involve conceptualising religion as a moving target with the meanings ascribed to it as shifting across time and space. Religious literacy necessarily involves self-reflexive attention to the political baggage carried by the analytical frames we use to dissect the world.

The initial chapter, written by the editorial team, presents an overview of these theoretical concerns. We probe the state of the field by tracing the emerging "religion and development" and "politics of development" literatures. Despite common concerns and frequent overlap, these two literatures have operated as autonomous fields, with surprisingly little interaction. We argue that a thoroughgoing conversation is imperative and we seek to outline various paths forward for the research agenda. In particular, we advocate for moving beyond conceptual essentialisation in order to analyse each of the key terms – "religion," "politics," and "development" – as moving targets which are constantly being re-worked across time and space. Oscar Salemink's contribution (Chapter 2) engages in a rigorous critique of the ways in which "religion" and "development" have been framed by development studies scholars and practitioners alike. Rejecting pre-emptive assumptions of their separateness, Salemink argues that development is itself imbued with processes of sacralisation and purification which lead invariably to the instrumentalisation of religion. In so doing he confronts prevailing frameworks as to what is considered religious or otherwise. His conclusion that development should be studied as a religious enterprise poses a fundamental conceptual challenge to development practitioners,

policymakers, and scholars alike. In the third chapter, Emma Tomalin addresses similar concerns but from a different entry point. Scholarship on Gender and Development (GAD), which has for many decades been a prolific and lively field of debate, has tended to assume that secularism is necessary for advancing women's rights. Tomalin interrogates this prominent and problematic assumption by questioning secularism's purported neutrality and the concomitant predilection for imagining religion as biased, parochial, and disempowering. Tomalin thereby invites us to reconsider the concepts of religion and the ideologies of secularism that remain, for the most part, implicit within contemporary development discourse.

All three initial chapters argue that our conceptual and methodological tools have been inadequate for a sufficiently rigorous analysis of "religion and development" with Salemink proposing a "religious toolbox" for analysing development and Tomalin issuing a plea for greater "religious literacy." Taking up this analytical challenge, the remaining seven chapters in this volume present detailed empirical case studies, drawn from around the Asian region, which analyse religion and the politics of development from a range of critical perspectives. The chapters cover a wide array of contexts, including material from India, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Russia. By addressing such a diverse array of country contexts, the volume encourages comparison between the cases and also invites critical attention to questions of borders and boundaries. At the same time, all the papers creatively engage with issues of scale and location. Kikue Hamayotsu (Chapter 7), for example, deploys an explicitly comparative framework, drawing together examples from Indonesia and Malaysia to illuminate broader questions about the charitable work of Islamic parties in Muslim-majority nations in Southeast Asia. While restricting her study to a single country context, that of China, Wu Keping (Chapter 6) also makes use of a comparative frame between religious traditions (Buddhism/Christianity) and charities that work from contrasting locations vis-à-vis the Chinese state. Other chapters, even while centring their analysis on particular actors, also pay close attention to transnational flows and spaces of encounter: R. Santhosh (Chapter 4) situates his analysis of reformist Islam in South India within the context of wider Islamic movements; Nalika Gajaweera (Chapter 5) analyses a Sri Lankan Buddhist NGO while attending also to transnational secular humanitarianism; Zoltan Pall (Chapter 8) discusses the work of Islamic charities from the Gulf in both Lebanon and Indonesia; Melissa Caldwell (Chapter 9) investigates the "invisible" development work of

Asian-Russian Christians in Russia; and Chika Watanabe (Chapter 10) traces inter-Asian developmental flows between Japan and Myanmar.

All seven chapters foreground contestations and complications involved in the practice of development, which is itself defined in various ways to include diverse forms of social service provision, charitable activities, humanitarian interventions, technocratic projects, and other acts of "do-gooding." We are familiar with a sense of religious "mission" being extended to service to the poor, homeless, and hungry. Religious NGOs and INGOs of all sizes and across numerous traditions are known for their provision of orphanages, schools, clinics, soup kitchens, and so on both in their communities and further afield. It is the political dimensions underpinning these activities – including the ascription of these actors as religious or otherwise – that the chapters foreground and interrogate.

The different scales deployed by the authors, and their different approaches to spatiality, pry open political questions, particularly with regard to the nation-state. All the chapters include analysis of the nation-state, and in so doing locate questions of religion in direct relationship with dynamics of governmentality. But while the nation-state is a crucial actor in any contemporary analysis of religion and the politics of development, it is never the only one. A number of other actors also receive attention in the studies collected in this volume, including NGOs, charities, and informal voluntary networks as well as churches, temples, and mosques. But even in these cases their work always takes place against the backdrop of the nation-state with its complex and sophisticated, if by no means coherent or systematic, technologies of administration.

In her chapter, Wu is concerned with the question of how temple- and church-based social services relate to the state during the course of providing social services. Her thick ethnographic descriptions reveal that regardless of their size or their formal identity, all such actors have to carve out space for action in the nebulous and shifting "grey zone" – a space created through state interventions, as well as its purposive absence, which renders considerable room for manoeuvre for activities that are neither officially sanctioned nor prohibited. This grey zone is both a creative space for innovation and a disciplinary space with proscribed limits. Similarly, Caldwell is interested in the gaps created by the state. Her rich analysis of ethnic Asian communities in Russia shows how these groups have taken advantage of ambiguities in the Russian state to become major players in Russia's assistance and development spheres. They have done so by drawing on close relations with religious

communities in Asia and by adeptly deploying their own invisibility, including their "non-religious" status, to carry out moral projects of Christian compassion and care.

Hamayotsu's chapter provides a detailed examination of Islamic social services provided by Islamic political parties in Indonesia and Malaysia. She compares and contrasts the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) of Indonesia with the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) of Malaysia. Whereas PKS effectively provides extensive social welfare services at a grassroots level for electoral gain in the context of a weak welfare state in Indonesia, PAS is much more constrained in pursuing a similar strategy. The key limitation faced by PAS is the political ecology of Malaysian party politics where the ruling Malay-Muslim party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), already dominates service provision to Malaysia's Muslim communities. Thus, while the nature of the charitable actor in question is certainly important, including for example their origins, ambitions, and theological orientation, it is clear that the wider political, religious, and developmental context is also decisive. Hamayotsu concludes by arguing that it would be a mistake to view such instances of political party involvement in religious social welfare activities as necessarily negative. Indeed, she proposes that the religious identity of political organisations can help in avoiding turning their relations with clients into purely materialistic and exploitative relations.

In his discussion of transnational Middle East Salafi charities, Pall engages in a careful and nuanced discussion of charitable actors which are both indelibly "missionary" and state-sponsored. Pall's attention is, however, less concerned with institutional arrangements than with the effects of theological discourses on charitable practices. After analysing a major ideological conflict within the Salafi movement in Kuwait, Pall proceeds to show how these divisions impacted Salafi's charitable activities in both Lebanon and Indonesia. Here, theological debate is seen as formative for instigating abrupt programmatic reorientations in service delivery partners. Pall therefore argues that scholars concerned with understanding religious charities have no option but to familiarise themselves with the ideological and doctrinal debates that occur within and around such actors.

Various chapters (see especially Santhosh, Gajaweera, Caldwell, and Watanabe) are particularly attuned towards complexities and tensions involved in cultivating a gap between the traditions that propel their initiatives and imperatives (variously felt) to engage in non-sectarian, cosmopolitan, or "non-religious" service provision. R. Santhosh provides a close case study of the palliative care work carried out by Islamic

groups in Kerala, India. As with Pall, he too is concerned with networks inspired by Salafi-reformist theology. However, his analysis presents quite a different case. Santhosh presents a textured and detailed analysis of the socio-political dimensions of service provision in which Islamist groups carefully avoid sectarian labelling in order to provide care across religious divides. So while Islam furnishes the motivations for involvement, religious identity is itself backgrounded. Similarly, Gajaweera documents the impulse within a particular NGO, the Foundation of Goodness, to distance themselves from sectarian elements of political (Sinhalese) Buddhism in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. She describes this effort as "cosmopolitan Buddhist ethics" committed to a "Buddhist universalism." Gajaweera further complicates this picture by placing this move in the context of the history of "Protestant Buddhism" in Sri Lanka with its own set of political and sectarian impulses. This particular(istic) universalism is depicted as a "scene of embattlement" between the specificity of Buddhism's ties to ethno-religious nationalism and the Foundation's vision of a cosmopolitan engagement with diverse Others. Gajaweera's chapter demonstrates the remarkable ability of ethnographic thickness to address questions of religion in humanitarian action in ways that move beyond tired religious–secular dichotomies.

In the final chapter Watanabe further pursues these themes by examining the fascinating case of "non-religious" aid by a Japanese NGO, the Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA), to Myanmar. Of particular interest for Watanabe is the (thoroughly political) question of how the NGO at the centre of her study considers itself as non-religious. Importantly, Watanabe does not argue that OISCA's "non-religious" identity involved an erasure of the religious, but rather that her informants intentionally distanced themselves from both religion and the secular in order to change the terms of engagement. In seeking to understand this manoeuvre, and despite the NGO's international focus, Watanabe argues that it is necessary to play close attention to the Japanese context. While OISCA derives from Ananaikyō, a Shinto-based new religion, NGO leaders have cultivated a "culture of silence" over this connection out of concerns that association with "religion" in contemporary Japan tends to be viewed with alarm, if not fear. Watanabe's sophisticated study explores the implications this politics of identification has on OISCA's practice of agricultural development projects in Myanmar.

Taken together this collection seeks to move the research agenda on religion and development in new and innovative directions. The chapters

are followed by a brief Outlook, written by the editors, which builds upon the work of this volume to propose future trajectories for research on religion and development. We argue that the additional focus on politics helps expand the conversation beyond a binary framing. We also make a case for research to focus on the ways in which, through their interactions, religion and development are coming to reshape each other all across contemporary Asia and beyond.

Note

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1
Religion and the Politics of Development

Philip Fountain, Robin Bush, and *R. Michael Feener*

We live in a world where extreme disparities challenge notions of basic morality and human rights – in Singapore today, the ultra rich can sip on $26,000 cocktails, while globally 18,000 people die every year of hunger and poverty-related causes; 1,020 million people are chronically undernourished; 884 million people lack access to safe drinking water; and 2,500 million lack access to basic sanitation. In his impassioned moral critique, *Politics as Usual*, Thomas Pogge (2010) cites these and other statistics to show that the toll of global poverty today far exceeds the total devastation of the Second World War. Indeed, 360 million people have died from hunger and remediable diseases since the end of the Cold War, amounting to a third of all deaths on the planet during that period (p. 11).

For Pogge, this amounts to damning evidence of an extreme violation of the most fundamental human rights. It is made all the more obscene because the situation could be changed at relatively small cost to the wealthy. Noting the extraordinary global disparity of income – evidenced by an income ratio of 273:1 between the top and bottom decile of humanity[1] – Pogge argues that a slight 2 per cent shift in global distribution of income from the wealthy to the bottom 45 per cent could wholly eradicate severe poverty (pp. 12–13). That this step has not been taken shows that poverty is fundamentally a matter of raw politics; it comes down to questions of distribution of resources and power rather than technical proficiency. On questions of blame Pogge is not shy to point his outraged finger: "World poverty is actively perpetuated by our governments and officials, and knowingly so" (p. 2). The world economy is shaped by rules and policies made by political and economic elites, including those of Western governments and transnational organisations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations (UN), and

European Union (EU), who designed and imposed an economic regime that benefits the wealthy and pays little meaningful attention to poverty. But the buck doesn't just stop there. Pogge repeatedly singles out academics as being especially guilty of wilful neglect precisely because they should know better. More generally he argues that all citizens in wealthy democratic countries are morally accountable because they have enough information to know what is going on and their collective voices could make a real difference. Therefore it is "we" who actively disregard, trivialise, and condone this "monumental crime" against the world's poor (p. 3). Instead of taking ownership for the task of reconfiguring transnational institutional arrangements to prioritise poverty alleviation, we merely affirm our apparent generosity through the offering of "development assistance" (p. 2).

Pogge's voice is a useful starting point for our discussions here as a sharp reminder that politics and poverty are inseparably intertwined. Far from the natural state of things, poverty is produced through the actions and inactions of the systems and structures which shape our world. Development is political and politics shapes development; this is a key starting point for the discussions brought together in this volume. Into this politics–poverty nexus, however, we also introduce a third key element necessary for understanding how this plays out in contemporary Asia: religion. While Pogge deploys *ethics* as a key weapon in his arsenal, he – like many development scholars and practitioners – pays scant attention to "religion." This has, we argue, impeded more nuanced understandings that could help in the formulation of better strategies for confronting the substantial challenges before us. The issues involved in this are, admittedly, far from straightforward. Careful attention must be given to the complexities involved in all three concepts. The dynamic interactions that take place between "religion," "politics," and "development" further complicate analysis – and each of these elements in turn is a moving target being formed and re-formulated in relation to each other. The ground to be covered here is complex, and fraught. Yet analytically, practically, and politically we argue that critical attention to all three is necessary for addressing the kinds of concerns about poverty and inequality that Pogge so urgently raises.

Politics

It is by now passé to make the observation that, far from an apolitical and purely technical endeavour towards the well-being of those less fortunate, "development" is in fact inherently and unambiguously *political*.

Critics of development have reiterated this point time and again over the past half century. The seminal work of Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire in the 1960s and 1970s exposed the global relations of power that contribute to poverty. Dependency and World Systems theorists, inspired by Marxist analysis, forcefully sought to recast debates away from discussion about the "lacks" and "failings" of the poor so as to make room for analysing unequal power relationships. "Underdevelopment" in this view was not simply a stage in a Rostowian linear progression towards industrialisation and mass consumption, but rather a consequence and outcome of exploitative global capitalism. Drawing on these currents, post-development theorists in the 1990s also challenged the self-representation of development as "doing good" to propose instead that development was *the* problem, rather than a solution, to poverty. Arturo Escobar (1995, p. 4) characterises development as a hegemonic tool of neo-imperial domination, (in)famously arguing that "the discourse and strategy of development produced . . . massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression." In a more detailed and nuanced manner than Escobar, James Ferguson (1994) has advanced similar arguments. For Ferguson, development is an "anti-politics machine" which makes it appear as if the highly invasive technical, governmental, and bureaucratic interventions of development actors are devoid of politics and conflict. This argument has recently been picked up by Tania Murray Li (2007, p. 7) who suggests that development actors "render technical" complex problems such that "experts tasked with improvement exclude the structure of political-economic relations from their diagnoses and prescriptions," and instead frame development problems purely in technical terms which consequently require purely technical solutions. Excluding other complex dimensions of the issues at hand, however, can contribute to the production of dire unintended consequences (Mitchell 2002).

Arguments about the inherently political nature of development have also recently been picked up within mainstream development circles. Over the past decade development scholars and practitioners have begun advocating for an approach of "working politically" towards poverty alleviation (Leftwich 2010). While they agree with the critics that development is political and that concealing this fact is disingenuous, their solution is not a disavowal of politics but rather an attempt to deploy politics for developmental ends. One of the leaders in the field has been Adrian Leftwich (1994; 1995; 2005; 2000; 2010) who argued tirelessly for the primacy of politics within development – both at a nation-state level (the developmental state) and as a strategy within development

projects. According to Leftwich, development actors and academics have concentrated too intently on institutional concerns and neglected the vital roles played by political elites. All development interventions prior to their implementation require careful political mapping, identification of elites and decision-makers with the capacity to effect change, attention to their incentives and disincentives, and the building of alliances among informal and formal political players. Leftwich views politics as a set of "activities of conflict, cooperation and negotiation involved in the use, production and distribution of resources, whether material or ideal, whether at local, national, or international levels, or whether in the private or public domains" (2000, p. 5). In addition to working closely with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the UN, Leftwich also headed AusAID's Developmental Leadership Program (DLP)[2] which has produced a wealth of analysis, case studies, and policy recommendations aimed at furthering the role of developmental leadership and coalitions in the political processes of poverty alleviation.[3]

By the early 2000s, in part because of the work of Leftwich and others, a number of major donors began acknowledging that active steps in poverty reduction required acts of political will and policy action, not merely infusions of funding and technical assistance. The subsequent focus on "governance" that emerged especially in DFID and the World Bank reflected this shifting awareness, and led to an emphasis on capacity building for the state "so governments could create the conditions and deliver the services necessary to reduce poverty" (DFID 2010, p. 2).[4] It is interesting to see that the value of a "political approach" (predicated on power relations and political economy analysis) has now become so accepted within the development industry that the primary critique of some currently popular "evidence-based" approaches to development is that it "deflects attention from the centrality of power [and] politics . . . in shaping society."[5] That is, as the development industry has responded to increasing pressure from various constituencies to provide evidence of the efficacy of its interventions, and as data has gained increasing prominence in this endeavour, donor projects and prescriptions can veer towards bean counting and technical approaches which provide more easily processed data for assessors. Advocates of a more political approach remind us that acts of policymaking that produce lasting change, often cannot be reduced to a formula in which data alone is the independent variable.

This mainstreaming of "working politically" has, however, not been without controversy. Indeed, it is probably too much to expect major development donors to fully embrace a political approach to poverty

alleviation in the near future. One key reason for this is itself political. There are strong incentives for making one's development work appear to be as non-political as possible, not least of which is that host countries do not always appreciate an explicit "meddling" in domestic politics. In this, and many other ways, the political structures of the global order are often not conducive for the eradication of poverty. A key reason for this is that they were simply not established with that intention. Numerous scholars have documented how US development assistance was deployed as an instrument of Cold War politics, but David Ekbladh (2010) provides a detailed account of the ways in which global institutions established after 1945, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the UN, and the World Bank, used planning and technical solutions to promote a global order based on principles of liberalism, and committed to modernisation and a liberal development agenda, rather than focusing on eradicating global poverty. Decades later, aid-recipient governments and societies have become politically savvy and often resistant to such political agendas, and to attempts to influence domestic political or economic policy.

Speaking to the contemporary American context, Demos International recently issued a report documenting that the skyrocketing inequality in the US is due to monopolies of influence on economic and political policy by wealthy elites who have set in place systems designed to benefit the upwardly mobile and to block the priorities of lower-income citizens. Joseph Stiglitz describes this development in the US context as evidence of severe "moral deprivation" (2012, p. xvii). For Stiglitz this is the result of political decisions which allow economic systems and markets to advantage the elite: "the economic elite have pushed for a framework that benefits them at the expense of the rest, but it is an economic system that is neither efficient nor fair" (p. xx). The US case is worthy of particular mention given its dominance within international institutions that determine global development policy. The US is not alone, however – Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) have expanded their critique towards a broader history of international dynamics to detail the politics behind whether a nation creates inclusive or extractive institutions, which in turn would determine whether it creates "prosperity or poverty." Clearly, the need to think about development politically concerns not simply the situation of those on the receiving end of interventions but also of "home" constituents and the administration of donor organisations.

Complicating discussions of "recipients" and "donors" are the dramatic and far-ranging transitions currently taking place in the field of development which Jean-Michel Severino and Olivier Ray (2009, p. 1)

characterise as a "triple revolution in objectives, players, and instruments." One of the most dramatic shifts has been economic growth across much of Asia, and the subsequent transition to middle-income country (MICs, a World Bank classification) status of many formerly low-income countries (LICs) in the region. This has meant a shift in the locus of "extreme poverty" – over 75 per cent of which is now found in MICs, contrasted with 1990, when over 90 per cent of the extremely poor were in LICs (Sumner and Mallett 2013). This has radically altered the political geography of development assistance in which traditionally "rich" countries transferred resources to "poor" countries, to an increasingly complex scenario where "newly rich" countries have more internal responsibilities for their poor citizens, while global power imbalances continue. Furthermore, traditional donors often have policies restricting assistance to MICs (DFID is a case in point) as domestic taxpayers often balk at donations to countries perceived as newly wealthy. Within this context, traditional paradigms of overseas development assistance (ODA) as resource transfers from north to south are no longer adequate. According to Severino and Ray (2009), the result of using ODA as a benchmark to assess official North-South financial flows is that "it measures things that are not remotely relevant to what really matters." What escapes such established aid politics are a whole host of "new" actors that now occupy an "increasingly complex, crowded, and potentially fragmented aid landscape" and which deploy a diverse set of finance mechanisms (Sumner and Mallett 2013).

Attention to the politics of development demands consideration of these dynamic shifts and also of the whole range of actors that now operate on poverty alleviation and other development tasks. This analysis needs to be carried out at different scales with attention to both local community and broader regional frameworks, in addition to the more established national and international paradigms. Of course, the nation-state remains a crucial and unavoidable actor. Although it is not the only player in the game, it is an absolutely central one. Government policies and personalities, shifts in political parties, mechanisms of electoral decision-making (or the lack thereof), capture of projects, "rent," and deployment of ideologies are all of great relevance to the politics of development. In the wake of the most recent global economic crisis, there is strong evidence of a resurgence of what might be called the "neostructural" state (Murray and Overton 2011a; 2011b). Far from withering away, the state appears to be making a comeback. Even so, in any given context the state should not be considered a singular and

undifferentiated entity. Rather, it is often characterised by internal divisions and deep contestation. The state is an assemblage, and not always an especially coherent one – as, for example, reflected in the Chinese state's adoption of a wide range of stances towards religious philanthropies, depending on particular cases and contexts. Here we are reminded that the problems to be grappled with play out at multiple levels simultaneously – not only in terms of how "development," "politics," and "religion" interact in diverse and constantly shifting equations, but also in the complex internal realities framed by all three of these shorthand categories.

We must cast our gaze both more widely and more deeply in order to comprehend the roles of diverse institutions and individuals in the politics of development, as well as the location and dynamics of religion therein. Transnational organisations such as the UN, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the WTO certainly deserve close attention, as too do regional groupings such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the European Union (EU). Corporations and NGOs likewise work across borders and can be major players in development initiatives, particularly with the rapid proliferation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. On a smaller scale, local elites, development brokers, and other mediators play extremely important roles, as too do activists, protestors, and leaders of social movements and community organisations. "Recipients" themselves are furthermore never simply passive actors who merely respond to the agential capacities of outsiders. In many cases, they also rework development initiatives as opportunities arise – appropriating material, managerial, and intellectual resources in pursuit of their own ends, which may lay along trajectories in tension with some of the dominant ideals of global players in the development sector.

A key element of political approaches to development is a "stakeholder analysis" which maps the political incentives, alliances, and positionality of all stakeholders, from the most grounded "recipients" to the most stratospheric transnational institutions. Given this, it is surprising that almost completely absent from the emerging, if also precarious, consensus about the need for "working politically" is any focused attention on the roles of religion. This inattention is even more surprising given strong evidence that religious leaders from diverse traditions remain important and politically influential players at both community and national levels throughout much of the developing world (Narayan et al. 2000). Yet even when the roles of religious actors are recognised,

this observation has yet to be translated into a thorough and careful research programme into the ways in which religion informs the politics of development and how the work of religious elites and institutions influences pro-poor outcomes in developing countries.

Religion

In development circles, and in Development Studies, religion emerged as an area of interest even later than did politics. By the turn of the twenty-first century, critical commentators were increasingly calling attention to long-standing biases in the development field that occluded religion from both policy and academic discussions (Ver Beek 2000; Selinger 2004; Marshall 2005). As Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough (2004, p. 2), writing from the position of the World Bank, expressed, "the world of religion has been largely unacknowledged and often unseen among many development practitioners, both in writing and on the ground." More recently, however, this situation has been challenged by a "surge of interest" (Hovland 2008) in the field and through the important work of several major research efforts (Marshall 2001; Marshall and Keough 2004; Marshall and Van Saanen 2007; Rakodi 2007; Deneulin and Rakodi 2011).[6] While Jones and Petersen (2011) characterise this emerging literature as "instrumental, narrow and normative," and while it is arguable that religion and secularism have never been absent from development concerns even when they have been off the explicit agenda (Fountain 2013), nevertheless these projects have resulted in important contributions to our understandings of the multiple ways that religious actors engage with development, and vice versa. Yet within these research initiatives there has been little explicit attention to the *political* leverage that religious actors can exert, nor to the *political* factors underpinning how and why development actors interact in the ways that they do with different religions and religious leaders/communities.

The chapters in this volume seek to address this issue directly by both raising important conceptual and analytic questions, and by providing a set of empirical studies upon which further reflections on religion and the politics of development can be built. As discussed above, the literature on the politics of development is rich and varied. The main innovation of our approach in this volume is to introduce religion into those evolving conversations. In order to proceed in this direction, we must now turn to discuss what we mean by "religion," and address some of the dangers this prospect presents.

It has been suggested by some commentators that we are currently witnessing a global "resurgence of religion" (Thomas 2005), or else, more modestly, that we now inhabit an increasingly "post-secular" world (Gorski et al. 2012). Whether such arguments accurately describe a global shift or not,[7] it is clear that within academic circles at least, arguments for the secularisation thesis have lost much of their strength and vibrancy (Haynes 2007; 2011). Indeed, there has been a marked and increasing trend among certain strands of academia – including among the most prominent critical theorists – to re-engage directly with religion.[8]

Remarkably, however, recent literature on religion and development has dedicated little attention to examining exactly what it is that is being referred to as "religion." The framing of religion as an important dimension in the politics of development poses a number of analytical challenges. For one, it is important to avoid any essentialising definition of religion such as those that would ground the category on some supposed universal feature such as the supernatural or a belief in God or Gods. Such definitions cannot be maintained on anthropological grounds, and have often tended to create their own theoretical problems as well. Instead, the definitions and constructions of religion by various parties including development actors, politicians, religious practitioners, and academic analysts also need to be part of our frame of analysis.

That there remains a debate to be had on the meanings of religion is indicated by the growing number of scholars who argue that there is no ahistorical, transcultural religion that is always and everywhere easily identifiable and demarcatable.[9] Acknowledging the historicity of the concept of religion is not the majority view among development scholars and practitioners today. Yet if we are to have meaningful discussions about religion, then issues of definition cannot simply be passed over as irrelevant or distracting; the politics of the discourse of religion, and its mutually constitutive relationship with the secular, must be part of the conversation (Fountain 2013).

Religion as a category of human experience and a unit of academic analysis is a rather recent conceptual innovation. Jonathan Z. Smith (1982) has even argued that the modern category of religion was created by modern academics studying diverse texts, practices, and institutions that were brought together under that rubric. Smith's argument serves to call attention to the ways in which our working conceptions of religion do not emerge organically out of traditional matrices of belief and practice, but rather out of discursive traditions shaped by processes of modernisation.

A significant body of work has now traced the evolution of the term and its meanings through the contexts of a modernising West, and the transmission and further transformation of the concept as it spread globally through contexts of European imperialism and globalisation.[10] One important vector of this influence came from Christian missionaries. In many parts of Asia their impact is perhaps best measured not so much by the number of actual converts they made, but rather by broader effects that their activities had on society at large – ranging from the provision of new models of doctrinal adherence, devotionalism, and institutional membership to organisational innovations in education, health care, publications, and social welfare programmes.[11] The modern models of religious organisation and social activism introduced to many Asian societies by Christian missionaries facilitated the transformation of a number of traditions across the region. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Asian societies saw diverse aspects of their traditions reconfigured as a consequence of their interactions with modern understandings of religion.[12] There was, however, no uniform theology to these processes, and modernising transformations were pursued in diverse ways, even within a given tradition. Addressing issues of religion in critical discussions of the politics of development thus presents us with important new perspectives on the complexities of the problem that can usefully inform our understandings of the politics of development more generally.

In his pioneering work, *Formations of the Secular*, anthropologist Talal Asad (2003) has brought serious attention to the particular mechanisms by which our understandings of "religion" and "the secular" have been mutually constituted over the course of recent history.[13] What is clear from such work for purposes of our discussion here, is that if we want to "bring religion in" to discussions of the politics of development, we are confronted with the complex relationships between religion and the secular. That is, "religion" is an intrinsic part of the "secularised" world – not simply a holdover from a bygone era, or an impolite intrusion into a modern landscape. Rather we see that in many cases, religion comes to take on increasing prominence in some societies in ways that have been facilitated by the secularising creation of a separate "religious sphere," a process which allows for new manifestations of public expression.[14]

Addressing issues of religion in discussions of the politics of development is by no means a straightforward matter of adding one additional area of analysis. Rather, the insertion of that particularly complex variable into the equation demands more dynamic approaches to deal with the mutually influencing reconfigurations of all three spheres. Coming to terms with critical approaches to definitions of

and models for understanding religion is thus important for developing more sophisticated understandings of both implied and unintended dimensions of engaging with, or attempting to avoid, religion in political and development projects.

In her incisive recent article, Elizabeth Pritchard (2010) notes the growing clamour of calls to "take religion seriously." Analysing the "submerged politics" of these requests, Pritchard argues that they are imbued with the presuppositions of "liberal secularism" by closing off space for dissent and conflict: "The religious other may be taken seriously but there is no indication that those who are serious are ever in danger of forfeiting the upper hand." Taking religion seriously tends to presume agreement or affirmation and therefore operates as a means of appeasing differences and controlling the outcomes so that conflict is "deflected, managed, or preempted." *Seriously* taking religion seriously would involve embracing the possibility of disagreement and conflict. It would also avoid homogenising religion into a single undifferentiated category and the concomitant recognition that, as Pritchard puts it, "there are many religions, all with complicated relationships to power and ethics." We argue that taking religion seriously in development research would further involve sustained attention to the ways in which religion is constructed and deployed in development discourse, by scholars as well as policy-makers and practitioners. Moreover, secular traditions of development would also be included in this frame of analysis.[15]

A further important political question concerns why, exactly, religion is now on the development agenda. The 9/11 attacks in 2001 on the World Trade Center in New York were clearly a key juncture instigating shifts in this regard – though this was but one, albeit very influential, tributary (Haynes 2011). Also influential was the role of specific key leaders throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s who gave prominence and legitimacy to the topic. The importance of James Wolfensohn's active engagement with religious leaders and organisations during his term as the President of the World Bank (1995–2005) (Rees 2011; Haynes 2013), President George W. Bush's "faith-based initiative" in the US, and Tony Blair's public articulation of the importance of faith in the UK cannot be overestimated,[16] though of course each of these personalities and their engagements with religion has attracted considerable controversy and debate. Relatedly, questions can be raised about what types of religions or religious groups development organisations prefer to work with, and which types they do not. How religions are seen, categorised, and related to by various development entities opens up its own set of political enquiries.

Up to this point much of the attention given to religion and development has made use of a particular optic in which religious actors are commonly thought to be local, parochial, and largely separated from the messy business of politics and the administration of development programmes. It is necessary therefore to acknowledge that religious leaders *are* political actors and, moreover, that many political actors around Asia are explicitly and publically affiliated with religious traditions and organisations.

Throughout much of Asia – and beyond – the state itself is decidedly not a secular entity. A number of modern Asian nations have provisions establishing an "official religion" within their state constitutions. This is something most frequently commented upon in discussions of the religious politics of Muslim-majority nations such as Pakistan and Malaysia. However, this is by no means something unique to Islam in the modern world as, for example, Buddhism has also been designated the official or state-privileged religion in the modern constitutions of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, as well as in Bhutan. The entanglements between different religions and state structures are both extremely deep and pervasive, and the power of the idea of an established official religion for the nation even appears to have been exercising increasing appeal in many Asian societies over the past two decades with the rise of movements to establish an official religion even in states that had formerly defined themselves in secular terms.[17]

Influential political parties throughout Asia are closely affiliated with particular religious traditions, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in Malaysia, and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) in Indonesia. Even when religion is not an explicit platform of party politics, informal or subterranean connections – as well as highly visible public expressions of piety – can exert a far-reaching influence on the activities of politicians and government departments. In Thailand, for example, Buddhist "development monks" have pursued diverse projects in various collaborations with state agencies and NGOs over recent decades (Lapthananon 2012). Further, an explicit secular identity, for example, as enshrined in India's constitution, does not dictate the quotidian practices of state bureaucracies, which can operate according to very different logics of allegiance and support (Sen 2010). Indonesia – the world's most populous Muslim nation – has also been a site of significant engagement between the development sector, the state, and religious institutions over the same period (Feener 2007; Bush 2009). The Suharto government famously worked with Muslim

mass-based organisations, especially the Nahdlatul Ulama, to "socialise" and enforce its family planning policies during the New Order (Candland and Nurjanah 2006). During the post-New Order *Reformasi* era, a number of international donors including USAID and AusAID supported voter-education and education initiatives carried out by Muslim organisations as part of the country's transition to a democratic system (Meisburger, nd).

A further striking example of the ways in which religion can factor in to the politics of development is the case of Islamic law in Aceh. Around the turn of the twenty-first century, the central government in Jakarta began looking for new tools that could supplement its brutal military crackdown against an armed separatist movement in Aceh and reintegrate the restive Sumatran province into the Indonesian nation. Towards this end they acknowledged "Special Autonomy" for the province in a package that included provisions for the state implementation of Islamic law. The move was meant by political operatives in the Indonesian capital as a way to attract local support away from the rebel "Free Aceh Movement." Within Aceh, however, this measure was seen by some local religious leaders as a remarkable opportunity to pursue projects for religious and social reform that they had been aspiring to achieve for decades. After getting off to a slow start, their state Shariʿa project was significantly stimulated by the flood of foreign aid and development projects that arrived in Aceh in the wake of the devastating 2004 tsunami. Over the years that followed, models of planned social and institutional reform introduced by state agencies, international relief organisations, and NGOs were actively taken up by the official architects and agents of Aceh's Islamic legal system – who in the process came to envision their work as a future-oriented project of social reconstruction and development (Feener 2013).

But politics, as we have argued, is not reducible to state initiatives. Religious organisations are at the forefront in many situations of service delivery, often operating in hybridised relationships with the state. Whether these programmes are examples of the state co-opting religion, religion annexing the state, or forms of complementary symbiosis, remains a matter of debate (Casanova 1994). In still other cases religious groups perform an anti-corruption watchdog function and/or seek to leverage their political clout to obtain resources for their communities/leadership. Analysis of religion and the politics of development thus need to devote attention to a diverse range of non-state actors, including social movements; social service agencies and NGOs; pastors, imams, gurus, and priests; study groups; activists, protestors, and militants;

and missionary organisations. Various religious development initiatives are undertaken to counter, subvert, disrupt, or reconfigure state power. Other initiatives are undertaken as part of a kind of shadow or parallel state which operates alongside the formally recognised one, and thereby construct a kind of religious counter-public.

While this "zooming in" to examine the micro-politics of religious development is crucial, it is essential that this be complemented by a broadening out of the frame of analysis to include a wider horizon beyond the Asian region. As discussed earlier, the field of professional development activity is currently radically diversifying, with a proliferation of new actors and players. These include "non-DAC-donors."[18] private foundations (e.g. Gates, Hewlett, ONE), corporations, regional forums, and transnational religious organisations. Non-DAC states are among the most important of these new players as demonstrated when the largest donations to the Haiti earthquake response came from Saudi Arabia and Brazil, and with India being the largest donor to the Pakistan emergency response fund (K. Smith 2011). Symbolising these changes the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) established a humanitarian affairs department in 2008, though the mechanisms for coordination and accountability remain minimal (Binder et al. 2010). How these donors present themselves – whether religious or secular, and what *kinds* of religious or secular – is itself infused with politics. So too are the ways in which they engage with diverse religious formations across the region. While there is a growing body of literature on non-DAC or "new" donors, and several impressive projects seeking to gather empirical data about spending flows, donor motivation, and recipient targets (see www.aiddata.org), there is little serious analysis on the religious identity of these donors, or how they engage with religious actors in the field.

Meanwhile, the potential for religious actors to have a major impact on development outcomes is huge. For example, the estimated $200 billion to $1 trillion annually that is given in "alms" and "*zakat*" (2.5 per cent of one's income) in the Muslim world vastly overshadows the amounts given through traditional ODA. This giving is largely not recorded by or integrated into traditional international development systems, one reason for this being that Islam privileges anonymity in giving which potentially limits how Muslim donors report on and publicise their donations (Davey 2012).[19] Yet, according to economist Habib Ahmed, if *zakat* is managed effectively with a poverty alleviation focus, between 30 and 50 per cent of the poor in these countries could be moved out of poverty (IRIN 2012a). State management of *zakat* does not have a strong

track record in poverty alleviation[20] but Muslim NGOs are increasingly becoming significant channelers of *zakat* and are deploying this for humanitarian and developmental ends (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2009; Petersen 2011; IRIN 2012b).

Another area for analysis concerns the ethical and moral frameworks that different religious and secular actors assert as compelling and normative. Such frameworks posit particular patterns of behaviour as praiseworthy and honourable and others as repugnant or polluting. Accordingly, Pogge, as outlined in the introduction, passionately condemns what he regards as an obscene disregard for the poor and he vigorously promotes other ethical alternatives. Certainly, many religious traditions call for particular kinds of relationships with the poor and disadvantaged as incumbent upon wealthier believers. Importantly, while there are points of intersection among these very different creeds, and between them and the wider development industry norms, there are also sharp points of disagreement and contention. In much of the West, neoliberal and market-oriented policies associated with the conservative right are often thought to be undergirded by groups "traditionally" religious in orientation. However, Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson's (2012) recent comparative study of "religiously orthodox" movements in four different countries (Egypt, Israel, Italy, and the US) shows that while these groups' efforts to sacralise society can be deeply conservative on Western indices of social issues, they are also more likely to support provision of basic services for the poor and needy. They do so through active and direct engagement, often starting out in small-scale initiatives and by "bypassing" the state. One might argue that the rise of inequality and the growth of "religiously orthodox" movements in both developed and developing nations may belie that data – nevertheless it provides an intriguing platform for analysis and conversation of the roles that different religious traditions have in shaping attitudes about and actions to counter poverty.

Development

Tania Murray Li (2007) argues that "the will to improve" is insidious and dangerous. It represents for Li ongoing misguided attempts to interfere with the lives of others. Every development project inheres a kind of coercive logic that demarcates, or rather *produces*, domains for engagement which are radically simplified versions of reality. She argues that because the world is so much more complex than development actors imagine, and because the cascading effects of programmes are inherently

unforeseeable, all development projects are wistful artifices. Certainly, development has left in its wake all sorts of failures and disasters. But development is a diverse, complex, and multifaceted domain. Li's own representation of development actors and logics actually replicates the strategy she critiques; the domain of development is sharply demarcated and produced as coherent and unitary.

Perhaps more important is the question of what politics would look like without a will to improve. The desire for a world that is "better" – more just, more prosperous, more equitable, less violent, more compassionate, more humane, more accountable – is not something that should be discarded lightly. In many ways such visions, incomplete and ephemeral as they often are, furnish us with what anthropologist Hirokazu Miyazaki (2006) calls "prospective momentum"; that is, hope. The dream for progress, in whatever form, is predicated on a politics of hope. Hope becomes the foundation upon which visions for alternative futures are constructed, disseminated, advocated, and enacted. Doing without hope, rejecting prospective momentum, leaves in its wake a despair which is potentially far more destructive than even misguided attempts at doing good to distant others. It is at least as fallacious as a cynical reduction of development to donor self-interest or military-minded "security." For even in a doomed project of compassion may lay a kernel of redemption insofar as a hopeful act has been embodied and performed.

Progressive politics is animated by hopeful anticipatory impulses. Thomas Pogge's passionate politics which we outlined in the introduction is inspiring and moving because he imagines a world which is other than the one we inhabit, he seeks to outline his vision as clearly as possible, and he articulates how this world might be attained. We suggest that such prophetic voices are necessary and vital for reimagining and reinvigorating the politics of development – and that the understanding of how such visions might be pursued requires careful, critical engagement with the compound complexities of our world.

However, even if we agree on this much, we must ask: What kind of progress is required or desirable? The trajectories of progress have become increasingly fragmented and contested over the past two decades. The bipolar world of capitalist and socialist visions for the future (though in actual fact this was always a rather crude simplification of a much more complicated picture) met with a dramatic shattering at the end of the Cold War whereupon diverse new visions and crumbling old ones began competing against each other. It is in this geopolitical context in which the conversation about religion and development

was germinated, has grown, and now flourishes. Diverse religious traditions offer profoundly different visions of the kinds of worlds which are desirable and practicable. Some of these visions cohere, or can at least comingle, with the technocratic and economic imaginations that predominate in the development industry, while others offer stark contrasts resulting in mutual conflict and contention. Nevertheless, interactions between differing visions can open new horizons of possibility. The study of religion and development has the potential to make decisive contributions to our understanding of the politics of hope and progress, both secular and sublime. Indeed, this might be among its most important legacies to the imagination and practice of development today.

Notes

1 Pogge (2010, pp. 12–13) records that the wealth ratio is even more extreme: in 2000 the bottom half of the world's population owned 1.1 per cent of global wealth, with the bottom 10 per cent having only 0.03 per cent, while the top 10 per cent had 85.1 per cent and the top 1 per cent had 39.9 per cent.
2 The DLP began in 2006 as the Leaders, Elites and Research Programme, LECRP, emanating from the World Ethics Forum. See http://www.dlprog.org
3 Sadly, Leftwich passed away in 2013 after a fight with cancer. This book builds upon his pioneering work in the field and seeks to advance his argument in new directions. His incisive analysis and leadership will be sorely missed.
4 See also the series of important development policy papers produced by DFID: *Making Government Work for Poor People* (2001); *Governance, Development and Democratic Politics* (2007); "Political Economy Analysis, How To Note" (2009).
5 See "The political implications of evidence-based approaches (aka start of this week's wonkwar on the results agenda)" at www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=13344. This blog, written by Duncan Green, reports on the argument made by Rosalind Eybend and Chris Roche that the evidence-based push elides politics. See also a response to this assertion, by Chris Witty and Stephan Dercon of DFID, in Green's subsequent blog www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=13327
6 In some cases these initiatives were funded by the same donors as those who supported the "working politically" approach. Donors include LUCE/SFS Program on Religion and Global Development, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University (2006–2011); DFID-funded Religions and Development Research Program, University of Birmingham, UK (2005–2010); Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, KCRD (2006–2012) based at Oikos Foundation, Utrecht; and the World Bank Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics (2000–2009).
7 Cavanaugh (2011), for example, asks whether talk about religious resurgence or decline distracts attention to the "migration of the holy" from church to state. The question is not therefore whether religion is increasing or decreasing but rather where religion is said to be located.

8 Including, for example, Giorgio Agamben (2005; 2011); Alain Badiou (2003); Terry Eagleton (2010); Julia Kristeva (2009); and Slavoj Žižek (Žižek 2003; 2008; Žižek and Milbank 2009; Milbank et al. 2010; Žižek et al. 2010) who have all – albeit in very different ways – opened new space for engaging with religion(s) and theology as part of their projects for re-envisioning politics.

9 See particularly Asad (1993; 2003), Fitzgerald (2003; 2011), Masuzawa (2005), J. Z. Smith (1982; 2004), and W. C. Smith (1978).

10 See particularly Asad (1993), DuBois (2009), Keane (2007), Masuzawa (2005), W. C. Smith (1978), Tayob (2010), van der Veer (2001), van der Veer and Lehmann (1999), and Zhong (2014).

11 Woodbury's (2012) provocative argument about the missionary roots of liberal democracy, for example, contends that the extensive impact of missionaries on key societal institutions (which he argues were critical in the rise of contemporary liberal democracies) was not only through their direct engagement, but also through the catalysing effects, whereupon other actors copied missionary practices in order to compete with them.

12 Since the 1970s these reconfigurations have been analysed, and extensively debated, under the rubric of "Protestantism" in, for example, Buddhist, Islamic, and Hindu renditions. The argument, classically presented in Obeyesekere's (1970) seminal article on "Protestant Buddhism" in Sri Lanka, is that through their opposition to Protestant incursions Buddhist movements took on an increasingly Protestant guise in both structure and content. See also Blackburn (2001), Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1990), Loimeier (2005), Malalgoda (1976), Raman (2013), and Weiss (forthcoming) for debates around this theme.

13 Academic debates on the secular address a range of issues relating to various processes that are often uncritically confounded in both popular and academic discussions – particularly those involving de-institutionalisation and disenchantment. See, for example, Martin (2005), Taylor (2007), and Scott and Hirschkind (2006).

14 See Casanova (1994). Martin Riesebrodt (2010, pp. 175–177) argues for limiting the concept of secularisation to apply "solely to the process of institutional differentiation through which secular spheres—that is social spheres free of religious premises and norms—emerge." In other words, it refers to "a transformation of social orders, namely to the process of freeing social institutions from religious control."

15 For suggestive provocations in this direction, see Ager and Ager (2011), Barnett and Stein (2012), Deneulin and Bano (2009), Fountain (2012), Grubbs (2009), Hopgood (2006), Lynch (2011), Paras (2012), and Redfield (2012).

16 This was despite the insistence of Alistair Campbell, Blair's director of communications, who interrupted an interview with Blair in 2003 by stating "We don't do God" (Margolick 2003).

17 For example, in 1988 Bangladesh passed a constitutional amendment making Islam the official religion of the state. In 2007 an attempt was also made to add an official provision for Buddhism in the constitution of Thailand. When this last measure failed to receive the support of the Constitutional Assembly, Buddhist monks and Thai political activists took to the streets in protest.

18 The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a forum within the OECD which comprises of 24 member states, many of which are the largest funders of aid. The World Bank, IMF, and UNDP also participate as observers.
19 On related issues of anonymous giving and questions of accountability in the context of India, see Bornstein (2012).
20 Indonesian sub-national politics are rife with local officials or electoral candidates manipulating and exploiting state zakat funds for electoral gains, as documented by Buehler (2013).

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2
The Purification, Sacralisation, and Instrumentalisation of Development

Oscar Salemink

A rapprochement between religion and development?

The last decade has seen a rapprochement between religion and development. Especially since 9/11 it has dawned on secularist policymakers, implicitly or explicitly, that the vast majority of the world's population is religious; that religiosity and piety are on the increase, and becoming increasingly visible in the public domain; and that religious groups sometimes make political demands that clash with the liberal world views that underpin much of mainstream development thinking. Universities established research programmes, NGOs established study centres, and major development institutions such as the World Bank established think tanks – all to do with religion and development – and funding for "faith-based organisations" increased in development practice. Clearly, the initiative for the "rapprochement" came from the secularist "world of development" which had often ignored or shunned religious issues, or had confronted religious practices as obstacles to the realisation of a modern, rational economy and society.

This is not to say that religious organisations and institutions had no interest in development. Historically, many religious groups have engaged in charitable activities, or promoted such activities among followers through such notions as *zakat* among Muslims, merit making among Buddhists, and alms, church contributions, and funding for missionaries among Christians. One could argue that the roots of much that could be glossed as "development" after the Second World War lies in Christian missionisation from the West. With the post-war emergence of a discourse and institutionalised practice of development – indeed, a "field" of development, to use a spatial metaphor – religiously motivated development organisations tended to progressively tone down their religious

signature. This was done to conform to the mainstream development paradigms that were en vogue at the time – for example, economic growth, equity, sustainability, gender equality – in the fields that such religious organisations focused on, such as health and education.

But over the last few decades, those religious "development organisations" that conformed to mainstream, secularist development principles have witnessed the rapid growth of explicitly religious organisations in the countries of the Global South where they worked, as well as a similar rise of wealthy proselytising religious organisations – often from North America and the Middle East. This has created an interesting double bind for such religious development organisations. On the one hand, they had to compete for government grants or tenders which were usually formulated in "neutral," non-religious – that is, secular – terms. On the other hand, they were now forced to compete for (financial) support from their religious constituencies with organisations that were much more explicitly religious and which worked in the same countries and in the same fields, but with different priorities, namely spreading the religious values that motivate them. The different approaches and conflicts between religious and secular/liberal values in the field of reproductive health speak volumes in this regard.[1]

Now, the story above is told from a basic assumption that there is a "field of development" and a "field of religion" and that these fields are distinct and usually separate, even though they may meet, compete, overlap, engage in conflict and dialogue, and eventually, achieve rapprochement. The encounter between these two fields materializes in two discrete discursive and institutionalised practices of religion (Christian churches and other institutionalised religions) and development (national, multilateral, and non-governmental development organisations). It takes place in workshops and conferences, training and meditation sessions, and is analysed and guided by an emerging body of academic research and writing. This post-secular rapprochement between "religion" and "development" assumes a prior, spatial metaphor of "society" as a set of flattened "fields," within a (societal) terrain bounded by national borders. The relations between such fields can be visualized by two-dimensional diagrams – like Venn diagrams (e.g. see Rees 2011, 21–45) – that picture distance, encounter, or overlap between the fields.

Historically, this idea of society is modern in the sense that it emerged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, along with the ideas of "economy," "politics," the "private domain" of household and family, "culture," "civil society," and so on – fields that in time corresponded with academic disciplines specialised in the study of such fields. However,

Karl Polanyi (2001) reminds us that the emergence of such fields – and, in particular, the field of the economy – required its disembedding from other domains. Prior to Polanyi, the great sociologist Max Weber reminded us that the differentiation of society is predicated on its *Entzäuberung* – its "disenchantment" – which came with the gradual secularisation of society and the shattering of its "sacred canopy" (cf. Berger 1990). However, the observation that led to the rapprochement between religion and development – namely that "religion" was *not* on its way out in a purportedly secularising society – resulted in the debunking of the Weberian secularisation thesis, and its substitution by the post-secular idea of multiple, religiously inflected modernities (cf. Eisenstadt 2000; Hefner 1998; Van der Veer 1996).

Christian intellectuals like Charles Taylor (2007) and José Casanova (1994) redefined secularisation as the individualisation and privatisation of religious belief, among other things. However, in his important genealogies of the ideas of the "religious" and the "secular," Talal Asad (1993; 2003) debunked the unproblematic use of the categories of religion and the secular by charting how both notions emerged in connection with each other in early modern Europe and in contradistinction with a situation where a "sacred canopy" made it impossible to think with the categories of the religious and the secular. In other words, the emergence of the generic categories of the religious and the secular requires a particular optic that refracts these ideas as differentiated, spatialised social "fields" that can expand or retract. In addition, rather than simply assuming that the secular is tantamount to the "non-religious" or the absence of religion, Asad showed in his *Formations of the Secular* (2003) how the category of the secular is connected with the historical emergence of specific subjectivities that construe human subjects as rights-bearing individuals rather than subjects of gods and monarchs. Moreover, human experience of their bodies – health and sickness, pleasure and pain – has "secularised" in the sense that people's this-worldly lives belonged to them, making people sovereign over their bodies.

This Asadian view of the secular has made it possible to conceive of institutionalised practices such as health care; the absence of pain; the pursuit of pleasure, happiness, and fulfilment; and the claiming and adjudication of individual rights, as secular practices. In that sense one can say that most development work done by religious organisations falls under the rubric of the secular, in the sense of this-worldly focus on individual and collective betterment. This observation is not new; many Christian missionary organisations, in the past and present, have offered and continue to offer modern biomedical health care

and formal education. Famous examples are Albert Schweitzer in Gabon and Mother Teresa in India. Many Muslim and Buddhist organisations engage in similar charitable practices. There is a flourishing literature, both academic and popular, which are critical and sympathetic to religious or faith-based organisations, and their development activities. Simultaneously, there is a body of literature on development organisations *qua* development organisations, which traces at least part of the history to origins in faith-based organisations and in religious practices and constituencies. However, most of these texts take the existence of stable categories of religion and development for granted without problematising them (see note 1).

This chapter seeks to do something different, namely to analyse development practice *as* religious practices. Again, this is not quite new, and this chapter finds itself in good company. In *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (2014 [or 1997]), Gilbert Rist uses religion and faith as a metaphor to understand and critique development. The other good company that I find myself in is the book *Religion and Development: Towards an Integrated Approach* by Philip Quarles van Ufford and Matthew Schoffeleers (1988). Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers also conceive of "development studies and activities as a quasi-religious phenomenon" (ibid.: 1), enabling them to apply a religious lens that allows a critique of development work. In what follows I will argue for a "religious" conceptualisation of development, but I seek to do that in a slightly different manner than Rist and Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers.

Development soteriologies

Historically, the concept of "development" has had varying meanings, in changing historical contexts, and propelled by changing visions of its *telos*, that is the state of being that development ideally should lead to. In his history of development, Gilbert Rist (2014: 69–79) foregrounded "developing" as a transitive verb, as in developing *something* or *somebody*, analogous to the pre-development colonial "*mission civilisatrice*." At the end of the Second World War, the word "development" expressed the meaning of rebuilding the infrastructure and economy of Europe, as epitomised in the Marshall Plan. Development concerned – and was directed at – Europe in President Truman's vision of a brave new post-war world order characterised by the Bretton Woods financial architecture (Rist 2014). However, as the reconstruction of Western Europe coincided with worldwide decolonisation, the field of development, initially modelled on the Marshall Plan, was transposed to these former

colonies which were "underdeveloped" and hence needed to be developed. In other words, development as it became understood in the post-war era can be conceptualised as "willed improvement" that on the one hand indicates the "underdeveloped" things and people to be improved and modernised, and on the other hand attributes the responsibility of the act of improvement to others. These *subjects* of development were developed or developmental states, development organisations, development agents and experts, embodying the White Man's burden – as William Easterly (2006) glossed it, deliberately using an expression with colonialist and racist connotations.

With the unfolding of the worldwide Cold War rivalry between the US and USSR, "development" began to be used in two novel ways. First, it began to be applied to the newly independent, former colonies (including Latin America) rather than "Europe," thus constituting the "Third World" as the site of development. In a reversal of the political geography of development, however, the "First World" (Europe and US) and "Second World" (USSR and other Communist states) became the models of development for others to follow. Second, "development" became an ambiguous and contested concept and practice, tied in with competing political and economic ideologies and geopolitical power games (cf. Kula 2005). While the discourse of development and underdevelopment gave rise to new practices glossed as development assistance, development cooperation, or simply "aid," these practices involved various institutional players, like governments, churches, business corporations, universities, philanthropic foundations, and of course, a wide variety of specialised development cooperation agencies. At the time the *vision* of development seemed to be the establishment of a world of material affluence for everybody by technical means, a truly "modern" world.

This vision of development places it squarely in a larger group of concepts with a strong family resemblance, in terms of signification, ideological/rhetorical use, and political practice: Think of civilisation, progress, modernisation, advancement, "improvement" (Salemink 2011). The ideas of human progress (develop, civilise, modernise, advance) emerged in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Europe (Rist 2014), in a time characterised by industrialisation, urbanisation, rapid technological change, and the disembedding of the economy (Marx 1981 [or 1867]; Polanyi 2001; Simmel 1976 [or 1903]); by emerging nationalism, state formation and nation-building, the development of standing conscription armies (Anderson 1983; Moore 1966; Tilly 1975); and by more general processes captured as rationalisation, disenchantment, and bureaucratisation (Weber 1922). The idea that the future could be made better, involved a linear and secular conception of

time according to which expectations of the future were different from visions of the past, and such futurities began to influence contemporary discourses, practices, and policies (Koselleck 2004).

This "will to improve" (cf. Li 2007) implied a desire and enhanced capacity on the part of states to know, regulate, plan, and utilise their territories, populations, and resources (Foucault 1991; Scott 1998) according to a vision of a (competitive) future (Koselleck 2004). While these processes have their "historical materiality," the thinking behind them (and oftentimes either legitimating or criticising them) tends to be teleological, eschatological, prescriptive, and utopian. Speaking of the "grandiose political projects of the twentieth century," John Gray writes in his *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions* (2004: 2):

> The thinkers of the Enlightenment . . . were actually neo-Christians, missionaries of a new gospel more fantastical than anything in the creed they imagined they had abandoned. Their belief in progress was only the Christian doctrine of providence emptied of transcendence and mystery. Secular societies are ruled by repressed religion . . . the religious impulse has mutated, returning as the fantasy of salvation through politics, or . . . . Through a cult of science and technology.

But these are not equally powerful, competing eschatologies, in the way that Peter Berger in his *Pyramids of Sacrifice* (1976) analysed the competing capitalist and communist global development endeavours as both partaking in the mythology of modernity:

> The myth of growth, and indeed the entire mythology of modernity, derives from the specifically Western tradition of messianism. Ultimately, it represents a secularization of Biblical eschatology. (Berger 1976: 18–19)

It is interesting to note the dated character of this observation, not so much in the reference to the Cold War polarity but in the assumption that Christianity and hence messianism are primarily Western – the global religioscape has changed much since 1976. Since 1989 – the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War – this bipolar eschatology expressed by Berger has been replaced by a seemingly unipolar eschatology of modernity.

But they are not simply competing eschatologies. Rather, the Enlightenment ideologies were secular soteriologies that projected

utopian visions of a future of peace, wealth, and abundance. One clear example is the secularised (socialist) version of heaven in Marx' worker's paradise. A capitalist version of that utopia is the idea of continuous growth which underpins most development thinking (and most economic and political practice). When brought in practice Marx' utopian vision turned into dystopia, in the former Soviet Union and its satellites, as well as in China. But what is still with us is a blind faith in growth as panacea of capitalist development, recently critiqued as "impossible" by George Monbiot (2014):

> Let us imagine that in 3030BC the total possessions of the people of Egypt filled one cubic metre. Let us propose that these possessions grew by 4.5% a year. How big would that stash have been by the Battle of Actium in 30BC? This is the calculation performed by the investment banker Jeremy Grantham [. . .] It's 2.5 billion billion solar systems. It does not take you long, pondering this outcome, to reach the paradoxical position that salvation lies in collapse.

The dystopian effects of such a seemingly inevitable collapse are already being felt – not just in resource scarcity but also in climate change.

However, more than its kindred concepts such as progress, development was transitive and hence proactive. One cannot "progress" a country, but one can "develop" it. This *mission* of development was to "modernise" through development aid and cooperation, which in practice implied making "them" like "us," as in a secular conversion campaign (cf. Salemink 2004). When the geographic focus of the discourse and practice of "development" was shifted from Europe and the West onto "others" – in the Third World, or now the Global South – the concept of development lost the connotation of reconstruction and added moral connotations of modernity and reform, thus resembling a secularised version of earlier missionary activities. In other words, development only acquired missionary and messianic overtones after it was reoriented from Europe to the Third World. Development interventions were directed at bringing a new "gospel" of technical progress and prosperity for all. Whether the supposed beneficiaries of these good intentions shared this modern secular vision of development was hardly asked or discussed. It is written in Genesis 1:27 (NIV):

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

As if playing for God, the Western post-Second World War subjects of development endeavoured to remake the rest of the world in their image. It is for that reason that when writing about "'development' as an element in the religion of modernity," Gilbert Rist (2014: 21) argues that the

> marginalization of ecclesiastical institutions does not mean that religiosity has disappeared. Rather, it has "migrated elsewhere" – above all, to where one does not expect to find it, in what generally passes as secular.

After the initial phase in which the Marshall Plan "developed" Europe, development and decolonisation were transposed to the Global South, which became a terrain for competing development paradigms allied with the different political ideologies and alliances of the Cold War period. A third development period was inaugurated by the neoliberal turn of Reaganomics and Thatcherism during the 1980s, and crowned by the collapse of the Soviet-dominated Communist Bloc in 1989, rendering the Cold War ideological contestations meaningless. Claiming a world historical victory of market capitalism over real existing socialism, Francis Fukuyama announced the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992) – a situation evoking utopian visions of global peace, order, and stability. Development cooperation was redefined as an unfolding of the (by then sacralised) market forces, as epitomised by the structural adjustment programmes imposed since 1979 by the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, IMF) that had historically been established for the post-war reconstruction of Europe. This market "fundamentalism" has been accompanied by seemingly de-politicised, technocratic notions of "professionalism" that reduce political issues to management techniques – technologies, accountability, governance, and so on (cf. Kothari 2005; Li 2007).

This "development ideology," as Easterly calls it, "shares the common ideological characteristic of suggesting there is only one correct answer, and it tolerates little dissent. It deduces this unique answer for everyone from a general theory that purports to apply to everyone, everywhere" (2007: 31). In this sense, development is about transformation by holding out one unique answer to all the world's woes. This developmentalist fundamentalism comes from, and feeds into, the "self-appointed priesthood" of the "international aid bureaucracy" (ibid.: 32). If the ideology of developmentalism can be seen as a secular religion – as Gray and Rist would have it; and a fundamentalist religion at that – then the

requirement of reform, brought out in "structural adjustment," "market-friendly policies," and "pro-poor globalisation," constitutes a process of forced conversion in the sense that countries and the people living in those countries are persuaded or forced to change their ways.

In the 70 years that have passed since the Second World War, expectations have hardly been met and had to be scaled down causing a severe legitimacy crisis in the field of development cooperation (Rist 2014: 23, 211–225). In spite of the growing economic might of China and India, poverty and hunger in the world are still staggering and even growing in absolute numbers. Perhaps unsurprising in a capitalist system driven by competition that simultaneously produces winners and losers in both local and global markets, differentiation and inequality – globally and within countries – have grown dramatically. The technical and organisational techniques that were exported by the Northern countries often did not catch on, resulting in many so-called "white elephants." Moreover, wherever rapid economic development did take off (as with the "Asian Tigers"), the role of classical Northern development cooperation seems to have been negligible (Easterly 2006). Other factors seem to have a much bigger impact on how societies and economies fare than programmes of development cooperation. At the same time, however, development is not just "globalization from above," as Easterly claims (2007: 32), because it holds out a promise of a better world, and in conjunction with the work of the market, it instils desire for the goods that the market can produce. In other words, capitalist development works just as much through desire and attraction as through dispossession (albeit highly unequally).

So far I have shown that there is an undercurrent of critical analysis of modernity that may or may not be religious in nature, but that uses a conceptual toolbox from the study of religion to understand modernity, understood here as the projection and materialisation of transformative, future-oriented ideologies and projects, in terms of secular soteriologies. Moreover at least since Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers (1988), such a conceptual toolbox has been applied to understand development theory and practice as well. However doing that, of course, begs the question of what religion might be, and what it is not (for fear of stretching its definition too wide to have any analytical value). What do my intellectual inspirators say about this? I pause here, therefore, to unpack the concepts that I use as analytical tools – concepts drawn from the world of religious studies. In my view, processes of sacralisation, purification, and professions of belief and ritualisation can be found in all aspects human action and human thinking, and hence are not reserved for a

specific field called "religion." It is important that I address what I mean with these terms.

A religious toolbox for development

Whereas John Gray, to my knowledge, never bothered to define religion (even while using it abundantly) but seems to assume that "religion" more or less equals Christianity, Gilbert Rist defines it in an utterly secular way as "the belief of a given social group in certain indisputable truths, which determine obligatory behaviour in such a way as to strengthen social cohesion" (2014: 20). This definition of religion does not problematise or historicise the category of "religion." Moreover, by absenting God (or gods), it is perfectly applicable to other social phenomena, thus making it possible to equate it in quasi-Marxist manner with false consciousness. I find Rist's definition weak, and have more sympathy for the conception by Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers; for them religion is not false consciousness, but an important part of the life worlds of "the communities undergoing planned change" (1988: 26). Yet, the authors also envisage a "world-wide dialogue" that takes the two positions and attendant categories – religion and development – for granted. Therefore, I follow Talal Asad (1983) in rejecting any transcultural and ahistorical definition of religion (as does Philip Fountain, in a brilliant paper on "The myth of religious NGOs: Development studies and the return of religion," 2013a).

In his *Genealogies of Religion* (1993) and his *Formations of the Secular* (2003), Asad argues that most definitions of religion (e.g. by Geertz 1973) cordon it off as a separate realm of belief and signification, thus disregarding institutional power and discipline. Instead, he argues that the idea of religion as a separate category denoting specific aspects of human endeavour emerged in the early modern period in Europe, characterised by Westphalian notions of separation of church and state. The emergence of a category of the religious simultaneously necessitated a notion of the secular – that is, the non-religious beyond this neatly cordoned off realm of religion – which enabled the (rather unsuccessful) "privatisation of religion." But the point to make here is that the separation of church and state, and the neat distinction between the religious and the secular, are largely fictitious (cf. Salemink 2009), and constitutes a modern myth – or a myth of modernity.

In the above, I have argued – with John Gray and others – that modes of thinking and acting that are thought to be exclusively religious, also permeate secular development thinking and practice. However, this

does not mean that development – or any other secular soteriology – is identitical with religion. We need to understand what the distinction is and how it is maintained. Paradoxically, this occurs through a quasi-religious process of *purification*, as Bruno Latour argued in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993). But no definition of *purification* can bypass Mary Douglas' notion of purity as a way to ward off or contain danger (1966). According to Douglas, notions of purity are connected with cultural classifications, brought out in ethnic, religious, and other boundaries; the antithesis of purity, pollution, refers to those ambiguous practices that fall outside these classifications, and that are seen as "matter out of place" ibid.: 36–50). As a Durkheimian anthropologist Douglas situates her analysis firmly in a Durkheimian dichotomy of sacred versus profane, and explicitly presents her study of purity and pollution against the backdrop of Durkheim's notion of "sacred contagion" (ibid.: 26–27). When she uses the term purification, it is always in connection with ritual; purification rituals are an important practice to create and maintain the sacredness of things in many religious practices (ibid.: 168–170). In other words, purification requires ritual action.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour asserts that modernity is predicated on the purification of two zones of non-human (natural) and human ontologies (1993: 10–11) which frees moderns "from religious bondage" (ibid.: 35). Purification here is understood as a separation of zones and objects and practices thought to belong to these separate zones, but Latour claims that purification has never been successful. Where these ontological zones blur – as it happens in most religious cosmologies and many ritual practices – by a process of translation between the two ontological zones and hybridisation of nature and culture, the sacredness (ibid.: 44) of the modern, scientific worldview is undermined. From a progressive modernist vantage point, such translational moments are regressive (religious or superstitious) elements. The competition between various levels or zones of sacredness is brought out by the fact that both scientific and religious authorities are attributed sacred respect "which is translated through proscriptive movements" (cf. Durkheim, above). In this sense, Latour reveals himself as much a hardcore Durkheimian as Douglas:

> The pure and the impure are therefore not two separate genres, but two varieties of a similar genre that comprises of all things religious. There are two sorts of sacredness, the one beneficent, the other maleficent, and not only is there no solution of continuity between these two opposite forms, but the same object might pass from the one

> to the other without changing in nature. With something pure, one does something impure, and vice versa. It is in the possibility of such transmutations that resides the ambiguity of the sacred. (Durkheim 1968-III: 389 – my translation)

In his work on *Christian Moderns* Webb Keane (2007: 23–25) critiques Latour's assumption that purification necessarily excludes the modernity of religion, arguing instead that Christian – and especially Protestant – reform and conversion can be understood as a work of purification. Following Asad's characterisation of Western religion "as a set of propositions to which believers gave assent" (Asad 1993: 41), Keane highlights that Christian religion is belief-centred. As a "creed paradigm," modern religion emphasises the "assent" aspect of the "set of propositions" by requiring a profession of belief in the first person: "I believe in . . ."; "I believe that . . . ." Keane holds that this "explicit statement of religious tenets and the norms for its verbal performance" (2007: 69), and their repeated and ritualised verbal utterance, shape human subjectivities and hence agency. However, whereas Keane assumes that the creed paradigm "is unique to evangelizing, scripture-based religions" (ibid.: 69) I argue that ritualised professions of belief have become central in many practices outside of the domain of religious confession proper, that is in those secular fields and practices characterised by a high degree of sacralised behaviour and as secular religions by John Gray (1998; 2004; 2007). Gilbert Rist defines development in light of quasi-secular beliefs that defy debate and scrutiny: "'Development' thus appears to be a belief and a series of practices which form a single whole in spite of contradictions between them" (Rist 2014: 24). Keane's insightful analysis of ritualised professions of belief leads me to the concept of ritualisation.

For Durkheim and Marshall, as for Douglas and Latour alike, ritual action is a key element in the processes of sacralisation and purification, but none of them really bothers to define ritual (even though the third volume of *Les formes élémentaires* deals with "the main ritual attitudes"). In the classic theories of ritual of Émile Durkheim, of his coeval Arnold van Gennep (1909), and of Victor Turner (1969), ritual is conceived of as a series of practices that take place according to a certain script in a special time-space, according to rules that differ from, or reverse, everyday rules. Turner emphasises the performative aspects of ritual as social drama through which tensions and conflicts are enacted and resolved in liminal phases characterised by what he calls "communitas" – or anti-structure. Such rituals reconnect individuals with their social group while reaffirming the group boundaries. In order to avoid infertile

definitional debates, Catherine Bell (1992) and Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary Crain (1998) use the term "ritualisation" in order to stress the changeable, processual character of much ritual practice in contemporary life, and to convey that ritualisation is one pole in the modalities of human behaviour. Bell calls ritualisation a

> particular cultural strategy of differentiation linked to particular social effects rooted in a distinctive interplay of a socialized body and the environment and its structures. The confusions that accompany attempts to distinguish clearly between rite and non-rite [. . .] are revealed to be highly significant for understanding what ritualization does. (Bell 1992: 2)

By emphasising the processual, performative, and participative character of ritualised practice, aspects of intentionality, identification, embodiment, and mediation in public, mediated social practices can be foregrounded. In particular, the role of media and mediatisation – already captured by Benedict Anderson in his analysis of the (reality of the) "imagined community" (1983) – enables us to transgress the divide between the private and public domains through embodied identification, subjectivity, and popular culture (cf. Couldry 2003; Meyer 1998; 2004).

Thus far, we have skirted around perhaps the most important aspect of the concept of religion, namely the question of *sacralisation* – alluded to above – which is at work in much religious and secular practice, not least development practice. Sacralisation literally means "making sacred," or imbuing something or somebody with sacred character, for example, through ritualised devotion. This begs the question what "sacred" then is, which of course brings us to Durkheim, who explained religion in terms of the opposition between the sacred and profane in his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*: "The sacred world maintains an antagonistic relation with the profane world" (Durkheim 1968-III: 307 – my translation). In his view, the sacred commands special respect through limitations like taboos: "All that is sacred is the object of respect, and all sentiment of respect is brought out, among those who experience it, by movements of inhibition" (ibid.). Douglas Marshall offers a more elaborate definition in his "theory of sacralisation" (2010: 66): "The sacred is a salient but directionally ambiguous moral property attributed by some observer(s) to some object(s) that is absolute in obliging those observer(s) to engage in or avoid certain behaviours toward it, and that evokes a mixture of attraction and repulsion, as well as a perception of

contagiousness, in those who perceive it." Simply following the standard dictionary definitions, sacralisation is "a process by which an object is invested with the property of sacredness" (ibid.: 66).

In both Durkheim's and Marshall's view, the sacred is ultimately created by humankind, even if it inspires respect, fear of contagion, is surrounded by taboos, and is to be handled in ritual fashion. The notion of sacralisation implies human agency in the active *making* of the sacred. However, in his influential treatise *The Idea of the Holy*, the German theologian Rudolf Otto (1923) sought to define the holy – a term he preferred to the sacred – in terms of *numen* [Latin for divine power] which would be a non-sensory and non-rational *feeling*, characterised by a sense of *tremendum* [awe and overpowering], *mysterium* [the wholly other], and fascination. As a deeply religious man, Otto did not reduce the holy to human sociality. At first sight this definition of the holy seems deeply at odds both with notions of sacralisation and with ideas about the secularisation of soteriologies and practices usually associated with religion. But the usefulness of Otto's definition lies in the combination of non-rational, non-sensory, awe, and total otherness – a combination of properties that to some degree characterises religious notions of Heaven and Hell. We may also note that these properties define utopias and dystopias as well, as these do not exist (non-rational, non-sensory) and are imagined as awe-inspiring and as wholly other. Although a historical and cultural review of visions of Heaven and Hell would explore how these are imagined in connection with existing historical conditions, they are also seen as something other than simply mirrors of extant societies: both Heaven and Hell are conceived as utterly different from, but also related to, this world. Heaven is therefore within reach through the performance of proper purification rituals that eliminate pollution, sin, and – in their more secular versions – backwardness, primitiveness, underdevelopment, superstition, and even religion itself.

In this section I have argued – with John Gray and others – that modes of thinking and acting that are thought to be exclusive for religious practice, in fact permeate human life, despite modern attempts to purify the religious from the secular (scientific, political). Perhaps, we should have known that all along since Durkheim's analysis of the sacred and the profane, if we had not relegated his analysis to pre-modern times. I have argued that a conceptual toolbox of critical religious studies can be useful for our understanding of – ostensibly secular – practices that I would call "secular religions" characterised by strong sacralising tendencies, buttressed by processes of purification and ritualisation.

In the next section, I will apply such an analysis to the globalising universalist doctrine known as the Washington Consensus, which pushes through a secular modernisation agenda while generating several myths in order to justify this agenda and to safeguard its so-called "professional" status: the myth of accountability, the myth of "target-realisability," the myth of mutuality and ownership, and the myth of good intentions and perfect altruism. These myths are best symbolised by the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as global targets that "the world" agreed in 2002 to realise by 2015.[2] The MDGs are worded in seemingly neutral terms that no morally sane person could oppose, but as targets that double as benchmarks towards a bright global future they are also utopian in nature – if not millennialist. However, far from neutral, the MDGs are predicated on a further unfolding of the market, as preached by MDG-prophet Jeffrey Sachs, and critiqued by former World Bank economist, William Easterly who calls this "ideology of . . . developmentalism a dangerous and deadly failure" (2007: 31). In the next section I shall discuss the MDGs as millenarian goals that further the proselytisation of development discourse which can be seen as a missionary enterprise.

The MDGs as millenarian goals

Critics on the left (Saith 2006) and on the right (Easterly 2007) have regarded development "cooperation" as promoting capitalist development. In so-called "countries in transition" (from socialism to capitalism), much development aid was and is aimed at reform: market reform for removing barriers to trade and investment; institutional reform for improving governance; capacity development for dealing with complex issues; and financial and banking reform for enhancing financial credibility. Guided by the Washington Consensus, development aid is provided and coordinated by multilateral donors like the World Bank, IMF, Regional Development Banks, and the UN system, along with numerous large and small bilateral and non-governmental donors. Before we move on to the MDGs themselves, I propose to take a look at the track record of the person who is arguably the brains behind and the public face of the MDGs, who heads the Millennium Project,[3] and who entertains close contacts with the media and media celebrities, Jeffrey Sachs.

Jeffrey Sachs made his name as the Harvard economics professor who devised the "shock therapies" for post-socialist Poland and Russia. The role of Jeffrey Sachs and the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID), in the selling out of Russia's state

assets under Boris Yeltsin, has been aptly analysed by Janine Wedel (1998), anthropologist and professor of public policy at George Mason University, and by David McClintick (2006). A group of young "reformist" economists from the US – the Harvard Group – and from Russia – the Chubais Clan – colluded with a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission to "privatise" Russia's state enterprises as quickly as possible, usually to themselves or their cronies, basically for peanuts. They avoided accountability by alternately assuming central state authority or claiming non-governmental status. The macro-consequences of this scheme for Russia are well-known: the failure of the "shock therapy" advocated by the Harvard economists, the overnight emergence of a class of "oligarchs" (Khodorkovsky, Berezovski, Abramovich) in a Russian economy characterised by casino capitalism, and the impoverishment of the population brought out starkest by the rapid reduction of the population and life expectancy. HIID went bankrupt after the "economic advisors" illegitimately – and for private gain – invested its assets into risky stocks which subsequently collapsed in the 1990s, and the main players were indicted for "defrauding" the US Government – and the Russian people, one might add. In 2004, Harvard University, some of the major HIID economists (Andrei Shleifer, Jonathan Hay), and a hedge fund headed by Shleifer's partner agreed to settle for over USD 30 million, but Shleifer and Hay were protected by former Harvard and World Bank economist, former US Treasury Secretary under Clinton, and former President of Harvard University, Larry Summers. Jeffrey Sachs, however, who had been the Godfather of Poland's "shock therapy" and who as director of HIID (1995–1999) was formally responsible for HIID's exploits in Russia, escaped prosecution by reinventing himself as special advisor for the UN Secretary General and as main global advocate for the MDGs (McClintick 2006; see also Wedel 1998; 2003).

In *The End of Poverty*, Sachs (2005) basically claims that the "end of poverty" is a matter of more money, more technology, more market, and private property. In other words, he puts forth a neoliberal vision of a global economy that can provide for all, without any real sacrifice on the part of the rich – paradise is just around the corner, we have the tools, knowledge, and means; with a bit of effort we will get there. Or in the words of Easterly:

> [Sachs] is now recycling his theories of overnight shock therapy, which failed so miserably in Russia, into promises of overnight global poverty reduction. (Easterly 2007: 32)

Sachs' association with the MDGs makes perfect sense, though. As Ashwani Saith (2006) showed, the MDGs are targets with benchmarks, but without analysis, strategy, or method – in that sense reminiscent of the devastating Great Leap Forward in China (see also Dikötter 2011). The "shopping list" of the MDGs offers "familiar, feel-good mantras on human development" (Saith 2006: 1195), but these well-intended and essentially benign values get lost in translation and consequently silence structural causes and inequality (see also Hulme and Wilkinson 2012). Small wonder, if one realises that the MDGs were initially jointly formulated by the UN, the OECD, the World Bank, and the IMF (Amin 2006; Saith 2006; 2007), basically excluding significant involvement by the "target" countries of the MDGs in the Global South. Saith (2006: 1171) draws attention to the remarkable presence of major corporations involved in the "realisation" of the MDGs as part of their "corporate social responsibility" in the raft of "public–private partnerships" that emerged under the UN Global Compact.[4]

The Marxist economist Samir Amin (2006) argues that the MDGs actually further the neoliberal agenda of the Washington Consensus, to the detriment of the global poor. This is realised even within the UN apparatus; according to Hulme and Wilkinson (2012: 4), "the Head of the Millennium Campaign, Eveline Herfkens, believed that Sach's [sic] Millennium Project could impact negatively on efforts to reduce global poverty." In 2005 Sachs inaugurated his Millennium Villages Project (MVP), intended as a demonstration of the salience of the ideas expounded in his book *The End of Poverty* (2005). The idea was to massively invest in a number of dirt-poor Sub-Saharan African villages and kick-start development there, through a comprehensive and integrated approach. He associated his MVP with the UN Millennium Project and the MDGs, managed to involve celebrities like Bono and Angelina Jolie, and received USD 120 million in capital injections from major philanthropists like George Soros as well as from corporations and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). By 2011, the interventions turned out to be a failure and everything had fallen apart, in spite of Sachs' attempts to silence critics as nitwits or immoral. Nina Munk portrays Sachs and his MVP during this time in her book *The Idealist: Jeffrey Sachs and the Quest to End Poverty* as a tragic, fallen hero:

> In the beginning, Jeffrey Sachs had set out on a quest to validate his scientific approach to ending poverty. He's used the Millennium Villages Project as laboratory to test his theories and to prove that

> his series of "interventions" could transform the lives of the world's poorest people. He'd spent more than $120 million on his experiment. For all that, he had misjudged the complex, shifting reality in the villages. Africa is not a laboratory: Africa is chaotic and messy and unpredictable. (Munk 2013: 231–232)

But it was not just Africa because, according to Munk, Sachs finally realised that "the world's problems were so deeply interconnected that it was no longer possible to focus solely on poverty, hunger, and disease in Africa" (ibid.: 230). The financial crisis made him see – along with the Occupy movement – that poverty and accumulation are two sides of the same coin. The MDG agenda as envisioned and advocated by Sachs is predicated on a magical "vanishing trick," in that the historical causes of global poverty and their structural links with inequality and dispossession have disappeared from the development agenda. As "matter out of place" this political economic analysis is removed from sight, in a discursive act of *purification*. What remains after the purification of the causes from the goals is a vacuous and inconsequential wish list that on the one hand legitimates the current, neoliberalised political economic system, and on the other hand works as another disciplinary instrument of neoliberalism.

Clive Gabay sees the MDGs as a disciplinary device targeting a purportedly autonomous civil society. Seduced by the "benign targets" of the MDGs as "consenting to heaven," civil society organisations in Malawi and elsewhere adopt the neoliberal mode of governance that produces "monitored subjects" (Gabay 2011). At a global level, the MDGs with their target-driven nature constitute a global biopolitics programme that is driven by the "logic of behaviour-change" to produce "rational subjects" (Gabay 2012: 1256). While the MDGs are formulated in benign and seemingly apolitical terms, their implementation is highly politicised. Their partial implementation moves this globalising world in a direction of further capitalist development from which no escape seems possible. It touches every geographic region, every sphere of life, and every individual without exception – even in so-called "remote areas" – and forcibly transforms not just societies but the way that people live, in a process of quasi-religious conversion which makes them fit for a productive role in the marketplace. Yet in spite of (or because of) Jeffrey Sachs we know that the capitalist promise of earthly paradise through consumerism remains out of reach for most of the new and old "converts"; a realisation that has become starker since the 2008 financial crisis, caused by corporate and individual greed, succeeded in

impoverishing and dispossessing a large proportion of the population in Northwestern countries.

The MDGs are the culmination of the neoliberalisation of development as well as their simultaneous sacralisation. While the MDGs hold out the promise that a better world can be achieved and suffering can be removed, their seemingly neutral and benign formulation masks their collusion with the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism. The global compact of the MDGs – as well as myriad other global development conventions – simply obscures the neoliberal economic orthodoxy that rules the world since Reaganomics and Thatcherism became the dominant paradigms. Simultaneously, the MDGs justify and eulogise the market as the only way towards an earthly paradise without poverty – the only pathway to Heaven, understood as sacred in Rudolf Otto's conception as non-rational, non-sensory, awe-inspiring, and wholly other. However, the message implied in the MDGs is that paradise is within reach in our world, with our system, but without undoing the increasing global inequalities and hence without sacrifice on the part of the world's wealthy. In this sense, the MDGs are good examples of what Jean and John Comaroff (2000) have called "millennial capitalism," closely connected with a "culture of neoliberalism." While the culture of neoliberalism reduces everything to financial values and requires accountability in those terms – *vide* the target character of the MDGs – the practice of millennial capitalism is based on the denial of a connection between the generation of wealth and economic labour, reducing economic practice to a big gamble, as we have seen in the present-day history of the banking crisis.

The MDGs have the format of a child's wish list, with the dual difference that these gifts are for others than for the wishers, and that some gifts may actually materialise. As any shopping list focuses on the goods to consume rather than the process of production and distribution of such goods, this wish list obscures the system that generates them and presents these goods as *sui generis*. Worded as good intentions and vague promises to rid the world of certain ills, the MDGs *purify* this world from attention to structural causes of poverty and inequality as "matter out of place" (cf. Douglas 1966). The goodness of the MDGs renders them "sacrosanct" and hence near impossible to object or resist against; their sacredness simultaneously *sacralises* the system producing both wealth and poverty by at once obscuring these interconnections and presenting paradoxically this system as the solution for the woes it produces. These twin processes of *sacralisation* and *purification* imbricated in MDG discourse and practice are not uncontested, yet they render the MDGs powerful and difficult to resist. Lacking substantive analysis,

their rhetorical efficacy is connected with the repeated, *ritualised* expression of belief in the goodness and feasibility of the MDGs in our lifetime – much like the proliferation of visions of a socialist paradise in the past. Such expressions of belief in the MDGs – and in any form of development without a political-economic analysis into the causes of wealth and poverty – constitute ritual performances of the goodness of the rich, and hence *ritualised* reaffirmations and legitimations of the status quo.

Coda: sacralisation, purification, and instrumentalisation

According to Bruno Latour (1993), the work of purification is never perfect, resulting in the proliferation of so-called "hybrids" that blur the distinction between the two worlds that should be kept apart. Hybrids abound both in the "world of development" and in the "world of religion." After all, we know about the history of the religious and missionary roots of much development in the past and present, and we know about the frequent injunction to help and support others in need, through direct practices or at a distance through the intermediation of money. We also know about the religious (and otherwise moral) motivations and experiences of development practitioners and communities or groups that find themselves to be the "targets" of development or humanitarian aid in this seemingly "secular" world of development. We also know about the emergence of a distinct, *secular* body of technical and managerial *development* expertise which is different from the "ordinary" (local, national) technical and managerial expertise because it has to deal with transnational flows of money, goods, information, and accountability (cf. Kothari 2005; Mosse 2011). This expertise is secular, because it forces all development actors to follow the same set of rules, protocols, and procedures that are increasingly transnational, regardless whether the motivations of development agents and communities might be primarily religious.

While the idea of a *rapprochement* between religion and development *prima facie* seeks to bridge – and hence create overlaps and "hybrids," to speak with Latour (1993) – this endeavour is predicated on a prior dichotomisation into purified and essentialised understandings of a "world of religion" as distinct from a "world of development"; it is precisely because of such separation and dichotomisation that the need arises to enter into some kind of dialogue or engagement in the first place. The turn of the century has witnessed the emergence of religion and development initiatives (within the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, and many other

development and philanthropic organisations) and institutions (such as Georgetown University's Berkley Center, the University of Birmingham's Religions and Development Research Programme, and the Dutch Knowledge Centre Religion and Development). As I argued in this chapter, present-day calls for dialogue, rapprochement, and engagement are not only based on an erasure of what we know about the history of development, but it evokes other fundamental problems with philosophical, ethical, and practical ramifications. Any research or practical programme that identifies "religion" and "development" as clearly demarcated, separate categories and (human) endeavours will inevitably end up instrumentalising one sphere for the purpose of promoting the other. It will end up instrumentalising religion for (secular) development, as is happening in many such texts, where the unspoken subject (first person plural: "we" as in "we developers") would like to develop "user-friendly and accessible tools that will increase the effectiveness of development engagements with religion";[5] or where "The Knowledge Centre Religion and Development provides knowledge concerning the relations between religion and development. In doing so, it contributes to international development cooperation" in an apparent one-way street.[6] In such sentences, in such texts, and in such reflexes, the subject is "development," the object is "religion" rather than the other way around. This is the default mode in much of the research on development and religion (cf. Jones and Pedersen 2011). Alternatively, if religion is the subject and development the object, it will inevitably end up instrumentalising development for religious work, as in the discussions about proselytising and "rice conversion," which is an old and persistent accusation against much missionary endeavour by those resisting or opposing that religious creed.

To a major extent, instrumentalisation is the practical effect of categorisation. Since categorisation is a fundamental human faculty allowing us to think and act, instrumentalisation is an inevitable staple of everyday life as well. In that sense, the instrumentalisation of development for religion and of religion for development should not surprise us or even alarm us greatly. What should alarm us, however, is the sacralisation processes at work in both "fields" of religion and development, rendering the categories absolute articles of faith and hence indisputable. This makes the desired "dialogue" difficult to accomplish, as dialogue is inherently political while sacralisation lifts the categories beyond discussion, rendering them untouchable, hence beyond the political. This "anti-politics" (cf. Ferguson 1994; Fisher 1997; Schedler 1997) effect of sacralisation is clearly visible in the MDGs themselves.

Their sacrosanct position removes them from the domain of political debate, which severs their link with a historical and political–economic reality in which they operate. In this chapter, I have shown that the application of conceptual tools from the study of religion makes these processes and effects more visible.

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Notes

1 These are rather sweeping statements about a complex history. For some literature where these themes are explicitly or implicitly addressed, see Bonsen et al. 1990; Bornstein 2012; Bornstein and Redfield 2010; Calhoun 2010; Carbonnier 2013; Fassin 2010; Fassin and Pandolfi 2010; Fountain 2013a; 2013b; Marshall 2013; Pels and Salemink 1994; 1999; Quarles van Ufford and Schoffeleers 1988; Rist 2014; Salemink 2003; Salemink 2004. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, some centres emerged with the explicit mission of working on "rapprochement" between religion and development, like the Berkley Center for Religion and Global Development (http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/programs/religion-and-global-development) at Georgetown University and the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (http://www.religion-and-development.nl/home) in the Netherlands.
2 See http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/ (accessed 6 August 2013).
3 See http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/ (accessed 6 August 2013).
4 For a recent report on these connections, see http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/9.1_news_archives/2013_06_18/UNGC_Post2015_Report.pdf (accessed 7 August 2013).
5 Quoted from the document "Religion and Development in Asia, RADA project abstract Religion and Globalization Cluster, Asia Research Institute," circulated at the conference on Religion and the Politics of Development: Priests, Potentates and "Progress," Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, 28–29 August 2013.
6 See http://www.religion-and-development.nl

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3

Gender, Development, and the "De-privatisation" of Religion: Reframing Feminism and Religion in Asia

Emma Tomalin

Introduction

While the early phases of the contemporary development project in the post-World War II era overlooked the ways in which development processes affected men and women differently, for decades now, it has been common to apply a gender analysis to development policy and practice. This recognises the different needs and interests of men and women relative to their position in local and global gender hierarchies. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that "poverty has a female face" in many contexts, including Asia, which has been exacerbated by the recent global economic crisis. Amongst the global range of actors that have responded to declining levels of state welfare support (one outcome of the economic crisis) are religious or faith-based organisations, increasingly recognised by mainstream development policymakers and practitioners as significant "development" partners.

Yet until recently, besides gender, "religion" has been another erstwhile neglected category relevant to development policy and practice. Similar to the pressure that development actors received to take gender analysis seriously, from the 1990s,[1] development policymakers and practitioners were critiqued for ignoring religion. This critique evolved against the backdrop of the so-called resurgence or de-privatisation of religion, wherein earlier predictions that modernity and secularisation[2] went hand in hand were recognised as being unable to account for the persistence and even growth of religion in different contexts across the globe. Following the emergence of the post-World War II Western-led development industry, there had been an assumption that as societies modernise, they would also secularise and religion will become progressively less important in the public sphere. At the

very least, the "developed society" was expected to be a secular society where, if religion continued to exist, it would have little or no public influence, and would only persist in the private lives of the individual, that is, it would become "privatised." People may continue to believe in God, for instance, or to attend and participate in religious rituals, but the laws and institutions of the state would be free from religious influence (or at least from the influence of any one religious tradition), as would the wider public sphere.[3] Over the past decade, however, there has been a "turn to religion" by development actors as a response to, as well as a part of, a broader global "resurgence of religion" that has been building momentum since the 1980s, if not earlier. As we will see below, this has received a mixed response from many gender activists as well as some of those who originally advocated this "turn." Accompanying and underpinning this has been a research agenda that has begun to emerge and that examines the role that different religions play within development.

My first aim is to examine the future of the "secular," and of the styles of feminism it has generated, in light of the apparent "de-privatisation" of religion. What are the implications for gender equality and women's rights, which are central to "gender and development" (GAD) approaches within mainstream development policy and practice? The dominant way of thinking about religion in the Global North – amongst academics, development practitioners, and others – has been to view it in terms of a dilemma highlighting a tension between the neutrality of secularism[4] and the partisan nature of religions, where the secular state is necessary to protect society from the irrationality of religion, which can become dangerous and extreme, particularly for women (Asad 1993, 2003; Thomas 2005). The preference for secularism amongst women's rights activists and GAD practitioners is no secret, and has been promoted as the best route for securing equality, freedom, and security for women globally. But what do we mean by secularism here? Can it deliver what it promises and is it a necessary condition for securing women's rights and "empowerment"?[5] In this paper I will argue that dominant understandings of both religion and the secular that influence mainstream development policy and practice rely upon frameworks for analysis that are not particularly helpful for addressing the above concerns about the impact of the "de-privatisation" of religion on gender equality and empowerment.

While in the Global North religion is viewed in terms of its contrast with the secular, this framework is not universal, and religion often has a different role and significance in other settings, including in

Asia. Thus my second aim here is to explore the impact of this observation upon understandings of and approaches to women's "empowerment," which is considered to be one of the key features of feminism. In what ways does the "de-privatisation" of religion force us to rethink or reframe the way in which we approach the relationship between feminism and religion in Asia? In settings where the distinction between the religious and the secular is less marked or even absent, what effect does this have upon what we might call feminism or strategies to "empower" women, or is this term so loaded with Western liberal assumptions or negative local perceptions as to make it less relevant in other places? Taking some examples of the ways in which women in Asia adopt and shape religious activity, which appear to be directed towards securing their interests and even empowerment, we cannot ignore the fact that these do not always neatly map onto secular liberal feminist goals of female and male equality in all spheres of life. This tension is taken up in the work of Saba Mahmood (2001, 2005) who argues that we need to look at women's own reasons for their actions in terms of the discourses they are located within in order to understand the nature and scope of their agency: we cannot assume that women are only agents when they choose activities that resist patriarchal structures in line with dominant liberal conceptions originating in the modern West. To what extent, however, is such a contextual approach to thinking about empowerment and agency likely to collapse into dangerous forms of cultural relativism that sanction culturally justified forms of oppression of women? While this should be avoided, I will suggest that a contextual approach to thinking about the role that religion takes in particular locations is both essential and pragmatic, and will enable development actors to better support women's rights and empowerment. I will argue that development practitioners and policymakers in the Global North need to acquire fuller understandings of what constitutes women's empowerment in different contexts and an openness to include a diversity of views and strategies even when they might seem to conflict with or not quite map onto secular feminisms.

Secularisation theories and the future of religion: Implications for thinking about gender equality

By the 1980s the dominance of secularisation theories had begun to recede and today they are largely viewed as either wrong or at least as seriously flawed and over-simplified. Secularisation theories have not,

for example, been able to account for patterns of religiosity in much of the non-West, including Asia, as well as high levels of religiosity in the USA; they cannot accommodate the "religious resurgence" globally; and their normative quality (i.e. modernisation and religious decline would/should go hand in hand) is seen by many as being the product of a Western perspective. The work of the sociologist of religion José Casanova has been one of the strongest influences in rethinking secularisation theories. In his influential 1994 book *Public Religions in a Modern World* Casanova argued that there has been a "de-privatisation" of religion where "religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them" (1994: 5).

However, to talk about the "de-privatisation" of religion in many settings makes little sense since religion was never "privatised" in the first place, nor was it ever expected to become so. The various expressions of the secularisation theories emerged from within and referred to the context of Western liberal modern societies, where the distinction between the secular and the religious had taken seed since the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the nation state in Europe (Asad 1993; Thomas 2005). In Asia the relationships between religions, societies, and politics took on forms that did not and do not map onto the European model. The frameworks and concepts that are used to think about the nature and role of religion in modern globalised societies are not necessarily or easily transferrable from one setting to another. This is not to say that societies outside the Global North have not adopted styles of politics that are referred to as secular but these are sometimes felt to be alien or foreign, reflecting the borrowing of a Western concept by political elites who are out of touch with the ordinary person (Varshney 1993; Nandy 1998).

Nonetheless, from the perspective of commentators in the Global North, debates about a "global resurgence of religion" have been building momentum since the 1980s, if not earlier (Thomas 2005). Others have discussed this in terms of the emergence of a "neo-secular" age (Reilly 2011; Beckford 2012) or with respect to the dawning of a post-modern era where "rather than there only being one path to modernity – Westernisation, there may be multiple paths [. . .] appropriate to the different cultural and religious traditions in the modern developing world" (Thomas 2005; 44–45). Thus, the idea that a particular style of modernisation is inevitable as societies "develop" and that a marker of this will be the decline of religion as a public force cannot be taken for granted.

Regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, this "de-privatisation" of religion, or the realisation that religions are not necessarily going to disappear with modernisation, presents challenges that need to be taken seriously. On the one hand, the persistence and even vigorous resurgence of religious forms that are often conservative with regard to women's rights present threats to hard-won gender achievements over recent decades. This is one reason why secularism could still seem like an appropriate option to secure women's rights and empowerment. On the other hand, theories of secularisation and the ideology of secularism simply no longer seem to fit the evidence or function persuasively in many contexts, and as such could be viewed as outmoded and even Eurocentric tools for dealing with the serious issues of women's global disadvantage, particularly with respect to the existence of conservative and patriarchal religious forces. As Thomas writes, "What if the global resurgence of religion can no longer be interpreted within the traditional categories of social theory?" (2005: 44) This suggests that it is time to revisit the idea of the secular and to examine the particular challenges that face it in this era, together with its implications for development policy and practice. Before I explore this in more detail, I will first outline some of the challenges to and concerns about this "turn to religion," which has been expressed by gender activists, including those working within development, as well as many of the academics and also religious practitioners who originally advocated this shift.

Challenging the "turn to religion"

Recent studies present a polarised view of whether we should embrace the (re)entry of religion into the "public sphere." Advocates argue that religion is important and influential in the lives of women across the globe and there are numerous examples of empowering forms of "religious feminism." For example, my research with Buddhist nuns in Thailand reveals that some women who are campaigning for the right to full ordination (the *bhikkhuni* ordination) are motivated by a feminist desire to address gender inequalities within society as well as to be able to practice their religion at the same level as men (Tomalin 2006, 2011, 2013). While advocates of the "turn to religion" might be encouraged by the way in which this and similar examples of "religious feminism" can be seen to support women's rights in ways that map onto GAD goals, others are more wary. Sceptics highlight the gender costs of rising forms of fundamentalism and conservative religiosities, urging us to be cautious of figures that thrust these ideologies into public spaces.

From a GAD perspective, "religious feminisms" are increasingly recognised as relevant to the pursuit of women's empowerment, but the apparent rise of conservative religion, coupled with declining levels of state welfare provision, presents a dangerous mix that could undermine gender equality and women's rights in some contexts. Therefore, it is crucial to view the "turn to religion" by mainstream development actors through a gender lens, not only because women are more vulnerable to poverty but because, as some observers have expressed, "religions have a male face" in many manifestations of the contemporary global religious revival (Tadros 2010; Tomalin 2011).

However, it is not only gender activists, including those working in development, who have reservations about this "turn to religion"; even some of those who may have originally advocated its importance are now critical of the way in which this engagement amounts to an instrumental use of religion to meet pre-defined development goals. This includes the tendency within GAD to only engage with religion where it can be reinterpreted to support activities that resist patriarchy in ways that mirror Western liberal feminist objectives (Deneulin and Bano 2009). In her groundbreaking study of women within an urban women's mosque movement, which is part of the larger Islamic revival in Cairo, Saba Mahmood (2001, 2005), for instance, examines the apparent paradox between the fact that these women have carved out opportunities to preach within the movement, often in the face of male objection, yet still appear to collude with patriarchy in wearing the veil and adopting behaviour that effectively makes them subservient to men. For Mahmood and the women within this mosque movement the above scenario is not a paradox once we view agency from within a distinctive Islamic discourse where both sets of actions are continuous with an agent who wishes to preach as well as to wear the veil to cultivate piety, modesty, and shyness as a means of better achieving the goals of Islam. The reason that this appears to be contradictory is because Western liberal feminist theory assumes that a "free agent" exists who will naturally resist gender oppression once his/her consciousness is raised. Mahmood argues, by contrast, that "the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance" (2005: 14) and it is essentially Eurocentric to view women who do not seem to be resisting patriarchy as lacking agency. Moreover, Mahmood is also critical of the political agenda behind liberal feminism, in that it not only seeks to provide an analysis of gender difference but also to promote strategies for social change based on that analysis (2005). Mahmood's apparent acceptance of the ways in which styles of Islam might also be oppressive towards women has earned her

the critique that she is effectively endorsing culturally embedded forms of oppression against women. In her defence she argues:

> I would insist that an appeal to understanding the coherence by which a discourse is articulated is neither to justify it, nor to argue for some irreducible essentialism or cultural relativism. It is, instead, to take a necessary step in the problem of explaining the force a discourse commands. (2001: 209–210)

While as an anthropologist Mahmood does not wish to engage in a political agenda of social change, this is unavoidable and indeed undesirable for most scholars and practitioners of development studies, including those working in GAD. How can GAD accommodate work that has been done by scholars such as Mahmood without compromising the important goals of gender equality and women's rights? I will come back to this thorny issue of cultural relativism towards the end of the paper.

For now, however, returning to the example of my research with Buddhist nuns in Thailand, which has been concerned with attempts to revive full ordination for women (the *bhikkhuni* ordination), what questions does Mahmood's work prompt about the revival of the *bhikkhuni* ordination and the relationship between "religious feminisms" in Asia and GAD more broadly? A recent book by Salgado (2013) takes up this issue and explores Mahmood's critique in the light of claims that the *bhikkhuni* movement in countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka is an example of feminism, arguing that "liberal feminist meanings of empowerment cannot simply be equated with a notion of nuns' renunciation" (2013: 185). As my own research has also demonstrated, not all *bhikkhunis* or aspiring ordinands are motivated by a social or "feminist" agenda that has as its focus a desire to transform gender relations beyond the monastic realm nor do they necessarily view their actions as a means of resisting patriarchal structures within Buddhism. Instead, many women emphasise the spiritual or religious benefits of being able to practice at a higher level or on a par with men. Moreover, many women in Thailand do not wish to take a higher level of ordination and are satisfied with their position as a white-robed *mae chi,* a religious role that clearly places women in a lower position than men in the Buddhist clerical hierarchy (Tomalin 2006). Instead of dismissing these as constrained choices made by women who are yet to realise their right to be equal with men, Mahmood's approach suggests that we need to (at least temporarily) suspend such feminist judgements and to understand what "empowerment" means for women in these different

subjective locations. In settings where the religious and the secular are not clearly demarcated we cannot necessarily interpret the significance of women's engagement with religion in terms of the extent to which it maps neatly onto GAD goals, since these in turn tend to value styles of "religious feminism" that promote the transformation of religious spaces to achieve secular social aims.

In a similar fashion to this apparently selective approach to women's engagement with religion by GAD, other mainstream development actors have also been critiqued for failing to engage with religions on their own terms. Most governments and donors in the Global North generally think that religion gets in the way of development, and while they are likely to consider that it is acceptable when it motivates people to promote (their model of) development, it is felt to be problematic when it interferes with the secular project of development according to "its own understanding of what constitutes rationality, progress, social justice and modern economic development" (Thomas 2005: 220). For instance, Western-driven development policy and practice are markedly underpinned by the view that religion *should not* have a public role, which is a normative position that shapes how development actors engage with religion. Instead, development thinking and action should proceed from an examination of the role that religion *actually has* rather than pursuing a quasi-political agenda of stamping it out or assuming it will vanish. It is important to understand the role that religion plays in women's lives rather than imposing an outside agenda that will not necessarily facilitate structures enabling empowerment and greater equality according to local barriers and opportunities, needs, and interests. While I do not intend to promote the view that religions are good for people's development or that they can plug the existing gaps in the modern development project by themselves, it is ethical and pragmatic to consider religion as an important and significant variable while also being aware that the form and structure that it takes may vary considerably across diverse traditions and contexts.

A good place to begin to address some of these problems is with respect to developing "religious literacy" within mainstream development policy and practice, which in my view comprises three related things: enhancing knowledge of the importance of religions in people's lives in both developing and developed societies; learning about the beliefs and practices embodied within different religious traditions; and moving beyond Western ways of viewing the nature and role of religion largely informed by Christian experiences. While the first two areas of religious literacy have received attention with the emergence of a research agenda

concerning the "turn to religion" by development actors in recent years, the third has been almost completely overlooked and there are arguably problems with the ways in which religion has been understood and engaged with, in the process of this interaction. Development studies, policy, and practice need to engage with critiques about the methods for studying and ways of viewing religion that have become popular in recent decades, which as we will see could also help in addressing some of the concerns about the tensions over issues of "gender" in patriarchal religious contexts.

The importance of critical thinking about religion as part of religious literacy in development studies, policy, and practice

> All too often theorists have taken religion as a relatively unproblematic unitary and homogeneous phenomenon that can be analysed and compared across time and space without proper consideration of its multi-faceted and socially constructed character. (Beckford 2003: 15)

As Beckford suggests in this quotation, it is important to examine concepts and theories about religion. This is important for those working in development, because what is typically meant by religion and religious change in the Global North is often poorly suited for approaching similar issues in developing contexts, as well as in many developed contexts. It is necessary to question the extent to which the familiar definitions, concepts, and theories that we bring to the study of religion are adequate for an examination of religions and development. As early as the 1960s, scholars from sociology, anthropology, and the emergent field of religious studies began to question the category of religion and distinctions between the religious and the non-religious, or the secular and the religious. They argued that the study of religion, as well as our understanding of what a religion is, involves transposing a modern Western Christian model of the distinction between the religious and the secular (that emerged following the 16th century Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe) onto non-Christian and non-Western contexts, thereby distorting our understanding of those "religions," as well as transforming the way in which they come to understand themselves (Smith 1991[1962]; Asad 1993, 2003; King 1999; Fitzgerald 1999; Beyer 2006). By contrast, in contexts today, in both the Global South as well as the Global North, it is often not possible to clearly separate the

religious from the secular, as people may not think about what they do or what influences them as being "religious." This is likely to be the case even more so in development settings.

For instance, while some organisations are explicitly "faith-based" and articulate their identity in this way, others may not acknowledge that religion plays a role in what they do. Kirmani and Zaidi (2010) in their study of Muslim charities in Karachi found that "faith-based" was not a term that was used by these charities to describe their work. This could be for political reasons, but also because they exist in a context where religion influences almost every aspect of life, making it uncommon to reflect upon where religion is and where it is not. Therefore, in attempting to investigate the influence of religion on development organisations, thinking in terms of "faith-based" and "non-faith-based" organisations may not always be the most helpful approach (Tomalin 2011). Moreover, the very idea of neatly classified "world religions" (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity), which have a linear individual history and that can be sharply differentiated from other "world religions" by virtue of the nature of their distinct beliefs and practices, is considered by many contemporary scholars of religion to be a relatively recent (and originally Western) invention (Smith 1991[1962]; Asad 1993, 2003; Fitzgerald 2000; Beyer 2006). The so-called "world religions" paradigm has been criticised for distorting features of the traditions we wish to study and understand, since it prioritises a particular model of what a religion *should be* (Masuzawa 2005). For instance, Buddhism does not teach the belief in a divine being and Hinduism has a greater focus on "orthopraxy" than on "orthodoxy." Whereas the focus within Western religious forms is on the importance of right belief and doctrine, for most Hindus, for instance, belief and doctrine are secondary to practice and how one acts. According to this paradigm, "world religions" demand exclusivity and while conversion is normally a possibility, people are not permitted to "belong" to more than one religion at a time. In shifting our focus away from considerations of right belief and doctrinal orthodoxy, we will be more likely to notice that, in many contexts, the boundaries between religious traditions may actually be more fluid than the "world religions paradigm" suggests.

While colonialism and globalisation have meant that this view of what a religion is is no longer a purely Western (Christian) phenomenon, it is also the case that viewing religion in this way does not always work that well, particularly in non-Western contexts where the differentiation between the religious and the secular, as well as between different

religions, may be less marked (Beyer 2006). As I will argue below, this blurring of the boundaries between the religious and the secular also implies a need to rethink the applicability of the distinction between the private and public spheres (implicit in theories of secularism and secularisation) when attempting to conceptualise the role of religion in modern global societies, and this has particular implications for gender equality. Before this, however, I will first examine the preference for secularism amongst women's rights activists and GAD practitioners as the best route for securing equality, freedom, and security for women globally. I will explore the relationship between feminism and secularism, specifically examining what is meant by secularism in these debates, whether it is a necessary condition for securing women's rights and empowerment, and the ways in which secularism can actually be problematic for women.

Do secularism and feminism necessarily go together, and can secularism be bad for women?

The preference for secularism that is found amongst women's rights activists and GAD practitioners has been promoted by them as the best route for securing equality, freedom, and security for women globally. But what do we mean by secularism here? Can it deliver what it promises and is it a necessary condition for securing women's rights and empowerment? From a feminist perspective, one of the central ways in which secularism can protect women's rights is through keeping religion away from the state and the public sphere, so that it can have only limited influence on women's opportunities for work, education, political participation, and access to any other "goods" that society offers in ways that disadvantage them compared to men. In other words, the public and political roles of religion should be regulated by the state, but private religious belief and practice should remain the prerogative of the individual, the restriction of which would represent a denial of the important principle of "religious freedom" covered by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, there are problems inherent to this way of viewing religion in terms of a public–private split that is conducive to women securing their rights.

While secular liberalism renders itself as a solution to gender inequality that transcends culture, tradition, and religion, Brown (2012), for instance, argues that "the secular" is an invention of a particular style of Christian religiosity and is not a "neutral space" (Asad 1993, 2003).

In particular she questions the extent to which secularism is necessary for ensuring equality in society:

> Secularism is presumed to generate women's freedom and equality a) as part of its historical purpose and project; b) as a dimension of its universalization of justice; c) through its subordination of religious or cultural inequality to legal equality; d) through freedom formulated as individual choice; e) through the elimination of sex segregation in economic and public life; and f) through replacements of modesty with transparency, cover with exposure, replacements themselves presumed indexical of women's sexual autonomy. (Brown 2012)

However, the extent to which secularism can deliver this (when conceived of in terms of the strict division between privatised religion and the state, as well as the public sphere) is questionable. The presumptions listed in the above quotation are problematic for many women – in both developed and developing settings – since they do not account for the fact that women are more likely than men to be located in or defined by their role within the private sphere, the domestic realm of the family. Whereas the liberal democratic state imposes laws upon behaviour in the public sphere to ensure equality, it is reluctant to "interfere" in the private realm. Thus, when women come into contact with conservative religiosity, which is a potent force shaping conceptions of culture and tradition in the family and local community, the rights that they would be granted in the public sphere by the state are not extended to the private sphere and religious forces are effectively allowed to go unchecked even when they are harmful to women. As Susan Moller Okin (1999) warns in her famous essay, originally published in the *Boston Review* in 1997 – *Is multiculturalism bad for women?* – a concrete manifestation of this partitioning off of the private sphere can be found in the modern liberal approach to dealing with multiculturalism through appeals to "group rights." Where certain minority religious or cultural groups are able to claim that they have distinct beliefs, practices, and interests, they are sometimes afforded "group rights" (e.g. the existence of personal law in India, as defined by religion). However, little or no attention is paid to the private sphere as a place where women are more likely to be located than men, but where group beliefs, practices, and interests are typically determined and then publicly expressed by men (Okin 1999). Thus, secularism can actually be bad for women when it masks the negative influence of religion in the private sphere.

Another reason why relying on secularism (as a key to women securing their rights) can be problematic is that it may overlook the ways

in which, even in settings that we imagine to be secular (e.g. Western Europe), religions have nonetheless contributed considerably to values and practices that can have negative consequences for women. Thus, Razavi and Jenichen (2010) question whether religion was ever

> a purely "private" matter, as the term "deprivatisation" implies – cordoned off from the state by a wall of separation, and contained within the private sphere of personal belief . . . [For instance] . . . Even in Western Europe, the stronghold of secularism, religions have contributed considerably to the shaping of welfare and abortion regimes. (Razavi and Jenichen 2010: 835)

Thus, there is concern that secularism can actually be bad for women. First, because it masks the influence of religion in the private sphere where women rather than men are more likely to be located, as well as defined with respect to, and from which the state keeps its distance (Romany 1993: 87). Second, because it refuses to recognise the fact that religions continue to influence the public sphere and even the state. In strongly adhering to secularism, not only as an ideal but also as an existing political reality, we risk not noticing when conservative religion contributes to social values and laws that obstruct women's rights. It is important to question the extent to which religion has ever been a private matter, and to address the ways in which the continued public relevance and influence of religion can both block and facilitate women's access to rights in the public sphere. There have been attempts to deal with or accommodate these apparent shortcomings of secularism as well as of theories of secularisation. Casanova, for instance, also notes that "most European states are by no means strictly secular, nor do they tend to live up to the myth of secular neutrality" (2009: 13) and he questions the most basic premise of secularism – whether "the secular separation of religion from political society or even from the state are universalisable maxims, in the sense that they are either necessary or sufficient conditions for democratic politics" (2009: 14). Drawing upon Stepan's notion of "twin tolerations"[6] – between religious authorities and democratic political institutions – he agrees with Stepan that there "can be an extraordinarily broad range of concrete patterns of religion-state relations in political systems that would meet our minimal definition of democracy" (Stepan 2001: 217).

This approach to accepting the place of religions in the public sphere coincides with another way of conceiving of secularism, *as representing the idea that no particular religion should have a monopoly within the public sphere, nor directly influence the state*. One benefit of this approach could

be that religious traditions would be open to greater public scrutiny in terms of the principles of democracy, which would arguably demystify and de-privilege religions, and transform their role in the private sphere where they are conservative and restrict women's opportunities. This approach to secularism rules out a theocracy, but allows for the contribution of different sorts of religious groups and activities in civil society, while putting in place measures to ensure that these did not disadvantage any groups or individuals.

Feminist scholars may well be critical that this approach is dangerous in the context of the rise of conservative religiosity in many parts of the globe and question whether measures could be put in place to ensure the success of the "twin tolerations." In a now infamous exchange between Casanova and the feminist scholar Anne Phillips, Phillips agrees with Casanova that we cannot "usefully represent religion as the nemesis of gender equality or secularism" (2009: 41). Drawing upon a body of literature that has emerged in recent years, particularly from a post-colonial feminist perspective (e.g. Mahmood 2005), Phillips argues that it is unethical to impose our own view about religion onto religious women in other contexts, and that in doing so we fail to understand their agency as well as the structures limiting it (2009: 43). However, she stresses that "if we are to abandon the idea of a strict separation of religion from politics – as unlikely to happen and anyway not normatively required – what other kind of protections need to be in place to secure the best conditions for gender equality? Are Casanova's twin tolerations, combined with the vitality of internal reform movements, enough?" (2009: 41). In answering "no" to this question, she is critical of Casanova for failing to account for the ways in which women are coerced to accept religious frameworks against their interests by the state and the family, and considers him to be rather over-optimistic about the role that democratic principles can play in society through curbing the influence of religious groups when they are conservative and totalising (2009: 43). Overall, Phillips rejects the notion that we can have a "simple principle" to guide the way that we negotiate these questions, and instead holds that "judgments must be made in a contextual way" (2009: 45).

The "de-privatisation" of religion: Lessons for GAD in Asia

Drawing upon the above discussion, I will now examine two important areas for future research that will contribute towards unpacking the diverse impacts that religion has on women's lives globally, while at the same time pointing towards ways in which GAD interventions can

more fruitfully engage with religion in order to ensure positive outcomes for women.

i) Rethinking the boundaries between the religious and the secular, and the private and the public

As demonstrated above, the binaries between the religious and the secular, and the private and the public, are a rather recent development when placed in the context of the timeline of religious histories. Such binaries do not always work well in non-Western contexts where the differentiation between the religious and the secular is sometimes less marked (Beyer 2006). Even in Western settings, secularism has not delivered what it promised nor has it taken the form predicted for it. Post-modern and post-colonial critiques of secularism (i.e. the view that the distinction between the religious and secular should be maintained) argue that it fails to account for the ways in which religion operates within people's lives, and that to force it out of the public sphere is immoral and impractical, giving rise to distortions in understandings of religious phenomena that have negative impacts upon those who embrace them (Asad 1993, 2003). More recently, feminist thinkers who have typically been dismissive of religion are beginning to involve themselves in these debates, recognising the importance of religion in the lives of many women in developing contexts, as well as the problems with the modernist binaries between public–private and secular–religious. Reilly (2011), for instance, points out that an emancipatory feminism "entails recognition of the complex and often contradictory intersectionality of women's identities and experiences cutting across gender, socio-economic privilege, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, geo- location, and so on" (2011: 26).

In fact, the line between different feminisms, secular and religious, is more blurred than we once thought, where "those who work for 'internal reform' [of religious traditions] very often draw on the ideas and arguments of 'external' advocates for change. Alliances between feminists of different religious and secular communities are therefore imperative" (Razavi and Jenichen 2010: 846). These alliances can be seen, for instance, in the strengthening of transnational women's movements, constituted by networks of regional groups and movements that promote strategies for women's empowerment. Organisations such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws and Catholics for Choice, as well as movements within religious traditions around issues such as female ordination in Buddhism in Asia, all suggest the growth of vibrant transnational feminist networks that aim to negotiate women's

empowerment from local religious and cultural contexts rather than earlier styles of international feminism that were often perceived as Western-driven and top-down, favouring secular approaches and values (Moghadam 2000; Tomalin 2009).

While religion is an increasingly prominent factor in many movements for social change, including women's movements, this area remains under-researched, despite its relevance for understanding the ways in which many campaigns for women's rights achieve success or not. Increasingly, women's movements, particularly in developing countries, have had to face difficult questions with regard to their positions on religion as they have recognised it both as a potential barrier to and a driver of social change. The public influence of religion is arguably becoming more prominent across the globe, while at the same time there are concerns that "fundamentalist" versions of religion (that are typically conservative in their attitude towards women) are gaining a firmer foothold in both civil society and at the level of the state. In such a climate, there is a need for empirical studies and theoretical reflection exploring the ways that religion can act both as a barrier to and a positive force for the achievement of gender equity and women's rights.

ii) Instrumentalisation versus dialogue

While over the past decade we have witnessed a "turn to religion" by development practitioners, many have been critical that this amounts to an instrumental use of religion to meet pre-defined development goals rather than an indication of a revision of the boundaries between the religious and the secular, and the public and the private. Development donors and organisations that choose to incorporate religion into their work are typically not open to the implication that engaging with religion might actually challenge some of their goals and the ways that they work. Instead, they have tended to use religion instrumentally to suit "what development donors conceive of as valuable and desirable development outcomes" (Deneulin and Bano 2009: 25). With respect to development, one area for consideration that has tended to be overlooked or avoided – quite possibly due to the complicated and uncomfortable issues it raises – is *how* religion should be incorporated into development initiatives and what implications this has. This raises the question of whether the inclusion of religion should force us to theorise or practice development differently, and what trade-offs, compromises, or tensions would be thrown up for the pursuit of gender equality as a result. Goulet, for instance, argued that religious values should not "be viewed *primarily* as mere means – aids or obstacles – to the achievement of goals

derived from sources outside the value systems in question" (1980: 484). By contrast, a "non-instrumental treatment of values draws its development goals from within the value system to which living communities still adhere" (1980: 485). He is not suggesting that religions necessarily have all the answers to solve development problems in particular communities. Instead, he argues that "development's pressing imperatives will doubtless oblige religious practitioners to change many of their ancient symbols and practices" (1980: 488). Conversely, however, he writes that "it is to be hoped, the resiliency of critically tested religious value systems will invite development experts to enrich their own diagnoses and prescriptions for action" (1980: 488).

Deneulin and Banu (2009) address this as an issue of "dialogue," and devote particular attention to the increasing number of development initiatives that seek to engage with women's rights in Muslim contexts, but which have been influenced by Western feminism, and have worked with a Westernised elite, thereby marginalising "Muslim women, in particular Islamic female leadership" (2009: 485). Whereas secular women's rights NGOs tend to stress "individual liberty, including sexual liberty, and participation of women in economic and political affairs" (2009: 160), female *madrasas* in Pakistan often adopt a somewhat different view, typically holding that women's interests are "best served in a stable family unit . . . [where] the emphasis is not on equality but on equity" (2009: 160). Their critique resembles Mahmood's, discussed above, but they go further than Mahmood, taking her discussion in another direction, in arguing that these different understandings of female empowerment suggest the need for "dialogue," where each group attempts to understand the other's point of view and that such "combined activism" is likely to be more successful than a situation in which neither side is willing to compromise and each pursues separate agendas. In contrast to Mahmood, they are located within a development studies context and their work is aimed towards facilitating social change, albeit not necessarily along the lines of Western liberal feminism. Mahmood has been criticised for essentially adopting a culturally relativist position, and although Deneulin and Banu promote dialogue to bring about positive social change, from a secular feminist perspective they too may not be considered to go far enough in their critique.

However, from a pragmatic and moral perspective such an approach requires recognition that women's engagement with their religious traditions may be "empowering" but not in ways that exactly map onto dominant global GAD goals. Such religious engagement can enable women to negotiate patriarchal religious boundaries in ways that are

culturally appropriate and also help them to improve their lives. Serious engagement with religion in pursuit of gender equity needs to recognise that it cannot be assumed that there is a unified feminist vision, nor that women's empowerment is best pursued within a particular version of a secular framework. In many contexts, there is a genuine commitment to exploring women's empowerment within a religious framework, even if by Western feminist standards the goals might sometimes seem quite modest or limited.

This approach requires a fuller understanding of what constitutes women's empowerment in different contexts and an openness to include a diversity of views and strategies even when they might seem to conflict with secular feminisms premised on female and male equality in all spheres of life. Research that addresses this could assist development actors in modifying their language and expectations in different contexts so as to be supportive of modes of female empowerment that are culturally embedded and appropriate, and therefore achieve the best outcomes for women at any particular time. Moreover, research that addresses both tensions and instances of successful interaction between secular and religious actors relating to gender concerns could be useful in highlighting areas where they are likely to agree, as well as potential flash points to be carefully negotiated or even avoided.

Conclusion

This chapter has two main aims: first, to revisit the idea of the secular in the light of the apparent "de-privatisation" of religion and to assess its implications for GAD; and second, drawing on the work of Saba Mahmood, to explore how GAD practitioners can best approach women's empowerment and gender equality in settings where the demarcation between the religious and the secular is absent or much less marked. While traditional theories about secularism and secularisation are now generally thought to be flawed, and religions are today viewed as having a relevance in public life, including within development policy and practice, this "turn to religion" is arguably reliant upon frameworks and models of religion that are underpinned by assumptions that derive from a liberal secular framework. I have explored the extent to which secularism is necessary and/or sufficient for pursuing equality and the ways in which this can be damaging for women's rights when religious inequality in the private sphere is allowed to flourish.

Overall I have argued for greater attention to "religious literacy" within development studies, policy, and practice, including GAD. It is

important that development actors are knowledgeable not only about the content of different religions, but also about the way that they are structured in relation to other religions and also to other social structures and systems. There does seem to be some agreement upon the fact that we live in an era where the certainties of traditional versions of modernisation theory and the earlier promises of modernity now seem less secure. This also appears to be reflected in evolving approaches regarding how donor-driven development has been understood and approached since the 1950s, from a focus upon an economic model that stressed growth and modernisation to more diverse approaches that increasingly aim to reflect the worldviews of different communities.

However, while it is perhaps significant that development actors are now beginning to take religion more seriously, the fact that this is happening in a way that reinforces the binaries between religions, the religious and the secular, and the private and the public, could well result in styles of engagement with religious actors that on the one hand do not reflect the way in which people actually live their religious traditions, and on the other hand could exacerbate gender inequalities. While the feminist movement in the Global North has typically shied away from engagement with religious ideas and actors in pursuit of women's empowerment, with the "turn to religion" various styles of "religious feminism" are now considered to have relevance for policy and practice around women's rights. However, religious feminisms are diverse, not only in terms of the religious traditions that underpin them, but also in terms of the extent to which they map onto the established Western-influenced ideas of the goal of male and female "equality" in all spheres of life or whether their goal is to achieve "equity" (fairness – i.e. what one deserves according to who they are) within a religious framework that assigns different roles and statuses to men and women. It seems to me that a contextual approach to thinking about the role that religion takes in particular locations is both essential and pragmatic, and will enable development actors to better support women's equality and/or empowerment.

Notes

1 One notable break with this earlier pattern of neglect was the publication in 1980 of a special issue of the journal *World Development* on the topic of religion.
2 "Secularisation" is understood as the process by which religion loses its public role, becoming "privatised," and may eventually even lose its grip on the lives of individuals altogether (Casanova 1994).

3 Based on the work of Habermas ([1962] 1989), I adopt a view of modern democratic societies as divided into (i) the "sphere of public authority" (i.e. the state); (ii) the public sphere, which mediates between the state and the private sphere; (iii) the economy; and (iv) the private sphere.
4 In this chapter, secularism is understood as a political or ideological commitment to bringing about or maintaining the "secular" which can be viewed in several different ways. First, "the belief that religion and religious bodies should have no part in political or civic affairs or in running public institutions" (Tomalin 2013: 69); second, the idea that all religions should be treated equally in society and no particular religion should have a monopoly within the public sphere, nor directly influence the state; and third, "the rejection of religion or its exclusion from a philosophical or moral system" (Tomalin 2013: 69).
5 To take an example of a definition from GAD literature, women's empowerment is defined as "women increasing their ability to act, to perceive themselves as capable, to hold opinions, to use time effectively, to control resources, to interact with others, to initiate activities, to respond to events" (Rowlands 1998: 23).
6 "Religious authorities must tolerate the autonomy of democratically elected governments without claiming constitutionally privileged prerogatives to mandate or veto public policy. Democratic political institutions, in turn, must tolerate the autonomy of religious individuals and groups not only to complete freedom to worship privately, but also to advance publicly their values in civil society and sponsor organizations and movements in political society, as long as they adhere to the rule of law and do not violate democratic rules" (Casanova 2009: 14).

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4

Islamic Activism and Palliative Care: An Analysis from Kerala, India

R. Santhosh

Introduction

For many scholars and policymakers, religion has made an emphatic comeback in the past few decades. Religion's salience in the political and socio-cultural spheres now seems unavoidable and the attention being paid to the emerging intersections of religion and development stands as a testimony to this trend. The tendency of treating religion as antithetical to modern rationality and hence as an obstacle to developmental thinking has become passé and instead the potential and possibilities offered by religion to make development more effective have attracted widespread support (ter Haar 2011). The globalising world of the neoliberal era has fundamentally altered the roles of state and civil society and it is within this context that religion, in the forms of faith-based organisations and religious civil society, has emerged as a force to be reckoned with within developmental discourses (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003; Bayat 2007; Marshall 2011).

The institutionalised delivery of palliative care in Kerala, India, has assumed the character of a mass movement with the active involvement of local community and several religious as well as non-religious civil society organisations. In this chapter I am primarily concerned with the nature of Islamic activism exhibited in the remarkable case of the palliative care movement in Malappuram, a Muslim majority district of Kerala.[1] While Kerala is no stranger to varied forms of Islamic activism, the extensive involvement of Muslim organisations in palliative care indicates a substantive shift in their dynamics of social engagement. I argue that the role played by Muslim organisations in the arena of palliative care in Kerala is a particularly compelling entry point into debates about religion and the politics of

development, not only because of the success of this initiative, but also because of its relationship with the state and the ways in which this Salafi-inspired movement was practiced in a determinedly multi-religious context.

One of my primary concerns in this chapter is to place Muslim activism in palliative care in the broader framework of religious civil society in order to explore emerging forms of interaction between the state and civil society in the neoliberal era of the reconfiguration of the state. I do this through placing the Islamic palliative care movement within the context of debates about the "Kerala model" of development. Because of its considerable success in key development indicators, Kerala has long been upheld by media pundits and scholars as establishing a distinct model worthy of emulation. While critical of this adulation, I nevertheless argue that the political context of Kerala state is key for understanding the palliative care movement: the specific developmental trajectory of the state, including the decentralisation programme and ongoing neoliberal reforms, provided the necessary space for civil society organisations including Islamic activists to be active players in reshaping the developmental landscape and social outcomes. But more than just working within limitations established by the (evolving) state governmental apparatus, palliative care activists also helped reconfigure the state. The Kerala government was compelled to respond to the activists of palliative care by adopting and institutionalising their own palliative care initiatives, thereby becoming the only state in India to have an official palliative care policy and programme.

Kerala is also a thoroughly multi-religious context[2] with numerous active religious groups and has a long history of social engagement by Christian missionaries and Hindu reformers. I am therefore also concerned with understanding the ways in which Muslim activists engaged and deployed Islamic discourses and distinctive identity markers in the course of carrying out palliative care. It is evident that inter-religious contestations, and theological differences *within* Islam, have fundamentally shaped the articulation of activism in the Kerala context. This plural religious context is shaped significantly by the formal status of India as a secular state. Moreover, Kerala is one of the very few states in India where the communist party – itself closely associated with secularism – wields considerable power, including a long history of serving as the state government.[3] While this case of Islamic activism in palliative care is a product of Salafi reformism, the multi-religious context and the secular public domain in Kerala offer an interesting backdrop for the articulation of Islamic activism and charity.

The "Kerala model" of development and the reinvigoration of religious civil society

The "Kerala model" of development has attracted widespread attention from scholars across the world for its unique features and characteristics (Drèze and Sen 1989; Sen and Drèze 1992; George 1993; Tharamangalam 1998; Parayil and Sreekumar 2003; Kannan 2005). The cornerstone of "Kerala model" is the developmental experience of the state, characterised by rapid rise in social development indicators, and an equally rapid reduction of social inequalities while maintaining relatively low economic growth. This phenomenon was first noticed in the late 1970s in a seminal report by the Centre for Development Studies (1975), with support from the Committee for Development Planning of the United Nations. In 1980–1981 Kerala's growth in per capita income ranked 14th among other states in India, but Kerala topped the list in all key social development indices, including literacy rate for men and women, low mortality rate, high longevity, and favourable sex ratio to women (Franke and Chasin 1997).[4] Similarly, and despite disavowing its potential to serve as a "model," in *Development as Freedom* Amartya Sen (1999: 48) repeatedly draws attention to Kerala's "unusual success in raising life expectancy and the quality of life" and uses it as a normative example of what can be achieved by other polities. Kerala stands out as an example of how one state has fared exceedingly well in social development indicators, on par with "developed" nations, without traversing the arduous path of militant social revolution or rapid industrialisation (Parayil and Sreekumar 2003).

The specific socio-historic factors that contributed to the unique developmental experience of Kerala have been intensely debated. Scholars have pointed to diverse factors as being influential, including the relative autonomy of Cochin and Travancore[5] during the colonial period that allowed the native rulers to invest in health and education, the presence of matrilineal and matrilocal kinship structures, social and religious reform movements during the latter part of nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, Christian missionary activity, the commercialisation of cash crops in the nineteenth century which required a workforce with basic education, high female literacy rates, high population density that increased access to education, and a strong tradition of communist mobilisation (Jeffrey 1992; Sen and Drèze 1992; Prashad 2001; Parayil and Sreekumar 2003). The unique character of welfarism in Kerala is explained by Drèze and Sen (1989) through the concept of "public action" which refers to a dialectical process involving

state intervention on the one hand and, on the other, the demands and actions of mobilised groups and public bodies. The result is a system of "support-led security" as opposed to "growth-mediated security" (see also Tharamangalam 1998, 2006). They argue that state-provisioning measures were crucial though they also point out that Kerala's success involved "a great deal more than activities of the state" (Drèze and Sen 1989: 276). Sen and Drèze point out that public participation through independent action and through pressure put on the state by democratic means, including via public debates, an active press, vibrant opposition parties, and adversarial politics, were all important factors. The vibrancy of active pressure groups including political parties, and caste and religious associations, has been a notable feature of Kerala politics (Jeffrey 1992).

Several scholars have argued that political mobilisation, especially that of leftist and communist parties, has undergone significant changes since the late 1980s. These changes, they argue, have given rise to alternative forms of mass mobilisation where civil society organisations found themselves increasingly prominent (John and Chathukulam 2002; Devika 2007). It is important that we locate the palliative care movement, along with a host of other such initiatives, on this wider canvas.

It is clear that in spite of the fact that left coalition governments come into power in every alternate election in Kerala, the traditional modes of left mobilisation has been systematically undermined by novel forms of mobilisation based on identity politics and civil society activism (Devika 2007). A series of mass mobilisations that can be labelled as "new social movements," including environmental movements, feminist movements, caste, tribal and religious movements, among others, emerged in Kerala during the last few decades of the twentieth century. Popular uprisings like the movements against "polluting" industries, protests against large-scale development-induced displacement, movements for the rights of sexual minorities, and land struggles by tribal groups, were characterised by the language of cultural and human rights and the invocation of identity politics for mobilisation. They were also spearheaded by civil society organisations. These movements raised new slogans and articulated issues that were not of central consideration for the dominant political parties, especially parties traditionally positioned on the left of the political spectrum.

Politically as well, Kerala Muslims have been successfully brought into the democratic mainstream and are active participants in the electoral process. The Indian Union Muslim League, a prominent political party

representing Muslim interests, has been an active member of the political coalitions, including aligning itself with the Communist Party of India. The Muslim League has been widely credited with the task of ensuring active Muslim participation in political processes and of dampening any attempts at mobilising more radical and militant elements. This successful political participation at every level of democratic decision-making has ensured meaningful bargaining power to the Muslim community.

Some forms of Islamic activism in Kerala have focused on theological contestations over points of Islamic religious doctrine, resulting in bitter conflicts and antagonism. However, new dynamics emerged in the early 1990s that led to a devaluing emphasis on theological difference. The radicalisation of the Hindu right wing since the 1970s, the demolition of the Babari Masjid (1992), and a series of communal riots, especially the infamous Gujarat pogrom in 2002[6] where the state took a partisan role against Muslims, played decisive roles in this new orientation. There was a concerted effort to put internal divisions and differences aside and present a united front against the challenge of resurgent Hindutva. Many Muslim organisations in Kerala began to strongly advocate for secularity as an important civic virtue. They also adopted the language of modern liberalism, including human and minority rights, because of a growing sense that only through a non-partisan, secular state could the safety and protection of Muslims be assured. Even organisations like Jamaat-e-Islami, who had previously advocated for the realisation of an Islamic state and had declared secularism *haram* (forbidden), began adopting secular discourses and became one of the most important advocates of secular democracy (Ahmad 2006; 2010). In Kerala, the Solidarity Youth Movement, the youth wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, is now a champion of oppositional civil society and engages in frequent struggles against the state on matters related to involuntary displacement of people for developmental projects, environmental protection, and human rights violations.

Significant transformations brought into the field of democratic decentralisation in Kerala in the mid-1990s facilitated the involvement of civil society organisations in local level planning and administration. Conceived and implemented by left-leaning parties as "people's planning campaign" this programme resulted in significant devolution of administrative power to the lower strata of local self-government and also initiated the process of planning in developmental matters and policies from the grass-root level (Franke and Chasin 1997). This model of governance reduced the traditional role played by political parties

and opened ways for increased public participation in the local self-government. In many places, civil society organisations and pressure groups began to make use of this space made available through democratic decentralisation in conceiving and implementing welfare policies and programmes along with elected representatives of the local area.

This new space made available to civil society organisations in the planning and execution of welfare programmes through the decentralised governance system brought in a number of innovative ideas and programmes aimed at community welfare. In the case of palliative care, though it was initiated and made successful solely through voluntarism and financial contributions from the community, the state incorporated this model into its health policy and a separate palliative care policy was proclaimed in the year 2008. Following this policy, the government has asked the local self-governing bodies to implement palliative care throughout the state and has earmarked the required financial outlay, and has also made required medical professionals available. The Kerala government has brought in this programme under the National Rural Health Mission, a central government-sponsored health scheme. In most of the places, the government-sponsored palliative care runs in parallel to the community-initiated palliative care clinics, thereby ensuring care and reach of the programme. Similarly, several palliative clinics in Malappuram district have extended service to mentally challenged patients and those suffering from renal failure and require constant dialysis. Community participation in these attempts were also overwhelming in terms of voluntarism and financial contribution, forcing the government to adopt these programmes into the official structure.

Islamic reform in Kerala

Though there is no unanimity among historians regarding the exact period when Islam reached Kerala, there is more or less an agreement that there was a significant presence of Islam by the ninth century (Miller 1976; Dale 1980; Kunju 1995). The spread of Islam in Kerala was through trade by Arab traders and gradual conversion of local populations. Today, Muslims constitute roughly 25 per cent of Kerala's population and the majority of them are concentrated in the northern part of the state, especially in Kozhikode and Malappuram. Kerala Muslims are predominantly Sunnis, following the Shafi'i school of theology. The era of reformism started among the Muslim community in the first half of the twentieth century, spearheaded in India initially by the Nadwatul Mujahideen or commonly known as Mujahid, a Salafist group, and later

by Jamaat-e-Islami, the organisation founded by Abul ala Maududi. The constant reformist campaign against so-called "un-Islamic" practices followed by traditionalist Muslims has given rise to fragmentation of community identity and its crystallisation around organisational lines. In the Kerala context, both traditionalists and reformers are Sunnis, though the term is now used to indicate the former to distinguish them from the reformist groups such as Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami. Both traditionalist Sunnis as well as the Mujahid witnessed splits in their organisations Samasta Kerala Jamiyyatul Ulema. The Sunni organisation split in the early 1980s and the factions are known as EK Aboobakkar Sunnis and AP Aboobakkar Sunnis, while the 2002 split in Mujahid resulted in two factions, one led by AP Abdul Kader Moulavi and the other group led by Dr Hussain Madavoor. These distinctions along the lines of religious orientation have pervaded the everyday lives of Muslims in Kerala who are forced to affiliate themselves with any one of these organisations, each of which has its own mosques, madrasas, youth and student's wings, publications, and other propaganda mechanisms.

As mentioned earlier, the Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami organisations represent the modernist turn in Islamic theology. Supporters of these organisations have vehemently criticised traditionalist Sunnis for their theological "aberrations" and "un-Islamic beliefs." Mujahid leaders emphasised the need for secular education and established a number of modern educational institutions that paved the way for educational advancements of Muslims in Malabar and this was in stark contrast with the traditionalist Sunni organisations who opposed English education in the early decades of the twentieth century. Reform-oriented Kerala Muslims, by contrast, present their view of a "true" Islam that is both grounded in the teachings of scripture, and consonant with the values of modernity. The reform attempts by these organisations could, therefore, resolve a fundamental challenge by reshaping Islamic religion in accordance with the demands of modernity. Observers of Kerala reformism have stated that irrespective of the initial opposition, "traditionalist" Sunni organisations were also constrained to articulate their "traditionalist" position within the overarching processes of modernity (Osella and Osella 2008).

The Mujahid movement is one of the most influential reformist movements in Kerala. It has played a fundamental role in the inception and successful functioning of the palliative care movement in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts. The fact that the Mujahid movement ventured into the field of palliative care is reflective of the distinct nature of Islamic activism in Kerala. This initiative is also shaped by its specific theological

orientation as well as the unique positioning within the overall context of the socio-religious reform movement in Kerala. The Mujahid movement emerged in Kerala in the mid-1920s, during the aftermath of the Mappila rebellion[7] that shook the very foundation of Muslim society in Kerala.[8] The Mujahid movement's agenda was inspired by the teaching of Islamic reformist scholars.[9] Though it shared a number of essential features of broader Islamic reform platforms, including the condemnation of *shirk* (associating false gods or adding partners in worship with Allah), of *bida* (innovations in worship), and of *taqlid* (blind following) with a stress on the significance of *ijtihad* (rational interpretation), their specific theological orientation has been strongly influenced by the politics of social reformism of the early twentieth-century Kerala. The caste and religious reform movements linked the goals of progress and modernisation to the Western forms of education, employment and business, women's empowerment, and a rational critique of the superstitious religious beliefs (Fuller 1976; Osella and Osella 2000; 2011; Kodoth 2001; Devika 2002). As the Osellas describe it, reform, with its universalist and progressive flavour, is then both a symptom of modernity and – like modernity – is necessarily worked out as a project, which is simultaneously local and transnational (Osella and Osella 2008: 333).

Observers of Muslim politics like Hefner (2001) and Bayat (2002) have pointed out a decisive shift in the nature of Islamic activism in several Muslim majority societies. Based upon his work in Indonesia, Hefner described the emergence of a "civil Islam" in which equality, freedom, and democracy are seen not as uniquely Western values, but modern necessities compatible with, and even required by Muslim ideals. Bayat argues that in many parts of Muslim majority societies, Islamist organisations have gradually replaced the objective of usurping state power to implement Shariʿa and instead have turned their attention to activism revolving around issues of providing welfare and assistance to the needy. He also suggests that in the era of neoliberal globalisation, these organisations are competing with each other to provide social services and provisions, trying to fill the gap created by the retreating state. He indicates a shift from Islamist politics to personal piety and ethics, as these novel forms aim at larger goals of public morality and sociability (ibid.).[10]

It is in this context that novel areas of Islamic activism and the success story of palliative care need to be understood. The palliative care movement in Kerala has been hailed as one of the most successful initiatives in the field of palliative care in the developing world, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared it as a model worth emulating

(Stjernsward 2007). The first palliative care clinic was established in Kozhikode in 1993 by a non-governmental organisation, the Pain and Palliative Care Society (Rajagopal and Kumar 1999). Soon, the main protagonists realised that the most vital component for making the palliative care initiative successful was not the doctors or other medical professionals, but a group of active volunteers and genuine patronage by the local community. The attempt to involve the community in the palliative care initiative received a fillip with the initiation of a project known as the Neighbourhood Network in Palliative Care (NNPC) in Malappuram district. Under this programme, local volunteers were trained to identify terminally ill patients in their locality and provide necessary basic medical aid with the help of trained professionals. Dr Suresh Kumar, one of the key persons active in the NNPC initiative, argues that this initiative revolutionised the way in which palliative care was organised. The NNPC was an important factor in the success of the palliative care movement in Kerala. This community-led initiative replaced the previous hierarchical doctor-led structure in palliative care with a network of community, volunteer-led, autonomous initiatives (Kumar 2012).

The palliative care movement in Kerala is significant both for its reach and for the overwhelming community support it enjoys. It is estimated that out of the total 310 palliative clinics in the country, 250 are in Kerala. Almost 50 per cent of the terminally ill people in the state are covered under the palliative care scheme while the corresponding national figure is only 2 per cent (Paleri and Numpeli 2005). Kerala also designed the NNPC programme where volunteers from the neighbourhood are identified and trained in providing palliative care (Kumar and Mathew 2005).

The palliative care movement is highly successful in northern Kerala, especially in two districts *viz* Malappuram and Kozhikode. In Malappuram district, almost 70 per cent of the chronically ill people are covered under this initiative in comparison with the state average of 50 per cent (Vijay and Mukta 2009). More than 20,000 bedridden patients in the district are getting regular care at home through the local self-government-led home care programme with community participation. Similarly in Kozhikode district, nearly 1,000 volunteers visit almost 10,000 houses every week to attend to patients who are bedridden with cancer, stroke, and spinal injuries (ibid.). While Kozhikode has the highest number of palliative clinics (39), Malappuram district is placed second with 33 clinics and these numbers are much higher in comparison to the number of clinics in other districts of the state. These two districts

are also ahead of all others in collecting financial contribution from the community for palliative care.

The overwhelming success of palliative care movements in these two districts and in the northern Malabar region of the state has been heavily influenced by Islamic activism and charity. Prominent in these developments have been Muslim organisations, and particularly the Mujahids led by Dr Hussain Madavoor. The Mujahids have mobilised their organisational networks to support palliative care work, including the establishment of clinics in most parts of these districts. Jamaat-e-Islami has also ventured into palliative care, but on a more modest scale with a single clinic in Malappuram district. Though traditionalist Sunni organisations have not established their own clinics, they also encourage their members to support the initiatives of the palliative care movement. More detail on these developments is provided below.

Islamic activism and charity in palliative care

Leaders of the Mujahid movement, many of them medical doctors themselves, who were instrumental in establishing palliative clinics in the Malappuram district, recalled that venturing into palliative care was a natural progression of the social service activities of the Mujahid medical professionals during the late 1990s. These doctors used to organise free medical camps in Malappuram district during the early 1990s but were concerned about the short-term reach and limited impact of these medical camps. Meanwhile they were introduced to the palliative clinic in Kozhikode, which had been initiated by the Pain and Palliative Care Society in 1993. Inspired by this clinic the group sought to replicate the approach in other parts of the district. The decision to venture into palliative care was also a reflection of the ideological differences between the senior leaders and student leaders regarding the nature of Islamic activism. While some senior scholars were sceptical of the idea, the young leaders argued that Islamic activism should not be limited to preaching the tenets of Islam, but rather that Islam should be demonstrated through meaningful actions for the service of humanity. I met Dr Abdul Rahman, one of the founding figures of the palliative care movement in Kozhikode and a leader of the students' wing of the Mujahid movement during 1990s, in his office in December 2013 and he recounted this debate:

> During the early 1990s, we, the student leaders of ISM [Ithihadu Shubbanil Mujahideen, the Mujahid youth wing] were convinced that the true da'wa is not merely preaching the tenets of Islam to

> others and inviting them to Islam. It is not through such preaching that you attract them, rather through exemplary works in the name of Islam. We also argued that attracting others to Islam, though a fundamental component of da'wa, needs to be seen as a natural consequence of our true activism rather than an end in itself. That was the time when a few of us got involved in tree planting campaign in the state. So we had heated debates whether as an organisation we need to get involved in environmental protection or initiatives such as palliative care. At the end of it we could convince the senior leadership that the divine endowment of humans, the ability of rational thinking, needs to be put to work for the creation of a better world and hence it was officially decided to get involved in initiatives like palliative care and environmental issues.[11]

Once it was decided to venture into palliative care as a form of Islamic activism, Mujahid activists began setting up clinics in different locations of the district. Though the key initiators of the palliative care were Mujahid activists, they made it a point to present the initiative in a decidedly non-confessional manner, dissociated from an explicit Islamic discourse or identity. This was done to ensure strong participation which would cut across communal and religious lines. This theme was reiterated during numerous interviews with prominent office bearers at these clinics: palliative care activism was never used to promote ideologies of the Mujahid movement, or even of Islam more broadly. "We are dealing with the pain and agony of human beings and they look at us as saviours who provide some relief and it is against the tenet of Islam to use such occasions to spread the religion" says Mustafa, one of the active palliative volunteers in Pulikkal in an interview conducted in October 2013. At the same time, these same interviewees generally admitted that the movement was understood as a religious obligation which draws its inspiration from the teachings of Islam.

What is made explicit through interviews with several of the Mujahid leaders and activists is a humanitarian interpretation of Islamic values in the service of society. Islam does provide the inspiration and guides palliative voluntarism, and different individuals relate to this inspiration differently. For quite a few activists, taking care of the terminally ill amounts to fulfilling religious obligations that would ensure their place in heaven. For them, palliative care is an act of religious virtue that conforms to their idea of what it means to live the life of an ideal Muslim. Many also stated that they believe that their acts of service will be rewarded in the after-life. They point to verses in the Quran that ask

the believer whether they provided medicine to the sick and food to the hungry and also to scriptural assurances that if a believer shows mercy to fellow humans, he will himself be shown mercy by the Almighty.

The most remarkable idea regarding the inspiration for palliative voluntarism is a profound sense of obligation to the creator and its articulation through the service of the needy and the suffering. This argument was put forward to me by Muhammadali, popularly known as Ali Master, in an interview conducted in his residence in Areakode, Malappuram district, in June 2013. He is a Mujahid activist and is widely respected as an authority in the field of palliative care, given his leadership qualities and association with the movement since its inception. Ali Master explained that the Islamic inspiration for service in palliative care programmes is not simply a wish to reach heaven, but as a reflection of a profound sense of obligation as a human being to the creator. As the sole being created by God with discerning and rational faculties, palliative care provides him the platform to fulfil his fundamental obligation to the creator. These faculties demand a true believer to be sensitive to the pain and sufferings of people in the immediate surroundings and do whatever is possible to ameliorate that. For him, the fundamental demand of Islam is to have a compassionate heart and an urge to strive for a better world. Whether he would be rewarded in this world or in the after-life is not a matter of concern for him.

For many volunteers, interactions with the patients provide emotionally profound moments with deep religious implications. For most of them, a permanently bedridden person writhing in pain reflects the fundamental truth about human life, that of fragility and capriciousness. It exposes them to the bare human character, bereft of any pretexts, ideologies, or masks. Most of the volunteers have heart-wrenching stories to narrate. Basheer, the founding member of Nilambur palliative care clinic, one of the oldest in Kerala, narrated several such stories when I met him at the clinic in May 2012:

> I used to visit a terminally ill cancer patient very frequently and it was evident that more than medical care, what he needed was my presence and company. He used to tell me that he is indeed thankful to God for giving people like me to take care of him and he would always keep me in his prayers. This is a really touching moment that somebody on the deathbed is praying for you and you are all the more aware about the fragility of human life and your obligations towards God and fellow human beings.

Basheer also narrated stories of patients grabbing his hand and refusing to let him leave from their bedside, and stories of the deceased patient's family offering him the most important position during cremation prayer as a mark of respect and gratitude for the service rendered. Basheer says that these experiences are profoundly spiritual; they simultaneously make you humble and empowered. They can help a volunteer realise how feeble human life is as well as reveal how much difference someone can make in another person's life with just a few small acts of compassion.

While Mujahid activists are acutely aware of the religious character of their work and formal involvement of their organisation in palliative clinics, they make it a point to avoid an explicit religious or organisational affiliation with the clinics. Mujahid leaders point out that the most significant reason for the success of palliative clinics in the Malabar region is the involvement of people from all sections of society, and hence projecting an unambiguous Mujahid or Muslim character would be detrimental to this success. For them, the success of a palliative clinic does not lie in community participation but rather in community ownership, and if religious identities are brought to the fore, this community ownership will be in peril. The leadership emphasised the point that in many places, Mujahid volunteers might have initiated the clinic, but it was strengthened and maintained by all. Ali Master, who is often invited by other palliative clinics to provide training and guidance told me that "in many places our initial meetings with Mujahid activist were held in our mosque, but then we insist that subsequent meeting are held in secular places. Similarly we just name these clinics simply as palliative clinics of a given place, never name with any words or symbols signifying religious or other meaning."

One of the often-heard refrains of the palliative care volunteers is that money is never a constraint for the activities of the clinic as the community is more than willing to donate out of a conviction that the clinics carry out noble and worthy work. The clinics and volunteers have succeeded in creating so much goodwill among the local population that they are always willing to contribute to this initiative. The inclusive nature of palliative clinics, non-discrimination on religious or caste lines in providing care and support to patients, deliberate downplay of religious identities and symbolisms, and above all the commitment and sincerity of the volunteers have succeeded in providing much legitimacy and patronage to these clinics and the activists. These clinics function with the support of "micro-funding," and money is mobilised from the community on a continuous basis. Several innovative methods are employed to collect money from the community. Small collection boxes

with an appeal to donate to palliative clinics are ubiquitous on the cash tables of most of the shops in Malabar region and they constitute one of the steady sources of income to the clinics. A second form of financial mobilisation is to have a list of contributors including individuals and institutions that offer a fixed monthly donation to the clinic, and in a typical palliative clinic individual monthly donation varies from INR 10 to INR 3,000. Similarly, schools, colleges, small industries, bus operators, auto rickshaw drivers, banks, and others also contribute this monthly donation, providing a constant flow of income.

The most significant forms of financial mobilisation take place during two occasions, one on the World Palliative Care Day, commemorated on 15 January every year, and the other in the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. During the World Palliative Care Day, every palliative clinic organises extensive volunteer squads to visit household, shops, and other institutions within its reach and collect money and this turns out to be a significant sum for each clinic. Similarly, the lion's share of financial contribution is collected during the month of Ramadan, through individual contributions or through the organised *zakat* (almsgiving) committees. In addition, all Muslim mosques undertake special collection drives immediately after the Friday prayer during Ramadan month, thus collecting a significant sum. For example, in Pulikkal palliative care clinic, one of the most active palliative clinics in Malappuram district, the total income for the year 2011–2012 was USD 34,020 out of which the collection during palliative care day yielded USD 4,384 and Ramadan collection USD 14,675. The remaining money was collected through monthly collections and through strategically placed donation boxes. The different local self-governing bodies of the state donated medicines worth USD 7,000.

Palliative care has outgrown its initial purpose of providing care to the terminally ill and has extended itself to providing a social safety net, albeit in a limited way. All palliative clinics have classified beneficiaries on the basis of their economic condition into very poor, poor, middle class, and rich, and offer their services accordingly. While the wealthy and middle class are charged for equipment and medicine, the poor and very poor are provided care free of charge. In addition, those identified as very poor families are provided with food grains, provisions, and other essential items for their subsistence, as they can buy these items from designated shops and the palliative care clinic pays the bill at the end of every month. Likewise, at the time of festivals, food kits and dress materials are distributed among these families. For example, in 2012–2013, Pulikkal palliative care clinic distributed 31 festival kits to the very poor families on the occasions of Vishu, a Hindu festival,

and Ramadan. Notebooks, pens, textbooks, umbrellas, and other useful items are supplied at the beginning of the school year to children from these families.

As indicated above, most of the financial contribution for the palliative clinics is collected in the month of Ramadan from individual contributors and mosques. The concept of *zakat* underlies this heightened period of charitable giving. The palliative care movement makes use of myriad forms of *zakat* and other charitable donations (*sadaqa*) to ensure sufficient funding. Reformist organisations including Mujahid have succeeded in setting up centralised *zakat* committees and even the traditionalist Sunnis have begun to follow suit. The reformist organisations argue that *zakat* committees ensure transparency, fairness, anonymity, and dignity of the receiver. They point out that quite often individual *zakat* giving has vestiges of feudal value system and the donor expects obeisance from the receiver. On the other hand, the *zakat* committees ensure an impersonal and just system of distribution where the recipient can receive alms without any sense of humiliation or obligation. It is interesting to note that while traditionalists argue that *zakat* can be given only to Muslims, reformists including Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami argue that non-Muslims and initiatives like palliative care are rightful recipients of *zakat*. Ali Master, one of the main volunteers and an ideologue of the Mujahid movement, pointed to a well-known Quranic verse on *zakat* (9.60), and asked me to show him where it was mentioned that alms could be given only to Muslims. According to him, this verse makes clear that the rightful recipients of *zakat* include all who are poor, needy, and captives among other categories. But none of these indicate a differentiation on the basis of whether the recipient is a Muslim or not. A bedridden patient who is unable to move or a terminally ill patient is, for Ali Master, a captive in every sense of the word and thus is a rightful recipient of zakat. "Human beings are given rationality by God almighty not to mechanically follow divine revelations, but to extend and interpret them for the greater service of human beings" he asserts.[12]

Beyond the binaries of religious and secular

The palliative care initiative in Kerala poses some interesting challenges to a binary perspective on religious-secular social activism. Here, as we have seen, the Mujahid as an avowedly religious organisation with scripturalist orientation and reformist zeal has consciously adopted humanitarian activity within an astute secular framework for furthering their religious and spiritual calling. Their palliative care work is, moreover, not

merely an end in itself, but they also follow rigorous secular modalities and an all-inclusive character in its execution. It is also evident that they have succeeded in this attempt, given the overwhelming support of the people from across the community. For the Mujahids, palliative care is an ideal way to fulfil their religious obligation, yet they vouch by the secular character of its execution and implementation. It is amply clear that the activism inspired by religion and charity conceived as religious obligation is channelled through secular modalities for serving the needy unmindful of their religious affiliation. Needless to say, the very identification of such a site for religious activism and a non-religious approach in its execution explains the specific theological orientation and ideological influences of the local context. Dr Abdul Rahman is emphatic when he argues that the idea of working for the ill and providing care for people irrespective of religious affiliation is specifically derived from Quran. He also asserts that the organisation is providing alms to non-Muslims because it is specifically mentioned in the Quran. "If it were not, if it were mentioned in the Quran that *zakat* is to be given only to Muslims, we would have followed it without a second thought" he asserts.

At the same time, Ali Master places these initiatives and specific form of activism within the broader socio-political canvas of Kerala. He admits that the specific theological interpretation of the organisation and the reformist and progressive zeal must have been influenced by the local history of Kerala marked by social movements aimed at equality and justice, spearheaded by both communist and socio-religious movements: "I am sure that as an organization aimed at building a mass base, Mujahid leaders have definitely been influenced by the success of communist parties in Kerala." Along with the ideological base, these parties directly got involved into the everyday problems of ordinary people and gained their acceptance through hard work and sacrifice. The non-partisan approach of the communist party and their commitment to the downtrodden irrespective of caste or religious affiliations are important lessons for us as well."

Indian forms of secularism that accept the legitimacy of religious ideas and their mobilisation for social projects have provided ample space for the articulation of religion in the public sphere. The composition of the public sphere in Kerala is an amalgamation of numerous groupings bonded by affiliations stemming from caste, religion, and ethnicity, leaving very little space for truly non-religious, rational organisations. These religious articulations are welcomed by citizens as well as by the state as long as they are not seen as disturbing the communal harmony of the society or directly challenging the state authority. The Mujahid

movement has successfully entered into such space provided by the state and civil society and has succeeded in presenting palliative care as a valuable site for religious activism. Non-Mujahid members of the palliative clinics, both Muslim and others, though identifying the initiative as led by the Mujahid, are comfortable in working with them as long as the leadership functions within a non-partisan and inclusive framework. Abdul Gafoor, an active volunteer with the Pulikkal palliative clinic refuses to identify himself with any Muslim organisation, makes it clear that he is least interested in the sectarian debates among Kerala Muslims, and asserts that his religious affiliation is immaterial. "For me it does not matter whether the clinic is run mainly by Mujahid or any other groups, what is important for me is that they understand the suffering of the patients and do sincere work and in that respect, I am really happy with the functioning of Pulikkal clinic." Quite often, activities like palliative care by Mujahid are widely seen by Muslim leaders as a desirable model worthy to be emulated by other organisations. Especially given the Indian socio-political context where Muslim organisations are constantly watched for their credentials and loyalties, the initiative of palliative care is a worthy example of "noble Islamic activism." For the Mujahid, this discourse is important too, because their activities portray a true picture of Islam and not its distortions reflected through violence, hatred, and fundamentalism.

Conclusion

For the terminally ill patients of Kerala who receive medical and financial help from the palliative care clinics, these services represent the love and compassion of the community. The expansion of these clinics in terms of their reach and nature of activities – ultimately serving as a social security net – is widely considered to be a successful community-initiated welfare measure in the state. Once we contextualise the socio-political and religious context, it is evident that models such as palliative care clinics are the products of a particular historic juncture produced by increased religious activism directed at social and civil spheres, a retracting welfare state in a neoliberal global context.

The palliative care experience also stands testimony to the myriad ways in which notions of activism and charity are conceived and practiced among different Muslim communities while they are subjected to enormous theological as well as organisational contestations. Reformist orientation and the peculiarities of a multi-religious social context in a secular state have inspired the Mujahid religious activism to emerge in

a visibly secular fashion, providing palliative care and other services to the needy, irrespective of religious affiliation. The enormous success of this movement and the overwhelming support from the community in terms of material resources as well as volunteerism indicate the legitimacy achieved by this model in the state and, needless to say, this legitimacy is heavily dependent on the secular character of this activism, albeit inspired by religious belief.

The palliative care movement in Kerala is also indicative of the larger transformations happening in the field of state–civil society relationship in Kerala. The much-acclaimed Kerala model of development heavily depended on powerful mobilisation by political and civil society organisations demanding welfarist measures, which was met by a positive response from the state with a slew of welfare policies and related actions. The character of political mobilisation has perceptibly changed in the post-1990s' neoliberal context where civil society mobilisations and movements are assuming much vigour and garnering popular support against a dwindling traditional left politics. The democratic decentralisation also facilitated the active involvement of civil society organisations and local community in the formulation and implementation of welfare measures at the local level. These civil society organisations, mostly organised on the basis of caste and religion are assuming greater visibility as well as legitimacy and are now important players in the local level welfare policies and programmes.

The palliative care movement and the story of Muslim activism and charity indicate the larger picture of transformation as well as revitalisation of religious civil society in the changing global context. The character of religious activism is undergoing substantial transformations and the field of development has emerged as a major site where competing notions of activism and charity are at play. Needless to say, the emergence of neoliberalism as the most dominant economic model has significantly fuelled this process as the void left by the shrinking welfare state is the most fertile ground for the welfarist-oriented religious activism across the globe.

Notes

1 Qualitative research was conducted at various palliative clinics in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts in Kerala between March 2012 and December 2013. Research included interviews with clinic office bearers and volunteers.
2 The population of Kerala is 33 million with 54 per cent identified as Hindu, 19 per cent as Christian, and 25 per cent as Muslim according to 2001 census.

The latest census conducted in 2011 has not yet released the religious composition of the population.

3 The first elected state government in Kerala in 1957 was led by the Communist Party and since the 1980s communist-led coalitions have assumed power in practically every alternate election in the state.

4 Kerala had an official per capita income of USD 180 in 1993 compared with the total for India of USD 300 but its social indicators included an adult literacy rate of 91 per cent (all India was 48 per cent), life expectancy of 69 years for men and 73 years for women, (all India averaged 61), an infant mortality of 13 per 1,000 (all India rate of 80), and birth rate of 17 per 1,000 (all India rate 29) (Franke and Chasin 1997). The sex ratio in Kerala is favourable to females, in that it has a higher proportion of women than many other parts of India. According to 1991 census, Kerala had 1,036 women for every 1,000 men while the corresponding national figure was only 937.

5 Kerala was formed in 1956 with the merging of Malabar district, the *taluk* (administrative district) of Kasargod, and Cochin-Travancore, which had been separate provinces during the colonial era.

6 The year 2002 witnessed large-scale violence against Muslims in the Gujarat state of India in which more than a thousand Muslims were killed. Besides the scale of violence, what made this incident more gruesome was the tacit support of the state governed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, in executing the pogrom.

7 The Mappila rebellion refers to a series of armed conflicts of Muslim peasantry with Hindu landlords and the British army since the latter half of the nineteenth century that culminated in a bloody standoff in 1921 where hundreds of Muslim rebels and British soldiers were killed.

8 Sayyid Sanaulla Makthi Thangal (1847–1912), Chalilakathu Kunjahammad Haji (d 1919), and Shaik Muhammad Mahinhamadani Thangal (d 1922) are widely considered as the forerunners of the reformist movement in Kerala. The *Muslim Aikya Sangham* that was started in 1924 by these leaders is the forerunner of Kerala Nadwat-ul-Mujahideen (KNM), widely known as the Mujahid movement in the state.

9 These scholars include Ibn Taimiyah (1262–1327), Shah Waliyullah (1702–1763), Mohammad ibn Abdul Wahaab (1703–1792), Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), and Muhammad Abdu (1849–1905).

10 The intricate relationships between neoliberal policies and processes of globalisation and the reinvigoration of civil society organisations have been analysed by several scholars (Sullivan 1994; Bayat 2002; Clark 2004; Bruno De Cordier 2010).

11 This difference in opinion between the young leaders of Mujahid who argued for a broader interpretation of da'wa and the senior leadership who were not keen on such a move was reflected in the split in organisation in 2002 as the young leaders joined under the leadership of Dr Hussain Madavoor and broke away from the parent organisation.

12 Though Sura 9.60 specifies eight permitted categories of *zakat*, scholars have pointed out that there are considerable divergence regarding the interpretation of these categories among Muslim communities. See, for example, Benthall (1999) and Singer (2008).

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5

Buddhist Cosmopolitan Ethics and Transnational Secular Humanitarianism in Sri Lanka

Nalika Gajaweera

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine humanitarianism against the larger socio-political history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, specifically focusing on the way Buddhism has been historically interwoven with the complexities of the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalistic project. The exclusionary politics of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism – an ideology that defines the nation as belonging to the ethnic majority of Sinhalese, who in turn are ennobled to preserve, defend, and promote Buddhism – has played a critical role in sowing the seeds for civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (otherwise known as the Tigers). In the colonial and post-colonial periods, proponents of nationalistically oriented Buddhist activism have – to varying extents – perceived minority ethnic and religious communities as a "foreign" presence that threatens the integrity of a unified Sinhalese Buddhist polity, and have devised strategies for fortifying the nation from such perceived threats. Crucially, this entailed fostering a sense of social responsibility amongst urban Sinhalese Buddhists to protect Buddhist cultural institutions from perceived disintegration and to advocate Buddhism as an indigenous cultural model and ethical code for social progress. In this context, "socially engaged Buddhism" emerged in Sri Lanka as a particular political mode for propelling Sinhalese Buddhists to participate in advancing the social welfare of the Buddhist populace, particularly of the rural poor.

This study is based on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork that I carried out with the non-governmental organisation called the Foundation of Goodness based in southern coastal Sri Lanka. A transnationally funded local NGO performing humanitarian relief and reconstruction work in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the Foundation

of Goodness (henceforth called the "Foundation") was clearly a product of this legacy of socially engaged Buddhism. The NGO's management, many of whom identified themselves as Sinhalese Buddhists, drew upon Buddhist ethical principles to guide their humanitarian and development work. The Foundation, however, also had a markedly different approach; they sought to efface the ethnic and religious exclusivity of socially engaged Buddhism. I argue that in lieu of the nationalistically oriented Buddhist activism, Buddhism was deployed by the Foundation as a universal humanistic ethic that held the promise of transcending social and geographical borders. Whilst they unmoored Buddhism from its localised attachment to the exclusionary politics of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, the Foundation actively reinterpreted Buddhism as a cosmopolitan ethic. Instead of being closed off to influences from the foreign, the Foundation embraced them. Indeed, they engaged a wide range of donors, volunteers, and partners from the international community and the Sri Lankan diaspora while similarly encouraging the participation of local minorities in the group's humanitarian efforts.

This "cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic," as I call it, also enabled the Foundation to claim to help Tamil victims of war living in northern Sri Lanka. By negotiating a cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic that encouraged these international and intranational connections, the organisation's members aimed to bridge and negotiate differences across ethnic, religious, and nationalistic affiliation. In doing so, they strove to situate the organisation as belonging to the broader transnational network of humanitarianism. In the context of the post-war period in Sri Lanka, I contend that these forms of cosmopolitan Buddhist ethics and humanitarian work challenged the resurgence of a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism that justifies the marginalisation of minorities to preserve the privileged status of Sinhalese Buddhists.

This chapter contributes to an emerging body of literature in anthropology and international relations that examines the role of religion in humanitarianism. Several recent studies under this rubric problematise the often taken-for-granted distinctions between secular and faith-based forms of humanitarian work (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2009; Bornstein and Redfield 2011; Lynch 2011; Paras and Stein 2012). A dominant understanding of what has been called "secular humanitarianism" is that it is founded on a cosmopolitan ethic based on liberal Enlightenment values that are motivated by principles such as human equality, individual rights, and reason. "Faith-based humanitarianism," on the other hand, is often regarded as an ethic of care founded on religious principles of belief, spiritual motivation,

and the sacred (Buss and Herman 2003; Ferris 2005; Hefferan 2007). Underlying these common constructions of modern humanitarian activity as either inherently religious or inherently secular are modernist assumptions about the binary nature of the secular and the religious (Casanova 1994; Asad 2003; Taylor 2009).

Yet, the very modernist conception of framing the "secular" as grounded in the empirical and the rational, and thus as distant or separate from the "religious" which is conceived as the belief in the "transcendent" is genealogically linked to post-Reformation European history and Enlightenment ideologies of reason (Asad 1993; Hurd 2009). According to this classic Protestant-inflected secularisation thesis, religious beliefs, practices, and institutions oriented around the transcendent or the supernatural were once expelled from the public sphere of politics, after which they were relegated to the private sphere to be practiced as individual belief or faith (Bellah 1991). Since this particular Christian-centric assumption about what constitutes the religious has powerfully shaped our analytical conceptions of the "secular" (Taylor 2009), it is important to specify how many of the ethical discourses, forms, and institutional processes that are assumed to be secular in the fields of humanitarianism and development – such as ideas of "empowerment," or the "sacralization of life and the valorization of suffering" found in the development and humanitarianism discourses – could also arguably be construed as Protestant in character (Fassin 2012: 249; see Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008).

In the context of studying humanitarianism, therefore, taking the secular and the religious as separate spheres can lead to an all too narrow framing of the analytical questions we ask. As Michael Barnett and Janice Stein have noted, questions such as "what *difference* does religion make?" presuppose that what is identified as "secular humanitarianism" is the benchmark and religion is the deviating factor that influences this given secular space (Barnett and Stein 2012: 22). Indeed, this kind of question illustrates an analytical tendency to view religion as one thing that all societies have in common and that it inevitably gets mixed and stirred into the "secular" context (Hurd 2009). Instead, we may consider how categories of the religious and the secular are "produced and positioned in relation to each other in different social contexts with different ends" (Hirschkind and Larkin 2008: 2; see also Asad 2003; Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008). As Cecelia Lynch problematises in her work on Islamic and Christian faith-based humanitarian organisations, we may alternately want to ask: "what do claims about the religious and the secular accomplish when people employ them to describe the

ethical imperatives that compel them to act?" (Lynch 2011: 207; see also Bornstein 2012; Redfield 2012).

In exploring the formation of this cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic, this chapter considers how humanitarian practice emerges as a central component of what scholars and practitioners identify as a cosmopolitan ethic. Conventionally, humanitarianism is understood as the concern for the "needs of strangers," the human moral imperative to promote and improve the welfare of others (Ignatieff 1984; Rieff 2003). Humanitarianism is thus generally understood as an expression of the liberal ethos that humans ought to care for others irrespective of differences because of their universally shared humanity. My approach to understanding the relationship between cosmopolitanism and humanitarianism in the context of Buddhist NGO work builds on scholarship that questions the constructedness of cosmopolitanism as a universalising category (Rofel 2007; Zhan 2009), and those that underscore the epistemological necessity of anthropologically investigating universals as particularities engaged and emergent in specific contexts (Tsing 2005). Thus rather than implicitly accepting cosmopolitanism as the driving force behind humanitarianism, in what follows, I address how claims to a universalistic Buddhist cosmopolitan ethic are made and produced through a situated engagement with transnational humanitarian networks, as well as how this relates to particular local strategies to uncouple Buddhism from its associations to hegemonic Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka.

In what follows, I examine the multivalent positions that Buddhism occupies in contemporary Sri Lanka. I contend that in order to understand the particular position in which Buddhism in post-war Sri Lanka finds itself, a socio-historically situated understanding of Buddhist modernism is required with an emphasis on its colonial history. Thus I begin by tracing the historical and political processes of colonial and post-colonial modernity which laid the groundwork for promoting Buddhism as a cohesive religious ideology, an expression of social activism, and a path towards reform. I show how in post-colonial Sri Lanka, this particular form of Buddhist modernism has most significantly shaped the way Buddhism has been deployed as a model of socially engaged Buddhism invoked and reworked for contemporary state- and non-state-led development projects (Tennekoon 1988; Brow 1990; Ruwanpura and Hollenbach 2013), and attend to the dynamics of Buddhism in contemporary Sri Lankan society in both nationalistic and cosmopolitan projects. I explicate these more socially engaged manifestations of Buddhism in the activities of contemporary social activists and their

humanitarian projects in the post-tsunami and post-war context by drawing on my ethnographic experience with the Foundation.

Buddhism and modernity in colonial Sri Lanka

During the turn of the nineteenth century, and half way through Britain's colonial occupation of Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), Theravada Buddhism underwent a revival in its encounter with and resistance to Christian missionaries and the colonial state (Harris 2006).[1] Specifically, I refer to the efforts made by Buddhist monks and their lay patrons of the urban elite colonial classes to revitalise Buddhism on the island to what they perceived as its pre-colonial glory.

The British had been the first European power to gain control of the entire island in 1815 when they defeated the kingdom of Kandy. The implications of this event for the role of Buddhism and religion in the country were two-fold. First, the removal of the last Kandyan King meant an absence of a local Buddhist monarch to resolve disagreements within the local Buddhist monastic community (*sasana*) and a weakening of the traditional Buddhist polity – that centred around the ideal Buddhist king (*dhammaraja*) – through the ending of monarchic patronage to the Buddhist sasana (Malalgoda 1976). Second, although the British colonial administration was not formally invested in implementing the Anglican Church or enforcing conversion, unlike the previous rule of the Portuguese and the Dutch, its religious neutrality rendered the public sphere open to Christian missionary activities, resulting in a proliferation of Christian churches, schools, and printing presses that attacked Buddhist texts and practices (Van der Veer 2002).

This new atmosphere of collective action gave a new class of indigenous elites (working alongside Buddhist monks who played the role of advisors to the laity) access to new venues of social activism and political power (see Schober 2011, for similar effects that the separation of politics from religious authority has in colonial Burma). Secularisation offered institutions that constituted the public sphere of modern civil society (Scott 1996). Much of this activism took shape as a form of resistance to the colonial state which was perceived as fundamentally Christian despite its efforts at neutrality. This included the emergence of new forms of lay and monastic Sinhalese Buddhist activism and organisations which competed with Christian forms of organisation. In their view, they were "reviving the true Buddhist and Buddhist Sinhala culture that had been corrupted by outside influences" (Seneviratne 1999: 26).

Scholars of colonial Buddhism in Sri Lanka such as Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere (1988) have coined the term "Protestant Buddhism" to provocatively refer to these changes brought about by colonial modernity (Obeyesekere 1970; Malalgoda 1976; Bond 1988), arguing that modern Buddhism was a particular recent manifestation of Theravada Buddhism which emerged in the colonial era in dynamic relation to Protestant Christianity, assuming salient characteristics of the Christianity that it was resisting. Other scholars have similarly illustrated attempts made by Buddhist reformers of the time, to maintain the path of the religious life as an individualised philosophical guide to life that was relevant to the here and now (Tambiah 1968). This emphasis on cultivating one's own religiosity through the internalisation of teachings and ethical precepts of Buddhist scripture was regarded as part of the Sinhalese Buddhist lifestyle, one not limited only to the monastic order but also a discipline for the lay religious person.

More recently, scholars of Buddhist history have problematised the concepts of Protestant Buddhism. Anne Blackburn (2010) has argued that this "historically ironic vision of anti-colonial and anti-Christian activity articulated through the discursive and institutional forms of the colonizer, and of the transformation of Lankan Buddhism by global processes" leaves little analytical space for what Charles Hallisey (1994) describes as the "local achievements" of those Buddhists. This alternative perspective broadens our understanding of changes occurring in the social world of Sinhalese Buddhists, helping to show how pre-colonial logics and techniques were being deployed simultaneously with new strategies and discourses in the service of anti-colonial and anti-Christian Buddhist activism.

These debates about the historical trajectory of Lankan Buddhism during colonial modernity in many ways also parallel recent debates in the study of Christianity. As Pamela Klassen (2011) has suggested in her incisive analysis of the historical trajectories of twentieth-century liberal Protestantism in relation to health and medicine, a dominant account of twentieth-century liberal Protestantism has been to characterise it as succumbing to forces of secularisation, wherein "traditional" Christian disciplines of self have been replaced with liberal individualism. Yet as Klassen and many others have argued, this sharp critique of liberalism has caricatured liberalism as anti-traditional, anti-supernatural, and is based on an over-simplified ideal of the liberal subject. This ideal-type conception of liberal Protestantism, however, leaves little room to understand how its meaning has changed across time and how those who live under its name have enacted their faith. Yet, instead of

foregoing the term "liberalism" altogether, Klassen argues for its continued, if cautious, use. This, she argues, entails "considering liberal Protestantism not as a trope but as a practice," a position that "reveals a challenging array of convictions and inconsistencies, solidarities and exclusions that have characterised the lives and communities of men and women who have taken both the advancement and the taming of modernity as their task" (2011: xviii).

In placing my analysis alongside the "Protestant Buddhism" debate, I find Klassen's efforts in deepening the analytical valence of the idea of "Protestant" in terms of practice rather than trope helpful in thinking about the messiness of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Buddhist activist life and social practice. Far from having a secularising influence on Sinhalese sociality then, the modernising project of the colonial State produced new, complex, and unexpected terrain upon which modern Buddhism emerged as a religion for a wide variety of social activist practices. That is, while Buddhism was being interiorised in some quarters, as helping the individual progress along the path of virtue, it was also being deployed as a way to mobilise the Sinhalese Buddhist populace to engage in the newly emergent public sphere.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the Buddhist revivalists were not alone in this practice of cultural translation, as a whole retinue of Orientalists, Theosophists, and European philologists took part in the translation of the Buddhist canon and Pali commentaries into English. The texts that they produced helped shape and further mobilise the homespun Buddhist revivalists' movement in Sri Lanka. The Buddhism that emerged in colonial Ceylon was therefore neither the creation of the East nor the West (the Orient or the Orientalists) but rather was produced through a form of "intercultural mimesis" between the two (Hallisey 1995; see also Blackburn 2001; Harris 2006). Indeed, like the Buddhist humanitarians of today who engage with cosmopolitan ideals of humanitarianism, early Buddhist revivalists saw in the Protestant ethic of their colonial rulers and their theosophical counterparts what, following Vincent Rafael (2005), may be called the "promise of the foreign." Local Buddhist revivalists' found in the discourses a means for translating Theravada Buddhist ideas as a properly modern world-affirming religious ethic.

In colonial Ceylon, Buddhist scripture was thus employed by revivalists like Dharmapala to realise different political, social, and spiritual aspirations hitherto not imaginable (Scott 1996). This ethic would lay the seeds for an exclusivist Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist identity, in which the nation was conceived as "*dhammadipa*" – *dhamma* (teaching of the

Buddha), *dipa* (island) – and it was the sacred duty of the Sinhalese to protect and fortify the nation. To this end, revivalists like Dharmapala felt that "reestablishing Buddhism and Buddhist values would enable the Sinhalese to re-establish the glorious civilization of Buddhist antiquity, where 'free from foreign influences . . . [and] with the word of Buddha as the guiding light' the Sinhalese people enjoyed happiness and prosperity" (Dharmapala quoted in Bond 1996: 124). It was a form of nationalist thinking that projected backward into utopian history and forward into the utopian future, towards a Sinhalese "righteous society" (Tambiah 1992). In spearheading a movement for Sinhalese to engage more actively in resisting Christian influences, Buddhist revivalists established Buddhist social service agencies like the Young Men's Buddhist Association, schools, universities, hospitals, and Buddhist newspaper publication. These new public institutions were often philanthropically sponsored by the burgeoning class of the Sinhalese Buddhist colonial elite (Jayawardena 1995), and were meant to challenge what was conceived as the hegemonic influence of the foreign colonial administration and the Christian missionaries. They constituted the incipient foundations for the project of "socially engaged Buddhism" in Sri Lanka that laid the groundwork for the formation of a religious identity, which in the wake of independence in 1948 became the basis for Sinhalese Buddhists to rally nationalist fervour as defenders of the "Buddhist nation"; to fortify the nation from insidious entities thought to be encroaching upon the intrinsic merits of a unified Sinhalese Buddhist polity (Berkwitz 2008).

However, alongside these more Sinhalese Buddhist centrist conceptions of nation-building, the development of Buddhism through the colonial era also helped introduce Buddhism to the world as a modern, world-affirming religion championing the humanistic values of the Enlightenment. It was one that could be invoked to mobilise nation-building projects within Sri Lanka and across Southeast Asia in the form of "socially engaged Buddhism" (Queen and King 1996). For example, the Sarvodaya Movement which was founded in the 1950s by social activist and charismatic leader A. T. Ariyaratne aimed to "fashion a Buddhist social and economic ethic for a modern Sri Lankan society" that "inculcates in the laity a sense of Buddhist work for the welfare of others by the donation of selfless labor" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 244–245; see also Bond 2004). Building upon the influences of Buddhist revivalist predecessors, the philosophical principles of A.T Ariyaratne's social work movement were drawn from both Buddhist notions of "compassion" and "loving-kindness," as well as the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya. Derived from the Sanskrit term referring to the "welfare of all," Gandhi

coined the term "Sarvodaya" to fashion an Indian society based on an idea of "social upliftment, economic emancipation and moral resurrection of all" (Rath 2010). A. T. Ariyaratne, working in the post-independence context of Sri Lanka, capitalised on the national rhetoric of serving the people by initiating work camps (*shramadåna* – that literally means "the gift of labour") with students building wells, schools, damaged roofs, and roads for rural communities. He drew on ideas presented by Dharmapala and his Buddhist conceptions of "righteous society," but he went "far beyond Dharmapala in being able to consolidate, systematise, present, and then manifest these ideas in concrete social, not political, action" (Watts 2011: 7). Also, unlike other contemporary Buddhist social reformers with a more exclusivist Sinhalese Buddhist agenda, Sarvodaya was actively involved in Tamil and indigenous Vadda communities, "translat[ing] its Buddhist ideology into a non-sectarian ideology stressing 'traditional values'" (Bond 1996: 136). A. T. Ariyaratne's "ideas were more closely aligned with the welfare ethics of the Ashokan empire and the participatory and democratic ethics of the republican congresses of the Buddha's day rather than the nationalistic values of the ancient Sinhala monarchies" (Watts 2011: 7). Nevertheless, in "appealing to the notion of the island of Dhamma and attempting to emulate and develop values of a Buddhist past found in the Chronicle, Ariyaratne's Sarvodaya also reinforces a vision of the nation as fundamentally Buddhist" (Bond 1988: 268).

The specific trajectory of Buddhism in the colonial and post-colonial periods – which stresses the centrality of Buddhism as an impetus for human development – shapes contemporary projects such as the Foundation which seeks to mobilise Buddhism as a universal humanistic ethic of goodness, oriented towards human welfare and happiness. Yet, in the Foundation's efforts to construct a more universalistic Buddhist ethos for doing good, it also explicitly attempts to decouple Buddhism from dominant Sinhalese Buddhist ethnocentric nationalism. In the following, I address how NGO workers' claims to a particular Buddhist cosmopolitan transcendence are constructed and produced by their efforts at embracing figures of the non-Buddhist "foreign" whom they encounter through humanitarianism.

Cosmopolitan entanglements

In 1998, the founder of the Foundation, Kushil Gunasekera (henceforth referred to as KG), a prominent Sinhalese Buddhist businessperson and sports manager for the Sri Lankan cricketing legend Muttiah

Muralitharan, returned to his hometown in the southern coastal village of Seenigama to carry out social welfare programmes for the rural communities living in the immediate vicinity of his ancestral home. At first, the welfare programmes he organised were focused on providing maternal care, educational scholarships, and English and computer lessons for the youth. These programmes were run from his home with members of his family and professional networks philanthropically supporting his work. Later, these activities extended beyond the provision of development aid, into specific programmes oriented around the moral development of the beneficiaries, particularly through Buddhist religious gatherings and events. Primarily inspired by the Buddhist religiosity of KG, residents of Seenigama who were also Buddhists, volunteered their time to coordinate community events in the village, oriented around Buddhist traditions. Coordinated primarily by local residents, the volunteers mobilised the villagers to give alms to their Buddhist temples, organise Buddhist festivities, and encouraged the Seenigama community to be more involved in temple activities.

KG thus occasionally invited highly regarded Buddhist monks such as Venerable Pitiduwe Siridhamma to give sermons. These sermons, as I was told by village residents who attended, were centred on the laity's responsibilities to practice "good conduct" by adhering to the five Buddhist precepts and other moral Buddhist teachings on virtue, meditation, and giving. Indeed, the five precepts that constitute the basic code of ethics undertaken by lay devotees of the Theravada Buddhist tradition (abstaining from harming living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication) were popularised during the Buddhist revivalist era as part of the religious path of the lay Buddhist. They still remain the basic principles of Buddhism taught to children from a very young age and are recited as the fundamental tenets of being a good Buddhist while also being explicitly linked with socially engaged Buddhist development work. Lata, a long-term employee, described KG's vision for the village and the kinds of activities they carried out at the time in the following manner:

> You see, from the outset, Sir [KG] wanted to develop our attitude (*akalpaya wardana karanna*). We volunteered with a lot of commitment; we organised Dharma events, religious lectures, student scholarships. All these activities were done collectively. This was what is called "religious-social" (*agamika-samajika*) work.

In Lata's description, she referred to the kinds of programmes that they carried out in the village under the composite label of

agamika-samajika work, or religious-social work. Before the establishment of the Foundation as an informal community-based organisation, residents of Seenigama, she explained, encountered fewer opportunities to listen to and discuss specific Buddhist teachings. Although villagers did make *puja* (ritual offerings) to the Buddhist temple, and gave *dana* (alms) to Buddhist monks of the Seenigama temple, she pointed out that villagers showed little interest in the *Dhamma* (the Buddha's teachings). Hence, when Lata explained that KG sought to "develop our attitude," she alluded to how KG, through his social activism in the organisation, was also seeking to instil stronger Buddhist values in the community. This foregrounded ways in which their work had articulated with the widely practiced model of socially engaged Buddhism in Sri Lanka discussed previously. In such a model, rural poor were conceived as requiring "attitude development" through stronger attachment to values of self-reliance and through the promotion of a "righteous society." These programmes were intended to improve the material conditions of the rural poor while also contributing to moral regeneration of society in Buddhist ways (Bond 2004; Berkwitz 2008).

When I conducted research at the Foundation between 2009 and 2010, I saw little in the organisation that could characterise it as consisting of a "religious environment" (*daham* environment) as one long-time NGO worker described the Foundation's atmosphere during the time of inception. Although the organisation did still celebrate Buddhist holidays and some of its projects had Buddhist activities structured into them – for example, the Foundation's youth club the Children's Goodness Club performed almsgiving to the temple on Buddhist holidays – Buddhist religiosity was not overtly formalised into the Foundation's institutional framework. Indeed, the Foundation shared none of the common characteristics that would ordinarily denote a "faith-based organisation" (Ferris 2005; Barnett and Stein 2012). For instance, the Foundation was not formally affiliated with any Buddhist temples, Buddhist civic groups, or religious leaders, and its mission statement and foundational documents had no explicit reference to the Buddhist doctrine. Moreover, its board members were not selected on the basis of their religious beliefs. In fact, the organisation's trustees identified themselves as part of the Tamil Hindu, Sinhalese Catholic, and Sinhalese Buddhist communities. Indeed, the Foundation's staff openly embraced the entry of non-Buddhists Sri Lankans and foreigners into the organisation as staff, donors, and trustees, and it was almost entirely supported by individual philanthropy and aid from international secular charities.[2] Although Buddhist notions of *dana* (giving) were invoked by its Buddhist staff when they

casually described their work, this term did not enter the organisation's formal records of giving in a way Islamic organisations frequently use the term *zakat* (Khan 2012).

Visitors to the Foundation during the time I did my research also saw little of the kinds of agamika-samajika work that Lata described as prominently featured in the work carried out by the Foundation during its inception. Instead, they encountered an organisation that placed little emphasis on specific Buddhist religiosity and instead emphasised more of its transnational links to the global humanitarian world.

The agamika-samajika aspect of the Foundation was therefore no longer explicitly part of the way the NGO management characterised themselves. Instead, they framed their mission as helping humanity in a more universalistic sense. This was particularly noticeable in the aesthetic that they adopted to present the NGO to donors. For example, one of the most striking images that catches the eye when one visits the Foundation's offices in Seenigama is a large framed photograph of a smiling Mahatma Gandhi hung on a wall within the NGO premises. It is uncommon in Sri Lanka to find images of the Indian liberation leader while images of the Buddha are ubiquitous in a country where nearly 72 per cent of the population is Buddhist. Thus, as an organisation whose work was inspired by a Buddhist ethos, and indeed had no explicit reference in its agenda to Gandhian philosophy or ideals, one might expect to find an image of the Buddha. Yet, unlike the Buddha, who is instantly recognisable as a religious symbol, Gandhi, an Indian image, closely associated with Indian independence and the Indian fight against colonialism, is internationally recognisable as a modern symbol of morality, goodness, and non-violent liberation of human suffering. By using his image, the Foundation appeared to align itself to Gandhi's universal appeal as a believer in the dignity of a shared humanity and as a crusader for human liberation. More than the Buddha, whose image is closely associated with Sinhalese Buddhist identity in Sri Lanka, the image of Gandhi could enact a cosmopolitan sense of the "common world" of which the organisation saw itself as a part. By associating itself with an Indian image such as Gandhi, this Sri Lankan NGO further articulated elements of the cosmopolitanism that it aspired to project.

In presenting the organisation to its donors, there was little emphasis or mention of the Buddhist character to the organisation. Rather, the organisation was framed as a professional post-disaster relief organisation drawing upon accepted rationalised and neoliberalised norms for

doing good. This cosmopolitan humanitarian identity the organisation sought to project to its donors, was further discernible from its Vision and Mission statements:

> Vision: To create a sustainable community model designed to inspire other regions and empower disadvantaged communities throughout the globe.
>
> Mission: To empower the less privileged rural communities, whilst inculcating the spirit of goodness so that they may have equal opportunities to excel in life.

A humanitarian and development discourse thus embodied in concepts such as "sustainability," "empowerment," "equality," and "community model," was deployed in the organisation's vision statement; it helped project an image of the organisation as squarely within the project of secular modernisation for the purposes of appealing to the international community (cf. Stirrat and Henkel [2001] for their discussion of how these secularised discourses of "empowerment" and "participation" advocated in the development field are genealogically linked to Protestant Christian ideas of personal salvation).

Long-time employees of the Foundation, for their part, explained this transformation as generally resulting from changes that took place in the aftermath of the tsunami when droves of international humanitarian workers and volunteers arrived on their tsunami devastated shores to help rebuild Seenigama. During this devastating period when all their energies were focused on reconstruction and humanitarian relief, there was little time for religious activities and more community-oriented programmes. It was a time when the NGO shifted from a loosely structured volunteer-based organisation to a more organised, employee-based, professionalised NGO, answerable to the accountability and transparency demands of the so-called secular humanitarian world.

But despite the organisation's non-affiliation as a Buddhist institution, Buddhist and non-Buddhist employees alike still definitely recognised and emphasised the organisation's ethical imperative to do good as being inspired by a Buddhist sensibility. This was captured in a comment made by Munira, a Sri Lankan Muslim woman who worked as one of the NGO's project managers. When I asked her about the NGO's religious identification, she flatly stated, "Yeah, it says it's not Buddhist, but the whole foundation is around Buddhism." The organisation's emblem, designed by one of the Foundation's original employees during

its inception, illustrated her point, for it displayed at its centre a Buddhist wheel, the *dharmachakra*, representing the Buddha's "Noble Eightfold Path" leading to the achievement of Nirvana (enlightenment). Indeed, this emblem was one of the first visual features of the Foundation that caught my eye when I began my research. In a country where Buddhism is as established as it is, the *dharmachakra* symbol was as recognisable as the cross would be in a church.

Though these semiotic ambivalences between the Buddhist and the secular character of the Foundation may at first glance point to a contradiction in terms of the Foundation's Buddhist links, I consider this ambivalence to precisely articulate how the religious and secular are produced and co-constituted in relation to each other in the transnational humanitarian field. That is, the "waves of compassion that followed the waves of destruction," as the Foundation described the post-tsunami global aid, did not submerge the original Buddhist character of the organisation. Rather, I found that these transnational encounters of compassion helped produce new terrains for the cultivation and enactment of a new cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic.

Goodness

The nature of this cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic came into sharp relief when speaking with Kamal, a young man from Seenigama who worked at the Foundation. While interviewing him, I raised the question of the role that Buddhism played in the organisation. Misinterpreting my question at first, as though I was inquiring into how the organisation was aimed at exclusively helping Buddhist beneficiaries, Kamal responded defensively:

> The Buddha did not preach to the Sinhalese, he preached on behalf of all. So similarly we have no discrimination like that. A good Buddhist is not someone who is concerned with creed, religion, or caste. A real Buddhist is concerned with humanity (*manawaya*), and humaneness (*manussakama*). Our White donors, our volunteers, they are Christians. We don't say, "Oh we are Buddhists. We don't want your help." Similarly, if we were concerned with only Buddhists, there is no way we would be trying to go to the north [of Sri Lanka]. People who live there are Tamil, they believe in Hinduism. True, we have a Buddhist philosophy (*Baudda chintanaya*). This is "unconditional compassion." But this just shows we have no limits. We work on behalf of everyone.

Kamal wanted to make sure I understood that his Buddhist identity did not limit how he related to the world, but rather it inspired his openness towards the good of all humanity. It contrasted with the dominant Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist discourse, where Buddhism has often been posited as axiomatically tied to the Sinhalese identity and their claims to national belonging to Sri Lanka (Obeyesekere 2003). Instead, Buddhism was posited here as a universalistic ethic of "unconditional compassion," one not limited or partial towards any individual or group. Kamal took up the discourse of humaneness to both align himself and other "real Buddhists" with donors, volunteers, and beneficiaries from different religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Claiming the concern for humanity as part of an essentially Buddhist worldview enabled him to position Buddhism as a properly modern world-affirming cosmopolitan ethic for "doing good."

Gamini, another Foundation employee, also expressed a similar opinion. When I asked him the same question ("In what way do Buddhist ideas shape the organisation?"), he explained that "although the Foundation's work is carried out in accordance to a Buddhist attitude" the Foundation was nevertheless reliant upon the charitableness of individuals who identified with other religions. Indeed, what struck me about Kamal and Gamini's comments was how, in order to produce a claim of Buddhist cosmopolitan transcendence, they selectively referenced and invoked the figure of the foreign non-Buddhist in relation to their own identity as Sinhalese Buddhists. Thus Kamal refers to the white Christian Other and the Tamil Hindu Other. The former was the foreign Other; the latter, the native Other. By expanding Buddhism as an ethic in the service of humanity, and one that could encompass these specific Others including, for instance, the numerous foreign volunteers from the UK, Australia, and Europe, they sought to distance religion from its localised attachment to the exclusivist reference of Sinhalese Buddhism.

At the Foundation, Kamal was certainly not the only one who attempted to explicitly distance Buddhism from a particularistic Sinhalese Buddhist ethnocentric nationalist agenda. This was clearly articulated in one of my first interviews in August 2008 with KG, when he spoke to me about his views regarding the Sinhalese Buddhist identity and nationalism, which evinced his anti-communal inclinations:

> I think the foremost things the Buddha has taught is not to get too attached and you have to be able to peacefully co-exist with everyone else, not to overpower and say [Sri Lanka is] seventy-five

> per cent Sinhalese therefore our country must be Sinhalese Buddhist. The Buddha has practiced loving-kindness to everybody; and goodness. And goodness is the core of all religions. So I firmly believe that Buddhism is your answer in enhancing your happiness . . . Actually, the other day, I read a book of a [Buddhist] nun whom I very much admire, her name is Sister Ayya Khema who runs a monastery here, and she is of German origin. She says religion is nothing special. There is nothing special about even Buddhism, it's just constant purification. That's something you can say about every religion. If you purify yourself all the time, you go from happiness to happiness. It's really not a big deal. It's goodness. I'm so glad I named it the Foundation of Goodness, because "goodness" is the core truth of all religions.

Like Kamal, KG diminished the sectarian aspects involving Buddhism and instead claimed Buddhism consisted of a universalistic ethic of goodness. In his view, and for many other employees of the Foundation like Kamal, the notion of goodness was derived from essentially Buddhist philosophical notions of loving-kindness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*), although they saw these as universals with cosmopolitan resonance in other faiths. Not unlike the "secularised humanitarian sensibility," in which one expresses sympathy and compassion for suffering others on the rational basis of universal human nature (Wilson 2010: 28), the guiding principles of Buddhism were articulated as consisting of a humanistic cosmopolitan ethic that transcends ethnic, national, and religious differences.

Although KG certainly identified himself as a Sinhalese Buddhist, the kind of Buddhism to which he subscribed could be considered as more akin to what Lopez (1995) has described as "an international Buddhism that transcends cultural and national boundaries, creating . . . a cosmopolitan network of intellectuals, writing most often in English" (Lopez 1995: xxxix, in McMahen 2008: 8). For example, we see that in his attempt to articulate his concept of Buddhism as an ethic that is "the core truth of all religions," KG distances his Buddhist ideology from those elements which were based on Sinhalese Buddhist identity politics, and instead he aligns his Buddhist thinking along the lines of modern English-speaking Buddhist teachers such as Ayya Khema. A German-born Jewish-American woman, Ayya Khema was ordained as a Theravada Buddhist monk when she arrived in Sri Lanka after travelling through Asia during the 1970s. Although a foreigner in Sri Lanka, Ayya Khema was widely recognised as one of the pioneer women seeking to

expand the opportunities of women to practice Buddhism (Bloss 1987). She was a prolific author of books and articles about the application of Buddhist concepts such as "loving-kindness," "compassion," "joy," and "equanimity" in lay life (Bartholomeusz 1994). The Buddhism she promulgated to her followers and her readers emphasised Buddhism as an internalised and rationalistic ethic fundamentally based on human self-purification (McMahan 2008). While Ayya Khema was certainly not the only Buddhist influence on KG's thinking, her ideas have melded with a wider doctrinal milieu of this period which has had far-reaching effects. Ayya Khema, and others working in a similar vein, provided the doctrinal legitimacy for framing Buddhism to be a universal humanistic ethic detached from Sinhalese identity.

One of the ways the NGO management expressed this cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic to its beneficiaries was through the publication of various pamphlets disseminated to its beneficiaries. These emphasised certain moral qualities of goodness, or "*goona anga*," that individuals ought to introduce into their day-to-day lives. These qualities included such aspects as gratitude, honesty, empathy, humility, as well as adherence to discipline, respect, non-violence, spirituality, introspection, and moral fortitude. None of these *goona anga* were solely derived from the precepts of Buddhism. Rather they encapsulate a universal religiosity, and emphasise the cultivation of mental, moral, and spiritual development of the universal human being through virtuous living. In this way, by not attaching itself to any specific Buddhist connotation, the Foundation was able to also address audiences – both donors as well as potential beneficiaries – of different ethnic or religious backgrounds. For example, at the outset of my research, I found that these kinds of materials were printed entirely in Sinhalese, and in some cases when they were distributed amongst their donors in promotional materials, the Foundation also listed these qualities of goodness in English. Without specific Buddhist connotations, these *goona anga* could easily be translated into English and be recognised immediately as shared human values. Hence in 2010, when the NGO began making trips to the north and east of Sri Lanka to deliver small relief packages to Tamil communities affected by the war, the organisation also started printing its materials in Tamil. Indeed, these areas had been occupied by the Tigers for over three decades in their struggle for a separate Tamil homeland. In their outreach to this new beneficiary group, the Foundation therefore also had to reach beyond linguistic, religious, and geographical differences of the people they were attempting to assist. Through the discourse of universal humanity and the message of human goodness conveyed through

these pamphlets, calendars, and flyers, the organisation attempted to construct an affinity with the Tamils in the north. Moreover, the organisation actively tried to engage Tamil diaspora groups in its project in the north. By spotlighting the involvement of these groups in the organisation's northern project and by involving Tamil volunteers in the coordination of this project, the organisation strove to bridge long-standing ethnoreligious divides between Sinhalese and Tamils.

A truly cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic was thus substantively universal insofar as it could include certain contested Others within its worldview. Take, for example, Munira, the NGO's only Muslim employee who managed the Foundation's youth club, also known as the Children's Goodness Club. I knew that many of the young people in the village were fond of her, and indeed, her vibrant personality, energy, and optimism were contagious. Talking to Munira during an arts competition organised by the club in Seenigama, she began describing how she became involved with the club. She recounted how at first her request to be appointed for this role had been contested by the NGO's manager, Mangala, on the basis of her ethnoreligious identity. He had voiced his concern that in a majority Sinhalese Buddhist community, families in Seenigama would not be willing to send their children to a club coordinated by a Muslim woman. His comment hinted at the contested belonging of Muslims within Sri Lanka, particularly in terms of the dominant Sinhalese Buddhist's nationalist mindset that views Muslims as local Others (McGilvray 2008). Yet KG had rebuked Mangala's argument on the basis that, as Munira recalled, "If as Buddhists they can receive help from *suddho* (whites), then why can they not accept working with a Muslim?"

In KG's response to Mangala, he brings together two scales of difference. On the one hand, he alludes to the difference between themselves as locals and the foreign "suddho." The suddho to whom he was referring were of course the foreign (and often white) donors and volunteers who arrived on the shores of coastal Sri Lanka after the tsunami to do relief work. KG thus insinuates that if local Sinhalese Buddhist could accept assistance from the foreigner, then they also ought to be willing to overcome the differences between themselves and a Sri Lankan adherent of a non-Buddhist religious tradition. Indeed, it was the Foundation's ability to "include" Sri Lankan Malay Muslims and suddho – both "foreigners" to Sinhalese Buddhists – that challenged the Foundation's cosmopolitanism, while this provocation itself is what helped forge and further engender its bona fide cosmopolitan status.

Munira was also personally very enthusiastic to promote the organisation's northern project as she found it a promising opportunity to help alleviate ethnoreligious tensions in the country. Chatting with me one day at a café in Colombo, she said, "I really like to get involved in the northern project, because growing up in Sri Lanka as a Muslim, racism has personally affected my family." In a country where ethnoreligious tensions are high, ethnic Muslims who comprise seven per cent of the country's population are subject to significant prejudice by the Sinhalese (McGilvray 1998; Haniffa 2009). As mentioned previously, some members at the Foundation did not readily accept Munira because of her ethnic and religious identity. Because the Foundation's northern project was a humanitarian initiative spearheaded by Sinhalese Buddhists to help Tamil victims of the civil war, it signalled to Munira a broader effort towards inter-ethnic and religious reconciliation. Munira thus hoped to personally be involved in this process of reconciliation by placing herself within the Foundation. Ultimately, her central involvement in the Foundation also contributed to the cosmopolitan Buddhist character of the Foundation, for it was only by incorporating non-Buddhists like Munira that the organisation's Buddhist management was able to claim its Buddhist ethic as fully universal in its reach.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that in the aftermath of the tsunami, the Foundation produced and negotiated a cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic through its entanglement with transnational humanitarianism. I suggest that it is a particular kind of cosmopolitan ethic that NGO workers, donors, and volunteers actively produced in order to strategically enact a humanitarian universality that transcends geographical and social distance. These entanglements produce what David McMahan (2008) described as a "transnational genre of Buddhism" that could be practiced even in what we conceive as consisting of a secularised context. Furthermore, in order to fully understand how such a cosmopolitan ethic develops through NGO workers' entanglement with transnational practices of humanitarianism, I argue that it is necessary to consider this ethnographic context as grounded in specific political and historical contexts that enabled the development of both nationalist and cosmopolitan forms of Buddhism. In doing so, I emphasise the epistemological need to understand a universalising concept such as cosmopolitanism as

always already produced by the particular historical and material conditions of the contexts in which they emerge (Tsing 2005).

In the context of Sri Lanka, therefore, this position of articulating Buddhism as a self-identified "cosmopolitan" ethic contrasted sharply with the dominant nationalistic position taken by Sinhalese Buddhists, who both presently and historically have seen themselves as the defenders of the "Buddhist nation." That is, in contrast to many of their nationalist Buddhist contemporaries, those working for the Foundation tried not to constrain themselves to particularistic nationalistic preconditions. Rather, as we have seen, in order to produce this cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic, they relied upon a negotiation of differences in which Buddhist religiosity, rather than being taken up as rhetoric for nation-building, was instead deployed as a humanistic ethic. In the wake of their own acknowledgement that the nationalistic project of Sinhalese Buddhism carried within it xenophobic prejudice and hegemony, some Buddhist humanitarians turned to the foreign Other to cultivate a new form of Buddhist cosmopolitanism. In doing so, they strove to situate the organisation as belonging to the broader transnational network of humanitarian giving.

These various negotiations of the cosmopolitan Buddhist ethic brings to the fore an argument made by Judith Butler (2000) on how the task of theorists is to examine how people make multiple and contesting claims to universality at particular instances and to investigate how people's articulations of universals change over time. Butler critically argues that "universality" is a type of "emergence" that occurs at the interstices of contesting "scenes of embattlement," and contends that universality is an "open-ended struggle" that arises when those who are not already part of its purview challenge the existing limits to the universal by laying claims to it and demand their inclusion within it (2000: 38). I imagine the Foundation as a similar scene of embattlement, as the Foundation's efforts to transcend the specificity of Buddhism's dominant ties to ethnoreligious nationalism through a vision of cosmopolitanism engaged diverse Others who came to the aid of distant suffering after the tsunami.

Notes

1 The colonial history of Sri Lanka dates from the start of the Portuguese period in Ceylon, in 1505, followed by the Dutch colonial era in the 1600s, until Sri Lanka achieved independence from the British in 1948.

2 Some of these charities included, for example, Laureus Sports for Good Foundation, International Relief Development, and Danish Aid.

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6

Buddhist and Protestant Philanthropies in Contemporary Southeast China: Negotiating the "Grey Zone"

Keping Wu

Introduction

After a near-complete standstill of public religious activities in most parts of China between 1958 and 1978, a widespread "religious revival" since the 1980s has seen the rebuilding of religious sites, the resuscitation of religious services, and the re-establishment of transnational links with co-religionists (Dean 1993; Feuchtwang 2000; Lagerwey 2004; DuBois 2005; Huang and Yang 2005; Chau 2005). A particularly important gap in the current research is the increasing number of religious-based charitable and developmental organisations in China and Taiwan that actively engage in providing for the poor and distressed (Laliberté 2003; Fan 2006; Weller 2006; Madsen 2007; Huang 2009; Laliberté et al. 2011). The rapid growth of these actors within the context of the authoritarian Chinese state invites critical investigation into how such religious groups navigate the politics of their social engagement. How much space do religious groups have for engaging in philanthropic activities in contemporary China? This chapter addresses the religion–state relationship in China through the lens of social service provision by religious groups or religiously inspired organisations. I argue that Chinese Christian and Buddhist charitable organisations navigate the "grey zone" of Chinese state (which is demarcated into national, provincial, and local levels of government) politics through both state-directed and community-based religious philanthropies.

By "grey zone" I mean the ambivalent political space located in-between what is legal and what is illegal, what is sanctioned fully by the state and what is not completely censored. It is a space of action

situated in relation to the state, but never entirely dictated by the state. This idea was inspired by a pastor's comment during my recent fieldwork:

> The Constitution guarantees religious freedom in China. However, how to interpret the constitution is up to the officials in charge of religion at the provincial, municipal and district levels. What a religious group can and cannot do? Well, there is a huge gap between what's legal and what's illegal in China. Most of us survive in the grey zone.

I argue that grey zones are areas of innovation and vitality, in which religious philanthropies originate as experiments. The term grey zone is not to be confused with "grey market" proposed by sociologist Fenggang Yang's (2006) "three-colour theory." According to Yang, there are three religious markets in China, a red market of "officially permitted religions," a black market filled with "officially banned religions" and a grey market populated by religions with "ambiguous legal/illegal status." In contrast to Yang's economic approach to religion, I use grey zone to refer to an elastic, flexible space in which all religions operate and through which their futures are forged. Instead of different religions falling into separate markets, I argue that even the officially permitted religions traverse the grey zone just as much as those who lack the same level of recognition from the state, depending on their engagement with particular projects and activities.

This chapter is based on 12 months of field research over a span of six years (2006–2012) mainly in the Jiangsu Province of Southeast China. Since late imperial times, Jiangsu, due to its robust economic growth and urbanisation processes, has been an important incubator for charities such as "benevolent societies" (*shantang*) that worshipped deities or were inspired by religious teachings (Leung 2001; Fuma 2005; Smith 2009). This legacy has been carried over to the contemporary period in different forms and is closely linked to the recent economic growth in the province. According to the National Statistics Bureau,[1] Jiangsu's GDP consistently ranked second highest among all the provinces in China throughout the research period. Not only is it among the wealthiest provinces in China, it also has a reputation of being among the most "charitable." The province hosts the Amity Foundation (see Hirono 2008), which is the earliest NGO founded by Protestant nationals under the current regime. Jiangsu is also home to the first transnational NGO, Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation based in Taiwan, which is also the only such organisation legally registered with the local

government (see Huang 2009). Besides those large-scale organisations, numerous smaller-scale temple- or church-based philanthropies such as Hanshan Temple, Aide Nursing Home, and so on, aim to provide social services to members of their own groups and beyond.

This chapter focuses on Protestant and Buddhist case studies for three reasons. First, these two groups have the largest number of constituents of all religious groups in Jiangsu, as I shall show below. Let me provide a brief picture of religious diversity in Jiangsu. Since the current Chinese regime recognises five official religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism, the national statistics only include information on these five, though popular temples are found throughout the country. It is very difficult to estimate the actual membership of these religions.[2] Therefore, I concentrate on the number of religious sites instead as an approximation. According to the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of Jiangsu Province, there were about 5,764 registered religious sites including 4,457 Protestant churches and 980 Buddhist temples in 2012. By contrast, there are only 146 Daoist temples, 129 Catholic churches and worshipping sites, and 52 mosques.[3] Buddhism and Protestantism are clearly the majority religions in Jiangsu Province.

Second, they are also the most actively engaged in philanthropy. During the state-launched "Religious Charity Week" (*zongjiao cishan zhou*) in 2013, of all the donations from the official religions, about 88 per cent of the donations (a total of 4,568,345 RMB, approximately 733,552 USD) came from Protestant and Buddhist groups.[4] Although this number is official and only indicative of the donations these groups made in one week, it is reflective of the status of religious philanthropy in Jiangsu Province.

Third, comparing Buddhist and Protestant philanthropies allows us to see that theological differences do not lead to different kinds of social service provisioning. More importantly, this chapter argues that the ways of negotiating the grey zones and interacting with the state contribute most to whether and to what extent the specific religious group engages in philanthropy.

Before delving into detailed case studies, I would like to discuss some of the terminologies that will be used in describing and analysing this material. Throughout my field research, the terms social welfare (*shehui fuli*), charity (*cishan*), public good (*gongyi*), and social services (*shehui fuwu*) were used by government officials, volunteers, religious specialists, NGO workers, and the media. However, social welfare is mostly used by government officials or regular citizens to refer to government-delivered social services. The word charity[5] is often used by religious groups or by the general

public to refer to individual donation or religiously inspired service delivery. However, it often implies a hierarchical relationship between the giver and receiver. The phrase public good is preferred by domestic and international NGOs, though there is a growing tendency to use the phrase "public good" in government and media and it is also preferred by more organised and systematic service delivery by religious groups. The phrase "social services" (*shehui fuwu*) means the goods that are delivered through philanthropy. When the Chinese government uses this term, however, it often indicates "serving the social society." Since "philanthropy" translated into Chinese could mean either charity or public good, I use the word "philanthropy" as a general term. Only when the group specifically used the term "charity" or referred to themselves as a "charitable organisation" do I use the term "charity."

State-directed religious philanthropy: The Hanshan Temple

The Hanshan Temple is a typical example of successful Buddhist philanthropy that collaborates extensively with all levels of the government. However, as I will demonstrate later, it also utilises the grey zone to innovate and maximise the impact of its activities. China has the largest registered Buddhist population in the world today (Ashiwa and Wank 2009: 3) and Jiangsu Province has been one of the major Buddhist footholds since the late imperial times (Wu 2008). Among the 980 registered Buddhist sites in Jiangsu Province,[6] there are 13 national-level "key temples" (approved by the State Council of the People's Republic of China) and 21 provincial level "key temples." The "key temples" are considered by the central and provincial governments to be of historical importance. Hence, their initial restoration was subsidised by the government and then further regulated. They were among the earliest religious sites to be restored in the early 1980s after two decades of religious oppression and class struggles. The Chinese government restored temples for two purposes: domestic and international tourism (Oakes and Sutton 2010); and serving as non-official diplomatic connections with surrounding Buddhist countries and political bodies, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, and Taiwan (Wu forthcoming). Due to their elevated status among the general public and close proximity to political power, those "key temples" played key roles in Buddhist philanthropy later on.

Hanshan Temple is one such "key temple." *Hanshan*, literally meaning "cold mountain," is the name of a monk in the Tang Dynasty (618–907). A small Buddhist site on the outskirts of the historical city of Suzhou,

Hanshan Temple was made famous by a Tang Dynasty poet Zhang Ji. In one of his poems, he wrote, "And I hear, from beyond Su-chou, from the temple on Cold Mountain/Ringing for me, here in my boat, the midnight bell."[7] The bell described in the poem was said to have been taken by Japanese pirates in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), but nobody could locate the bell, even in Japan. In the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), a replica was made by a provincial government official. As this poem was very famous in Japan, many Japanese tourists were interested in visiting the Hanshan Temple to see the bell as soon as China opened up to international tourists in 1978.

In 1979, the city government of Suzhou decided to restore the temple and reinstate the bell-ringing ritual to accommodate the Japanese tourists who flooded the temple.[8] In 1983, this otherwise insignificant temple in the history of Chinese Buddhism was listed as one of the 142 national-level key Buddhist sites by the State Council. Japanese tourists were of crucial importance to China in the 1980s – they brought the much-needed tourism revenue and their presence in China helped mend the fraught Sino-Japanese relationship, which had been sore since the Japanese invasion in 1937. The active involvement of the city government in the restoration demonstrates that Hanshan Temple was closely connected to the state and was regarded as useful for achieving state agendas.

Since Hanshan Temple occupies important economic and political positions, the two post-Mao abbots have also taken up important positions in the government. Venerable Master Xingkong (1922–) became the abbot in 1984 and also served as the standing member of the China Buddhist Association (CBA), vice-chair of the Buddhist Association of Jiangsu Province and Suzhou Municipality, and standing member of the People's Political Consultative Committee of Suzhou.[9] Moreover, Venerable Master Xingkong made many visits to Japan, which paved the way for unofficial exchange between the two countries and was considered as helping contribute to the United Front's work in building diplomatic ties with China's neighbours after years of alienation.[10] Master Qiushuang (1967–), a disciple of Venerable Master Xingkong and the abbot of Hanshan Temple since 2004, equally enjoys many official titles. He is a standing member of the China Buddhist Association, vice-chair and secretary-in-chief of the Buddhist Association of Jiangsu Province, as well as a standing member of the People's Political Consultative Committee of Jiangsu Province.[11] He was made abbot of the newly reconstructed Chongyuan Temple in 2007 and the abbot of Baihe Temple in 2010, both outside of Suzhou. His ambition was to build Chongyuan

Temple as an education centre, Baihe Temple as a charity centre, and Hanshan Temple as a cultural centre. These titles and positions demonstrate that two generations of Hanshan Temple leadership in the post-Mao era were closely connected with the central, provincial, and municipal governments. Furthermore, the temple's subsequent expansion in the 21st century demonstrates that it has benefited from such close ties with the state.

What puts Hanshan Temple on the map today, however, is its involvement in philanthropy. Since he was made abbot in 1984, Venerable Master Xingkong donated considerable amounts of money, quilts, and winter clothes to the government's social welfare institutions each year. In 1996, he contributed an initial funding of RMB 10,000 and established the "Hanshan Scholarship Program" in a local university to help assist in providing educational opportunities for students from poor families. This scholarship programme is still running today. In 1997, he donated RMB 2,000 to the family of a policeman who had died on duty. All these demonstrate that the early philanthropic acts of the Hanshan Temple were closely related to the needs and calling of the local and central governments.[12] Master Qiushuang has not only inherited the temple from Venerable Master Xingkong, but also his legacy of philanthropy.

In 2003, Chinese Premier Hu Jintao announced his slogan of "Harmonious Society."[13] In the same year, Hanshan Temple established a "Charitable Supermarket" which has proven to be one of the most successful social service programmes offered by religious organisations in the region. In an interview with Master Qiushuang in 2006, he recalled this event vividly:

> We [religious leaders from Suzhou] were called for a meeting in the Religious Affairs Bureau when Chairman Hu announced his new slogan. The head of the Religious Affairs Bureau called on religious groups to contribute to the larger society, instead of only caring about death or individual matters of enlightenment. Because poverty and education were important issues that were "dragging the hind leg"[14] of "socialist development," the abbot and I came up with the idea of the "Charitable Supermarket."

Suzhou is one of China's most economically developed cities. In 2012, the GDP of Suzhou reached USD 18,142 per capita.[15] However, 49.5 per cent of the urban population has an annual income lower than USD 4,397 per capita. Among them, 2.9 per cent is lower than USD 1,626[16] (compared with the annual income of USD 6,543 per capita

of Shanghai in 2012[17]). Therefore, even if Suzhou as a city is wealthy, the buying power of its residents is relatively low. That is the reason that the Charitable Supermarket idea was immediately welcomed by the municipal government.

The original "Charitable Supermarket" was set up at the back of the Hanshan Temple. It contained 300 square metres of shelves full of food and household goods, such as rice, cooking oil, dried noodles, towels, soap, water bottles, and so on. The Hanshan Temple obtains a list of the "urban poor" families from the local government and gives each family a voucher worth RMB 60 (roughly USD 10) each month, with which they can purchase daily consumables from the supermarket at very low prices. This system had some problems. For instance, receiving charity is generally considered by many Chinese to entail a significant "loss of face." The volunteers who worked for the supermarket noted that some of the families refused to take the vouchers or to be seen in a supermarket with the word "charity" attached to its name. They also had concerns about taking things from a temple. At times, there were family members who were psychologically unstable who showed up with these vouchers but could not understand how the system worked. Therefore, changes needed to be made.

In 2004, when the State Administration of Religious Affairs published a new *Religious Affairs Regulation* to control religious properties and to make religious charities legally responsible entities, the Hanshan Temple established the "Hanshan Charity Centre." It is registered with the Suzhou government as a "Non-profit Social Service Organisation." After this the philanthropic acts of the temple gained some legal recognition. Before that, despite the public visibility of such activities, they were in the "grey zone." Contrary to Fuma Susumu's (2005) argument based on 15th-century Chinese philanthropy that state intervention led to its deterioration, the Hanshan Charity Centre seems to have proven otherwise. It was precisely its close collaboration with the state that has allowed Hanshan Temple to excel in its provision of social services. In the meantime, it has successfully reconstructed itself as a leading Buddhist cultural and charitable centre, as well as a leading institution of religious philanthropy in the region.

The Charity Centre is responsible for its own accounts but administratively inseparable from the temple. In the major hall of the temple, one is able to see two separate donation boxes – one for the temple and another for the Charity Centre. Some of the tourists are confused – in which one should they make the donation? The volunteers sitting next to the boxes explain very patiently the difference between the two boxes

and add that the merit would be the same, no matter which box they put the money in. My own observation shows that they often end up putting money in both – not to miss any opportunities to make merit. But the Charity Centre does not only rely on the donation boxes alone for funding its work. Larger donors (both individuals and businesses) have become attracted to the temple's philanthropic cause. In 2009, one of the largest supermarkets in Jiangsu Province collaborated with the temple and allowed the recipients of the charitable vouchers to purchase goods from their regular supermarkets. With access to the supermarket's branches all over Suzhou, the recipient families welcomed this change. By 2010, this programme has benefited more than 422 families in Suzhou and the Charity Centre spent RMB 289,440 (roughly USD 47,136) on this programme alone in 2010. The programme has also extended to various districts of Suzhou and other counties of Jiangsu Province.

The Charity Centre interacts frequently with local government for both its activities and its administration. For instance, in 2006, the Public Security Bureau of Suzhou donated 80 bags of rice and 60 barrels of cooking oil to the Charitable Supermarket. Every year, the Charity Centre organises trips to visit the elderly and disabled living in the Social Welfare House run by the Suzhou government on traditional Chinese holidays such as the Dragon Boat Festival (lunar calendar 5 May), Mid-Autumn Festival (lunar calendar 15 July), and Festival for the Elderly (*Chongyang*, lunar calendar 9 September), bringing food, money, and other household goods as well as to help clean their living quarters. Since 2010, the Charity Centre launched a new programme in which two lay Buddhist volunteers called "*Zhigong mama*" (volunteer mothers) were stationed at the city district level Public Security Bureau each Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday to act as mediators of civil disputes and to provide counselling to distressed citizens. The programme originated with one Public Security Bureau officer's special experience in Taiwan. On an official trip to Taiwan, he and other public security officers from Suzhou were invited to observe the "Tzu Chi Mamas" (female volunteers) at work in mediating disputes in the neighbourhoods of Taipei. Extremely impressed and inspired, upon returning to Suzhou this officer went immediately to Hanshan Temple in the district where his office is in charge and asked if they could offer the same service. The temple was more than happy to oblige. According to the volunteers, "If anything, Buddhism's mission is to eliminate suffering (*quchu fannao*). As Buddhists, we have the obligation to help and enlighten more people. If the Public Security Bureau provides this platform, we have the compassion (*cibeixin*) to conduct this service." This has been replicated in a

different temple in Suzhou and has become a unique phenomenon for the city. This incident demonstrates that on the local level, religion can help better governance and the purposes of the religious groups and government officers may not always conflict with each other. Moreover, in both the case of the Charitable Supermarket and the Volunteer Mothers, attempts to meet the demands of the state have also given rise to innovative religious philanthropic activities.

This kind of positive interaction can only be achieved when particular religious organisations prove themselves trustworthy in the eyes of the Chinese government. One way to cultivate trust is by inviting RAB officials to participate in decision-making and take up important positions on the board of the Charity Centre. Another way is to participate in local government's disaster relief and poverty relief projects. During the blizzard in Guizhou and after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, for example, Hanshan Charity Centre donated RMB 100,000 (about USD 16,324) to the Guizhou provincial government and RMB 50,000 (about USD 8,162) to Sichuan provincial government, respectively, in order to help the state's response to these disasters. In the latter case, Hanshan Temple also hosted a ritual named "Protection of the Country, Prevention of Disasters, Calling for Peace and Blessings" (*huguo qizai qifu pingan fahui*). The temple has always put the name of the country at the forefront in its public display of the charity, declaring its position as one that is in accordance with social development as defined by the state.

In addition to donating directly to local governments, the Charity Centre also participates in state-initiated developmental projects, such as "Project Hope." The "Project Hope" was a developmental effort launched by the Communist Youth League in 1989 to absorb non-governmental and overseas funds to provide educational opportunities to students from poor regions of China. According to the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF) which was founded by the Communist Youth League and registered with the Civil Affairs Bureau of China in 1989, in 2013 there were 18,335 Hope Elementary Schools in China. Through the channel of the RAB, Hanshan Temple donated RMB 300,000 (USD 48,972) in 2004 to build a "Big Tree Hope Elementary School" in Lianyungang, a northern Jiangsu city. In 2008, collaborating with the RAB, Hanshan Temple donated money to build a female dormitory in a special-education school in another northern Jiangsu city.

In 2011, Hanshan Temple founded the "Suzhou Hehe Cultural Foundation," a membership-based foundation registered under the Civil Affairs Bureau but managed by the RAB of Jiangsu Province. The foundation can accept government funding as well as donations from

individuals and institutions. What differentiates the foundation from the Charity Centre is that the donors to this cultural foundation are able to receive formal provincial-level tax exemptions as it is among the small number of organisations with religious background to issue officially recognised tax-exemption receipts in China. Its initial funding of RMB 3 million (roughly USD 488,560) mainly came from entrepreneurs from the Suzhou region. What is worth noting is that in the name of the foundation, "Hanshan Temple" is omitted and the term "Hehe" is used. "Hehe" in Chinese refers to the two renowned Buddhist masters Hanshan and Shide who were in charge of the temple in different periods of time and were deified later as "Hehe" to symbolise harmonious relationships. Thus, naming the foundation "Hehe" echoes the political slogan of the time: building a "Harmonious Society." The foundation is also able to achieve relevant independence from the temple on the books, making it easier to accept donations from government agencies; but decision-making is still concentrated on the abbot, through a designated monk who oversees the daily management of the foundation. The first initiative of the foundation was to build an old age home, mainly intended for lay Buddhists. The Hanshan Temple Hehe Anyang Yuan was established at the end of 2011. The city government supported this cause by leasing them the land in one of the high-tech industrial zones, right outside the city.

However, not all projects are monitored strictly by the government. For example, in the case of "Project Hope," after the initial connections were established through the RAB, Hanshan Temple was able to go to the schools directly and donate computers, books, schoolbags, and so on rather than continuing to rely on the intermediation of the state. This direct contact between a temple and a school would have been impossible if not sanctioned by the state-launched "Project Hope" through RAB. Since the Venerable Master Xingkong's time as Abbot, the Hanshan Temple has been active in providing assistance to patients in need of urgent medical care or those suffering from chronic illness such as leukaemia. Following the Volunteer Mothers project, Hanshan Temple expanded its services and established a "Hanshan Psychocounselling Service" in 2011 for the general public to help those who are distressed.[18] As Chinese religious groups are not allowed to proselytise outside of legally registered religious sites, this initiative enables the temple to reach out to the public without going to the street. Hence, the thick collaboration with and trust from the local government has actually created a shadowed "grey zone" for the temple to explore further opportunities of growth.

Both Fuma Susumu (2005) and Angela Leung (2001) have noted that Buddhist and Confucian-inspired charities in the late Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368–1911), while seemingly independent from the state, were nevertheless unable to completely by-pass the state. Sometimes the state provided resources, such as money, estates, or land in exchange for their acquiescence to state interests. The case of Puji Tang analysed by Fuma (2005: 141–143) is a good example. Initially, in 1679 a monk outside of Beijing decided to provide care in a temple for beggars from other cities who were not covered by the highly corrupt state-run welfare institute Yangji Yuan. A wealthy Buddhist merchant donated money to the monk's effort and established Puji Tang. Soon, additional branches were established in many other cities. By 1742, the emperor ordered the establishment of Puji Tang throughout the country, effectively making it indistinguishable from the state-run Yangji Yuan. Both Puji Tang and Hanshan Charity Centre were established in times when state power was strong in China. In such cases, grassroots efforts by the temples were absorbed and "standardised" (Watson 1985) by the state after they had already proved successful. However, in both cases, the religious group took the initiative and while the state was influential, it was nevertheless unable to maintain total control over the religious philanthropy.

Despite the undoubted strength of the Chinese state, religious groups are not without agency. In her study of philanthropic organisations, one Buddhist and the other Catholic, McCarthy (2013) argues that religious charities "re-purpose the state" through contributing to state-sanctioned charitable causes and in so doing they enlarge the space made available for their own "spiritual practices." While the Hanshan Temple has clearly not instigated a thoroughgoing "re-purposing" of the state, it has definitely successfully expanded the room for its religious practices. Hanshan Temple is among the most high-profile and wealthiest religious sites in the city of Suzhou. In the case of the old age home, theoretically, the local government has demanded a certain percentage of non-Buddhist residents. However, my visit there in 2014 revealed that all the current residents are in fact Buddhists and, furthermore, that many of them are former volunteers in the Hanshan Temple. Of course, more than half of the rooms are yet to be filled, and non-Buddhists may be disinclined to choose to live in an old age home attached to a Buddhist temple. However, the existing residents appear very happy to participate in the daily sutra-chanting sessions led by nuns. Furthermore, after years of running an informal Buddhist learning centre, "Hanshan Shuyuan" has recently received the state-issued license to open up a formal Buddhist College, the third one in Suzhou (the first two were in two

temples that were historically renowned for their Buddhist education).[19] Given the strict rules against establishing religious education centres in China, it shows that Hanshan Temple has successfully carved out a much larger space for itself in comparison with other religious groups. In this space, it is able to enjoy a certain level of autonomy. Without the ability to navigate the grey zone, this autonomous space would have been impossible.

In attempting to understand these grey zone negotiations, it is important to recognise that the "the state" is not a static or monolithic entity. On the contrary, the grey zone allows the state to observe social processes and to adapt to innovations on the ground. The central government issued "Advice on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Philanthropic Activities" in early 2012. Some religious leaders regard this as the state's attempt to tighten control over religious groups. However, it can also be interpreted as the state being "re-purposed" by the religious groups' grassroots efforts in contributing to the public good. Furthermore, the State Department issued a policy document titled "Advice on the State Purchasing Services from Social Organisations" in 2013, which opened the door for religious groups (as one kind of social organisation) to appropriate funds from the government. Like many other policies from the central government, the content of the "Advice" is vague and open to interpretations by lower levels of government. Religious groups are theoretically eligible to apply for funding from the government on projects of social service provision, but what projects are qualified, how they compete with non-religious groups, and so on, are not clear. This vagueness allows more negotiations in the grey zone to do the work. For instance, trusted religious philanthropies such as Hehe Cultural Foundation are very likely to benefit from this policy; whereas smaller religious groups which lack connections with the right government officials or professional personnel who have experience in negotiating with government offices may likely be less able to tap into the resources. One thing is certain, new state policies bring new constraints and new opportunities. The nature of policies (vague on the central level and open for interpretation by various lower level governments) in China has made the grey zone possible, if not inevitable.

Though Hanshan Temple is quite representative of religious philanthropies that collaborate closely with different levels of the state, Buddhist groups are not the only religious organisations that have forged such relationships. The aforementioned Amity Foundation, established by a group of Protestant nationals under the leadership of Bishop K. H. Ting (1915–2012), is described by the Foundation as

"an independent Chinese voluntary organisation . . . created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote education, social service, health, community development and civil society building from China's coastal provinces in the east to the minority areas of the west."[20] By 2010, Amity Foundation had raised over 1 billion RMB (roughly 160 million USD) and reached more than 100 million people over 31 provinces in China. The Secretary-in-Chief of the organisation, Mr Qiu, serves not only in the committees of the National and Jiangsu Three-Self Patriotic Christian Associations, but also in the Jiangsu People's Consultative Committee. The Foundation frequently collaborates with the government at various levels of the state, despite the fact that most of its funding comes from overseas Christian organisations. That the Amity Foundation has won numerous awards from the municipal, provincial, and central governments throughout the years demonstrates the significant degree to which Protestant Christians as well as Buddhist groups have worked closely with the Chinese state on social welfare projects.

Community-based religious philanthropy: The United Heart Church

State-directed religious philanthropies are often criticised as being "secularised," meaning devoid of religious content and detached from the lives of active believers and practitioners. Since they work closely with the state, some religious leaders that I spoke with dismissed such organisations outright as "acting like government agencies" and disqualified them as being properly "religious." One of the criticisms is that they are disembedded from religious communities. The majority of Chinese religious groups are deeply rooted in their local neighbourhoods and villages (Fisher 2008). Yet, are these smaller-scale, locally rooted organisations equally adept at providing social services as the large organisations that work closely with the state? What motivates community-based actors to undertake philanthropic activities? How are they different from the state-directed ones in terms of organisation, sources of funding, and social impact? The Protestant nursing home I discuss below is a case of community-based religious philanthropy. Even though it is small in scale, it has consistently provided services to believers and non-believers alike for the past two decades. As will be shown below, its survival is even more contingent upon how successfully it negotiates the grey zone between legality and illegality and between the cracks of the Chinese political system.

The United Heart Church, located ten kilometres outside of the southern Jiangsu city of Changzhou, was founded in 1946 by a Protestant pastor from Shanghai. It was closed down in 1959 during the nationwide campaigns against religions which preceded the Cultural Revolution. In 1994, over a decade after the aforementioned "key temples" were restored with government subsidies, some former members of the church pulled together some money and bought several old houses, 151.6 square metres in total, to construct a place of worship. In 1996 a church building was erected and immediately filled with believers. By 2006, there were 200–300 attendants every Sunday and 400–500 on important holidays such as Christmas and Easter. The main person in charge of church affairs is the church elder Mr Wang. He grew up in a village not far away from the church. As a young man, Mr Wang worked as a carpenter. During long nights when he laboured at making furniture, he taught himself Christianity by listening to evangelistic radio programmes broadcast from Hong Kong. Eager to be part of a Christian spiritual community, Mr Wang joined some Christian families and started regular communal worship services in their houses in the 1980s. As recognition of his devotion and dedication to the faith and to the congregation, Mr Wang was elected as the elder after the United Heart Church was rebuilt.

Initially most attendants of the church service were from nearby towns and villages. Mr Wang was able to communicate with them in the local dialect, which was quite distinct from Mandarin. Many of these early congregants had accepted the Christian faith before the 1960s or were from families who became Christians prior to the Communist Revolution. However, this generation of people is growing old and the younger generations in those families (who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s) have gone through a thorough socialist education and not followed their parents' belief systems. That is the reason why church services in the 1990s looked quite elderly. In recent years, however, there have emerged a growing number of young people in the congregation. Mr Wang explained to me that they were mostly migrant workers or students attending the newly established "college town" nearby. These young people are from all over China and speak completely different dialects. As a result, Mr. Wang even had to learn to use Mandarin as the primary working language.

Even with the increasing number of migrants in the congregation, the church remains deeply rooted in the local community. For instance, it hosts big feasts on important festivals such as Chinese New Year and Christmas, when the Christians in the nearby neighbourhoods bring

food and cook together for the entire community, including the migrant believers who cannot return to their hometowns. These communal meals are very similar to those one can find in any community temples in China. As a matter of fact, Mr Wang told me that originally they only had special services on important Christian festivals. However, the congregation really hoped to have celebrations on Chinese festivals, such as Chinese New Year and Chongyang (festival to pay respect to the elderly), just as other religious groups did in the neighbourhood. So Mr Wang decided to provide the church facility to the congregation for such occasions. Therefore, the United Heart Church plays important roles in the community of Christians and answers to their needs not only as Christians but also as members of a typical Chinese community.

One important way that the United Heart Church engages with the community is through its sponsorship of an old age home. Having noted that the majority of the congregation is composed of senior citizens, Mr Wang was inspired to build an old age home to provide long-term care for them. In 1999, he accumulated enough funds to build a two-story building at the back of the church. He named it the "Gospel Hall" (*fuyin tang*). It consists of 20 rooms in total and has a capacity of 50 beds. The current occupancy is 21 people, 16 women, and five men, including two couples. Each person pays only RMB 250 (USD 40) a month, though for those who face financial difficulties this fee is waived. Those who cannot afford the fee tend to be older women who, after their husbands pass away, no longer have any income. The payment of the monthly fee is made in the form of donations to the church. The facilities provided are minimal, with only one bathroom on each floor and no basic medical facilities. It does, however, have a prayer room, a small vegetable garden, and a large communal kitchen that also caters to other church functions. A man in his late fifties has been hired to take care of the vegetable garden and to do grocery shopping in the market. He is paid only RMB 200 (USD 32) a month. Two women have been hired to cook and clean the rooms for RMB 400 (USD 64) a month each. All the helpers are Christians.

One woman in her late forties has been hired to look after three sickly elderly women, including one who is bed-ridden. This woman was an orphan from a poor family in rural northern Jiangsu. She married early and had a daughter, but both her husband and daughter died of a genetic disease, leaving her alone again. She said that she cried so much that her tears all dried up. She converted to Christianity when her husband and daughter got sick. Though her prayers for them to recover did not come true, she stayed a Christian, because, according

to her, "Only when in a church, is my heart at peace." She initially came to the area as a migrant worker and began attending church services. When she found out that the church was hiring a caretaker for the elderly, she immediately quit her job and moved to live in the Gospel Hall. She was paid next to nothing, though received free room and board. Nevertheless, she felt at home and conveyed to me the idea that she would wish to spend her old age in this facility. Though she is a caretaker of the Gospel Hall, one can also consider her a beneficiary.

Most of the women who live here can take care of themselves. Some women in their seventies still insist on washing their own clothes, but some need assistance with bathing and cleaning. It is a very communal life style. Every morning they get up to do exercise together. After the morning prayer, the helper serves breakfast, which normally consists of congee and pickled vegetables. The rest of the morning is spent washing clothes, chatting, and helping the cook prepare lunch, which normally consists of fresh vegetables from the Gospel Hall's garden and some meat from the market or donated by other members of the church. After lunch, the elderly women usually take naps and spend the rest of the afternoon studying the Bible or watching TV. Every Tuesday there is a prayer meeting for the Gospel Hall's residents as well as for other members of the church. On Fridays there is a gospel singing session in the afternoon. Attendance is generally very high. Some women who used to be illiterate have now learned how to read by studying the Bible in the Gospel Hall.

The convenience of communal and spiritual life is another attraction to the elderly who move here. A number of the elderly opt for this simple living inside the church since they cannot worship together with their neighbours or children who are not Christians. Others live at the Gospel Hall because of financial problems. One 78-year-old woman moved here because her husband passed away and her two children were both laid-off from state-owned factories. They could not afford to take care of her. A 65-year-old woman gave up her one-room apartment in Shanghai to her only son who moved in after he got married. She then moved back to Changzhou, where she had grown up, and subsequently found a place as a resident of the Gospel Hall.

One 90-year-old lady was brought in by her daughter and basically abandoned there since the daughter had been laid off by a factory and she could no longer afford to support her mother. The woman was "still chanting Buddhist beads" when she was left at the church gate. But, according to Mr Wang, she converted to Christianity on her death bed and "had a beautiful and touching funeral." This incident shows

that the Gospel Hall does not discriminate against those who are non-Christians, although it is also the case that non-Christians rarely willingly choose to spend their old age living in the church. The exception is the above case, in which the daughter really had no choice and no money. She heard from a fellow passenger in a bus that the Gospel Hall was practically free and decided to try out her mother's luck. The old woman was indeed lucky enough that the Gospel Hall took her in. Other residents considered it the grace of God that she finally chose to convert to Christianity, since some of them still remembered that the old lady would wear the Buddhist beads and chant silently when the rest of them were praying.

Mr Wang's vision for the Gospel Hall actually has two phases. Phase one is for Christians only – "since everybody has the same faith, it will be easy to have the same activities and easier to manage." Phase two is for the general public – "after we have accumulated enough experience operating the old age home, we can serve the general public." However, the philanthropic enterprise Mr Wang has envisioned has not gone entirely smoothly. The first obstacle is from within the church. In order to cope with the pastoral need of the increasing size of his congregation, the Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) of the Protestant Churches and the China Christian Council (CCC) appointed Mr Xiao, a fresh graduate of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, to assist with Mr Wang's pastoral work. Mr Xiao was quite concerned about the "low level" of theological training in the congregation and he was determined to bring the theological education up to "standard." For him, the old age home is a distraction from doing the spiritual work, which he sees as the primary task. Mr Xiao believes that using the meagre weekly contribution from the congregation on these old people, some of whom cannot distinguish Jesus from any other god in Chinese temples, is against the ideal of Christian service. Though he was not interfering with the operation of the old age home at the time of my research, he made it clear that his interest and mission lay somewhere else and that he would not participate in the daily management of it.

Moreover, the Gospel Hall struggles financially. Different from the privileged Hanshan Temple, the community-based religious philanthropy does not receive government subsidies, except the RMB 10,000–15,000 (USD 1,632–2,448) per year allowance from the state-sanctioned TSPM and CCC. Since the congregation is composed of poor elderly and young migrant workers, the collection at Sunday services in 2006 was only around RMB 800–900 (USD 130–145) per week. While this increased to around RMB 2,000 (USD 323) in 2012, the church has to

rely on external funding to maintain its operations, including that of the Gospel Hall. This also marks a sharp contrast to Hanshan Temple's Hehe Foundation, which generates its funding mostly from wealthy members who contribute membership fees as well as annual donations that give them tax exemptions.

In principle, the 1993 document "Notice on the Rights to Accept Donation from Foreign Religious Organizations and Individuals" allows religious organisations to accept overseas donations, as long as the funds are not used for "political or proselytising purposes." Only when the funds go beyond RMB 1 million (USD 161,645) do the provincial level governments need to endorse it. However, in practice, TSPM churches are not allowed to receive funding directly from overseas religious organisations amid fears of foreign infiltration. The foreign funds have to go through TSPM associations. The Hong Kong-based United Christian Nethersole Foundation, which operates a large old age care home in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, was interested in supporting the cause, but it was only allowed to donate to the TSPM central office, which then allocates the money to specific churches or organisations that apply for funding. The aforementioned Amity Foundation plays a crucial role in absorbing international funding and directing it to these smaller-scale community-based religious philanthropies that are in dire need of financial support. Both organisations have supported the Gospel Hall indirectly before, though in small amounts.

The attitude of the government towards such community-based religious philanthropies has been capricious. In comparison with their Buddhist neighbours, Christianity tends to be seen as a "Western" religion and therefore attracts greater scrutiny from government officials.[21] Despite the fact that the old age home has been operating since 1999, the Civil Affairs Bureau did not grant it a license until 2006. The Gospel Hall therefore survives in a particular kind of grey zone such that it has been largely ignored by the state. The local United Front and the RAB have turned a blind eye towards its existence. Robert Weller calls this "blind-eye governance," which involves "a 'don't ask, don't tell' attitude toward many social forms that lie outside the law but are nevertheless mostly tolerated" (Weller 2012: 83). Old age homes operated by religious groups were a novelty for the government in 1999. There are no policies regulating or prohibiting them. Instead of completely banning them, or actively supporting them, the state allows the Gospel Hall to survive in the grey zone by turning a blind eye towards it. Though it means that they cannot apply for any sort of external support and do not have legal status, it continues to exist.

This political fact of "blind eye governance" is clearly recognised by the pastor mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. It is exactly this "grey zone" that brings vitality to religious philanthropy in China today. The Gospel Hall is not alone. Many community-based religious philanthropies survive in the grey zone thanks to the "blind-eye governance." Less than ten kilometres away from the hall, a Buddhist temple operates a license-less old age home. The temple espouses the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism, which emphasise non-stop sutra-chanting. Many elderly choose to live in this temple where they can chant sutras without disturbance and keep a strict vegetarian diet – which are often hard to maintain if they live with their children and grandchildren. However, the government has not granted them a license and they too survive on a bare minimum derived largely from temple donations. Therefore, by using a Protestant philanthropy as a case study for the community-based charities, I am by no means suggesting that theological differences are decisive for the split between state-led and community-based types. Instead, different religious denominations may fall into both categories. The operation of the old age home in the United Heart Church more closely resembles community temples of Buddhist or Daoist origins than the aforementioned Amity Foundation, which is a Protestant-based NGO that works very closely with different levels of governments.

In comparison with state-led philanthropies, community-based charities enjoy little state support. Due to the lack of funding and political connections, their service provision is limited, precarious, and sometimes also sporadic. Some of these charities extend their services to a larger community beyond their own followers, but most of them are restricted to serving members of their temples and churches. However, they are more responsive towards the needs of the community and integrate their religious belief and practices in their social service provision. I argue that their legitimacy and resilience is dependent on the support from community members and their operation relies largely on the "grey zone" that is created by the "blind-eye governance" of an authoritarian regime.

Conclusion: Transforming the state, transforming religions

As the editors of this volume observe, religion has come to attract increasing interest from the developmental sector over the recent years. Religious groups as providers of social services did not come to the attention of the Chinese state until the 1990s, despite the fact that Chinese

religions throughout history have offered care for the needy and poor (Smith 2009). Both in terms of theology and practice, religions are well-equipped to provide services to members of their own community and society at large.

In both the case of Hanshan Temple (via Charity Centre and Hehe Foundation) and United Heart Church, religious groups, regardless of their theological differences, deliver social services effectively. Both have to negotiate the grey zones to survive and sustain themselves. However, the state-led and community-based religious philanthropies vary in the ways in which they engage with the state and community. The state-led religious philanthropy often rides on the state agenda in social welfare provision, works closely with various levels of government officials, and reacts quickly to changes in state policy; but they are often accused of lacking a deep community base and are less responsive to the needs of the community. Community-based philanthropy is deeply rooted in the needs of the community but its survival is often more contingent upon factors such as the temperament of specific religious affairs bureau officers, certain government policies that are in favour of or against its practices, and the specific religious leader who has the passion and mobilising power to carry out the project.

As a result of such different interactions with the state and community, these two types often vary in terms of scale, access to resources, and social impact. The state-led philanthropies are often highly visible and capable of mobilising substantial movements and delivering services to much larger populations. This does not necessarily mean that community-based ones are less capable. They provide for the members of their own community, especially those who do not want to bear the stigma of taking social welfare from the government or charity from public institutions. For instance, much research has been done on the idea of filial piety in China and how it shapes the preferred arrangement for old age care, which is for the elderly to live at home with a filial son who can take care of the parents (Fan 2006). Thus, living in a commercial old age home publically declares the failure of the old person to have a son, or to raise filial children. Religious piety, however, is viewed positively as a venerated choice on the part of the elderly. Therefore, these community-based religious old age care facilities are frequently welcomed by the elderly, especially those who prefer to stay in the community where they have lived for a long time.

The case studies of state-directed and community-based social service delivery programmes by both Protestant and Buddhist groups presented in this article support the view that an antagonistic state-religion

dichotomy does not depict the current reality in China (Ashiwa and Wank 2006). The state constrains, encourages, and ignores religious involvement in service provision in specific contexts. Ashiwa and Wank (2006) argue that a closer examination of the religious organisations, religious associations, and state bureaucracies reveal that overlapping and flowing memberships necessitate constant negotiations through the re-interpretation of policies and regulations. This chapter demonstrates that a careful examination of social service provision by specific religious groups in contemporary China provides an effective lens through which state–religion interactions are illuminated. Far from an oppression/resistance dichotomy, there are overlapping interests and constant re-interpretations of state policies.

The Chinese state is transforming itself from being the total caretaker of the society in the socialist period to a more limited role of securing provision following a neo-liberal model of privatisation. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the Chinese state took full responsibility for social welfare. Both the state and people considered the state as the sole provider. There was no room for competitors or facilitators. As discussed earlier, from the 1980s religious organisations started engaging in social service provision in the grey zone, relying on either external resources (such as the Amity Foundation) or the will of individual religious leaders (such as Master Xingkong of Hanshan Temple) with limited resources. Without formal sanctions from the state, these efforts were marginal but have been steadily growing stronger and more creative in the protective shadow of the grey zone. In the 1990s, the state gradually realised the importance of such social forces, which was marked by the 1992 flood in Southeast China when the government called for the international world to contribute to the disaster relief operation and recognised the contributions from religious organisations for the first time. Twenty years have passed from 1992 to 2012, when the "Advice on Encouraging and Regulating Religious Philanthropic Activities" was issued. Though the real impact of this policy still needs to be assessed, one thing is clear: the state has never been a static, unchanging entity. In the case of religious philanthropy, this chapter argues that religious philanthropies were able to take the initiative in gradually transforming the attitude of the government and subsequently also changing state policies. This was made possible because of the existence of the grey zone which allowed religious groups to experiment with innovations in philanthropic activity. However, the grey zone does not mean the non-existence of the state. On the contrary, the existence of a grey zone is exactly because there is a strong and interventionist state.

With the issuance of the 2013 "Advice on the State Purchasing Services from Social Organisations," the state is moving toward a model that resembles privatised social service provision. This general policy carves out more room for non-state actors to participate in the field of philanthropy. As a result, religious philanthropies are not only competing amongst themselves but also with other non-religious NGOs and also government organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs). Again, the current state of research is insufficient to assess the impact of this policy on the ecology of philanthropy in contemporary China. However, it appears fairly certain that the competition for government resources that opened up in the wake of this initiative will ensure that religious organisations remain thoroughly engaged with the state.

This chapter echoes the editors' introduction to this volume in arguing that nation-states remain crucial and unavoidable actors for religious interactions with development. In the case of state-directed religious philanthropies, such as Hanshan Temple, the state and religious group might collaborate but the religious group still managed to push its own agenda alongside its state-sponsored projects. In the case of community-based religious philanthropy such as the United Heart Church, the state did not permit nor prohibit the old age home from operating, but in the end granted its legal status. Both cases show that there is a grey zone in which religious philanthropy innovates, improvises, and is sometimes sustained for a prolonged period of time. But in neither case were they able to bypass the state in a real sense.

Notes

1 National Statistics Bureau, http://data.stats.gov.cn/workspace/index?m=fsnd, accessed 20 July 2013.

2 It is hard to count the number of Buddhists and Daoists since there are no formal rituals such as baptism in Christianity for the two religions. Buddhists can "take the refuge," but not all self-claimed Buddhists do so and some take it multiple times. Protestant and Catholic communities often claim a much larger number of believers than the official record, due to existence of underground and "house churches." Therefore, it is virtually impossible to get "real" number of religious believers and practitioners in China.

3 http://www.jsmzzj.gov.cn/col/col49/index.html, accessed 20 July 2013. The site states that the total number of religious sites is 5,761 but the add-up of each denomination is 5,764. I use the number 5,764 since the individual denominations report their own numbers, which are more accurate.

4 http://www.jsmzzj.gov.cn/art/2013/12/2/art_1121_38887.html, accessed 21 February 2014; calculation, my own.

5 For a review of the term "charity," please see Laliberté et al. (2011: 139–151).

6 "Religious sites" or *zongjiao changsuo* is a unique term used by the Chinese government, referring to legally registered formal churches/temples/mosques but also informal worshipping spaces called *juhuidian*. http://www.jsmzzj.gov.cn/col/col49/index.html, accessed 20 July 2013.
7 The poem is titled "Night-Mooring by the Maple Bridge" and is translated by Witter Bynner.
8 In recent years, the temple cast a new bell according to the Tang style and it was taken into the Guinness World Records in 2008.
9 He became the monastic manager of the Hanshan Temple in 1963. But the temple was closed down in 1968 and he was forced to work in a fruit farm outside of Suzhou. In 1979, he was invited by the head of Buddhist Association at the time, Zhao Puchu, to come back to restore the temple.
10 The China Buddhist Association was established in 1929 by the Republican Government and was re-established in 1953 by the Buddhist modernist reformer Master Taixu as part of the United Front work. It was shut down in 1966–1978 and reopened in 1979. The United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) central committee is a special government office that was established during the Second World War to unite those who are outside of the Communist Party in order to fight against the Japanese invasion. After the founding of the PRC (People's Republic of China), this department has evolved to deal with all the "other" representatives of non-CCP bodies and organisations: Other political parties (Bureau One), Ethnic and Religious Affairs (Bureau Two), Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and other Overseas Chinese Affairs (Bureau Three), non-CCP cadres in the government (Bureau Four), non-state-owned economic bodies (Bureau Five), non-CCP and overseas intellectuals (Bureau Six), and Tibetan Affairs (Bureau Seven).
11 This is not unusual. Almost all important leaders from the five official state-sanctioned religions have official ties and occupy seats in various levels of the government.
12 Please see the article by Su Long on the Hanshan Temple website: Su, Long: http://www.hanshansi.org/download/zx/200401/200401f018.htm, accessed 24 July 2013.
13 Hu's collection of essays and speeches *To Build Socialist Harmonious Society* was published by the CPC central office in April 2013. This volume includes all his important speeches on this topic, dating back to 2003, when he first moved to this direction.
14 Dragging the back leg (*tuo houtui*) is a socialist expression, meaning to hold back, prevent from moving forward.
15 http://www.sztjj.gov.cn/info_Detail.asp?id=19944, accessed 23 January 2015.
16 The rural annual income is even lower.
17 http://finance.people.com.cn/GB/8215/356561/359047/, accessed 6 September 2014.
18 This might have also been inspired by an earlier initiative run by another temple in the same city, Xiyuan Temple, which opened up a "Guanyin Hotline" that offer psycho-counselling services with Buddhist teachings. Guanyin, *Avalokitasvara* in Sanskrit, is the major Bodhisattva that is worshipped in East Asian Buddhism.

19 Xiyuan Temple and Lingyanshan Temple have had a long history as Buddhist education centres. In comparison, there is no Daoist college in the entire Jiangsu Province.
20 http://www.amityfoundation.org/eng/who-we-are, accessed 21 February 2014.
21 Some might argue that the Christians are intentionally distancing themselves from the government. This might be the case for the underground churches but for the majority of Christians in China, they do not distance themselves from the government more than the Buddhists do.

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7

Patronage, Welfare Provisions, and State–Society Relations: Lessons from Muslim-Dominant Regimes in Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia)

Kikue Hamayotsu

Introduction

This chapter engages in a debate about the effects of informal institutions – including patronage, clientelistic relations, and communal networks – on the effectiveness of welfare programmes, as well as welfare conditions of citizens in non-secular developing nations. There is a normative assumption that informal institutions, especially patronage and clientelistic relations, tend to bring about negative consequences on human development by keeping the underprivileged population dependent on their political patrons for survival and thus exposing them to exploitation, coercion, and fear (e.g., Scott 1972).[1] Some scholars also find that the political use of welfare and social programmes such as microfinance by political organisations and elites, contributes to exploitative relations which are detrimental to the interests of poor clients (e.g., Karim 2001, 2011). In contrast to such theoretical and empirical expectations, more recent scholarly work in the field of comparative politics finds that patronage-based and clientelistic informal linkages can potentially contribute to the *improvement* of welfare conditions of citizens in the absence of a welfare state (e.g., Helmke and Levitsky 2006; Kitschelt 2000; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). This prompts us to ask whether patronage politics and clientelistic networks promote or hinder the effectiveness of welfare programmes in non-secular developing societies in Southeast Asia, where religious organisations play a significant role as providers of welfare services. We also investigate the conditions in which informal associations and transactions driven by political and patronage motivations work to benefit the welfare of religious communities.

This chapter will analyse the strategic use of welfare and social services by religious parties and the effect of patronage politics, as well as the clientelistic community networks they build in the process, on the welfare conditions of Muslim communities in Indonesia and Malaysia to evaluate these contending propositions. In particular, I will focus on the two most prominent Islamic parties in Indonesia and Malaysia, the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS) and the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (*Parti Islam Se-Malaysia*, PAS). These parties have adopted different strategies to build their support base in the context of democratic transitions and consolidation. To offer an explanation for the diverging strategies and make broader theoretical contributions to the studies of informal institutions, human development, and state–society relations in deeply religious societies, this chapter examines the origins and development of these political organisations as well as the function and nature of the state in extending welfare services to religious communities.

Religious parties and mass mobilisation in electoral politics: Provision of welfare and social services

Recent scholarship on religious organisations in the context of political liberalisation and democratisation in the developing world has drawn attention to welfare and social services that religious parties develop in order to mobilise mass support and/or to appeal to particular targeted constituencies. Scholars consider religious organisations and parties as social movements and/or strategic actors in order to have a better understanding of the ability of these organisations to gain mass support. For example, Janine Clark (2004) examines the networks of medical clinics and service centres that the Muslim Brotherhood has expanded as part of their religious charity and missionary work in three Middle-Eastern countries: Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen. She argues that such charity work helped the Brotherhood to penetrate civil society and expand their support base. However, she notes that the charity primarily benefitted the middle-class constituencies, having limited effects on the welfare of the less-privileged communities and on overall development. Other scholars of Middle-Eastern politics extend their analytical focus more specifically to the electoral effects of such welfare and charity activities of the Brotherhood in the context of political liberalisation and democratic transition. Tarek Masoud focuses on "clientelistic" relations that the Brotherhood in Egypt has cultivated through provision of welfare services as material incentives to mobilise Muslim constituencies to their electoral advantage (Masoud 2007).

Religious parties are active in the electoral politics of various countries in Southeast Asia including Indonesia and Malaysia, both of which are emerging democracies and have clear Muslim majorities. In post-transition Indonesia, numerous parties based on Islamic principles or associated with mass religious organisations have been formed to participate in competitive democratic elections since 1999. The major Islamic parties that were eligible to contest the legislative elections in 2014 were the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*, PKB), the PKS, the National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional*, PAN), the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), and the Crescent Star Party (*Partai Bulan Bintang*, PBB).[2] Except PPP, all the parties were newly created after the democratic transition. In Malaysia, on the other hand, the PAS is a major Islamic party. This Islamic party contested the first general election in 1955 and has since then been a major opposition party in Malaysia's repressive undemocratic regime commonly dubbed "electoral authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way 2010).

The ability and mechanisms of these parties to mobilise followers, however, have yet to be adequately understood. Studies of religious parties tend to focus on ideological aspects and Islamist agendas – most notably, implementation of Shari'a (Islamic law), linkage to the Muslim Brotherhood, and/or establishment of religious rules, norms, and values – in order to explain their popular appeal (Bubalo and Fealy 2005; Machmudi 2008; Permata 2008; Rahmat 2008). Do they primarily rely on ideological and spiritual capital in order to build their support base and close relations with their followers? What kind of social work are religious parties in Southeast Asia engaged in and what kind of services do they provide, if any? What constraints have they faced in doing so? To what extent – and how – does the political and patronage motivation of these parties affect the operation and impact of these activities? In order to answer these questions, the next section is focused on the two most prominent Islamic parties in Indonesia and Malaysia, PKS and PAS, and comparatively analyses their social welfare activities.

Prosperous Justice Party: *Da'wa*, religious duties, and social welfare services

Among all the religious and other new parties in Indonesia, with the sole exception of the Democratic Party (*Partai Democrat*, PD), PKS has grown most rapidly since the democratic transition and achieved political prominence as one of the leading political parties in the ruling coalition led by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014).

In the legislative election in 2009, PKS won 7.8 per cent of the popular vote and 57 seats in the parliament (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) and secured four cabinet positions (later reduced to three), the highest among all other religious parties, though its popular support has shrunk to 6.8 per cent of the popular vote in the latest election in 2014.[3] Early studies tend to emphasise ideological attributes and appeals based on religion or religious characters to account for the earlier expansion of PKS, though these studies also consider other non-ideological attributes and conditions (Bubalo and Fealy 2005; Machmudi 2008; Permata 2008; Rahmat 2008). Other studies emphasise the "clean" and "religious" images that the party's leaders and cadres cultivated through their commitment to *daʿwa* (religious proselytising) and social activism (Aspinall 2005; Commett and Jones Luong 2014; Hamayotsu 2011b). However, as they gain national prominence and state power, some studies suggest that it is state patronage and corrupt activities that have helped the party leaders to run party machines and win elections both at national and regional levels. Their general contention is that PKS has become just like any other secular party as a result of their strategic adjustment, political moderation, and, in particular, their use of patronage and money politics (Tanuwidjaja 2010; Tomsa 2010, 2011).

All this may be empirically true, but it is not able to adequately account for the reasonably solid informal linkage that the party has built with their followers and constituencies – an attribute that is generally acknowledged. Indonesian elections are extremely expensive and corrupt. A massive amount of money is spent on running election campaigns and winning elections (Mietzner 2007, 2011). Corruption cases and scandals of PKS top leaders in recent years have raised and confirmed prior speculations that the party is likely to be involved in money politics and corruption in order to expand the party. It was widely predicted that its popularity would fall because of those high-profile corruption scandals.[4] Nonetheless, overt vote buying involving PKS has not been extensively noted. If their popular allegiance is primarily not bought, what is a prime source of popular allegiance to the party?

My primary research and fieldwork across the archipelago since 2008 finds that PKS has strategically developed social and welfare programmes in order to build community networks with their followers, both active and potential, since its inception.[5] The party has recruited and trained young cadres to serve the local communities and build a religious movement. These social services are taught as their religious duties, *daʿwa* (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera 2007). Although the party does not forget about compensating committed and hardworking cadres in return for

their volunteer service, it is without doubt the element of religious and social commitment that has made their commitment to social and welfare services even stronger. As the party was new and lacked resources in the formative years, recruitment of these young, educated, dedicated, and ambitious men and women was crucial for expanding party machines, programmes, and a solid mass support base. Moreover, the party has forged strategic alliance with a number of social and welfare NGOs in civil society, in order to procure resources necessary to devise and deliver services. This informal alliance has helped the party to expand their grassroots networks and penetrate religious (and non-religious) communities.

The linkage between political organisations especially state and political parties on the one hand and religious movements on the other is generally contentious, but has become even more so after the first democratic elections in 1999.[6] Religious elites from prominent religious movements such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah formed or joined political parties to achieve their political ambitions, generating heated debates within the movements about their appropriate positions and functions in civil society and their fundamental duties as religious movements or *da'wa*. Some contend that participation in electoral and party politics – and ultimately access to state power – is essential to expand their movements while fulfilling their religious missions. Others are opposed to participation in electoral politics altogether and insist that they should be fully dedicated to their religious missions and social activism because participation in electoral politics will do more harm than good to their original missions in the long term. Resolutions of the debates differ from one movement to another, having brought about varying outcomes.[7] In the case of PKS, the former position prevailed, allowing the pursuit of political power as a necessary avenue to achieve their religious goals. According to this position, their social work is religiously motivated but at the same time politically instrumental. PKS has taken advantage of their attribute as a religious movement and developed a range of welfare and social programmes and community networks in order to gain popular support and political allegiance. The programmes range from humanitarian aid, charity, education, and medical and health services, to hierarchically organised microfinance under the social welfare division of the party, Kesra (*Kesejahteraan Rakyat*). For example, PKS attracted much publicity and gained a reputation for swiftly dispatching convoys of cadres to offer humanitarian aid and rescue services in Aceh in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster. The programmes were usually tailored according to local conditions and needs as well as their capacity.

One of the most high-profile programmes is *zakat* (Islamic tithe) and charity-based financial programmes. The most successful and prominent zakat institutions with which PKS has forged close working relations are PKPU (*Lembaga Kemanusiaan Nasional*, National Humanitarian Institution) and *Rumah Zakat* (Zakat House).[8] Both institutions are officially independent NGOs and have gained national reputations as the most successful and innovative private zakat institutions among a number of other similar institutions, both public and private, that have flourished in post-transition Indonesia. According to the latest data collected by Forum Zakat, a national association of zakat management, Rumah Zakat is ranked the second largest and PKPU the third in terms of the total amount of funds collected per year (see Figure 7.1).[9]

The success of Rumah Zakat is not only in collecting large donations from affluent business and middle-class segments of society, but also in devising creative programmes intended to cater to underprivileged and often neglected groups such as single and poor mothers. Running 25 branches nationwide, the institution has introduced a wide array of innovative welfare programmes for the poor such as free maternity clinics. Rumah Zakat, based in Bandung, is leading a growing Islamic philanthropy movement that adopts modern technology, efficient management, and customer-friendly approaches with a focus on health, education, microfinance, and youth development. Its reputation has enabled the institution to coordinate large-scale operations, including humanitarian aid after natural disasters.[10] As pointed out by other

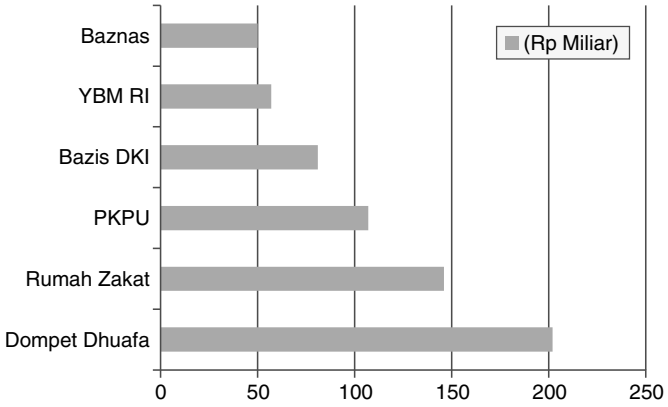

Figure 7.1 Zakat management fund (Rp Miliar)
Source: "Ribut berebut kue zakat," *Tempo*, 11 August 2013

anthropological studies, these programmes have contributed to community building and empowerment of the Muslim poor in Indonesia. Their programmes encourage underprivileged clients to not only achieve financial independence, but also to be involved in religious, social, and political activities through community channels catered by the institutions (Latief 2010; Sakai 2008).

It is undeniable that these social programmes are readily used for PKS' religious and political purposes and that these programmes have gained from working closely with PKS. For example, the founder of Rumah Zakat, Abu Syauqi, was nominated by PKS as a candidate in the Bandung mayoral election in 2008. Although he was not elected in the end, he subsequently quit the top position of Rumah Zakat and was appointed as the head of the social affairs division of PKS.[11] While these programmes have clear political effects on PKS, however, it is also necessary to ask about the effects of these programmes on human development. Do their political motivations stymie the socio-economic effects of these programmes? If so, how? Hypothetically, could these programmes have been more successful in bringing about greater benefits to those people in need? I emphasise at least two characteristics of PKS-linked welfare institutions to suggest that political motivations may not always be as negative as the normative perspective tends to suggest, especially in the absence of an effective welfare state in Indonesia. I argue that these programmes could not have been developed to the degree that they have, without the party's political motivations to expand their support base across the archipelago, including remote areas.

PKS leaders have strategically tailored their programmes with an aim to empower the underprivileged people and communities to limit both economic and political costs. They have learned from their earlier experiences of charity work that the free provision of goods and benefits would not help them achieve financial independence and ultimately "freedom" in Sen's famous terms because people are likely to take the easy money and free goods while rarely committing to support the party, thereby keeping the payoffs of the service minimal for the party.[12]

Scholars of political clientelism pay attention to such "commitment problems" and try to answer how we could minimise the lack of commitment and/or free-rider problems (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). A solution to this problem for PKS leaders was to devise group-based programmes centred on "collective responsibility" principles – especially among the programmes that involved monetary transactions such as microfinance. A cooperative scheme for mothers run by PKS' female activists provides one such example.[13] To participate in this financial

scheme, members are required to pay a membership fee and also form a group of 10–15 members to take joint responsibility of managing their accounts and funds loaned by the organisation. The groups are supervised by PKS cadres and members are required to participate in regular group meetings and training to learn new skills and knowledge to gain financial independence in the long-term. An important sociological (and psychological) effect of these programmes is to imbue a sense of community and responsibility among members and participants that could help reduce selfish and opportunistic attitudes.[14]

Without doubt, it is still a challenge to keep poor and undisciplined clients committed to the programmes, a common problem in most other microfinance programmes. What makes PKS programmes distinctive and possibly more effective is that they combine their microfinance programmes with other religious and social activities such as *Majelis Taklim* (local religious study groups). This way, the programmes intend to integrate clients not merely into creditor–debtor relations, which could be exploitative, but more importantly, into communities bound by a shared religion. Additionally, programme officers seem more lenient in demanding their clients to pay back debts as their ultimate goal is not purely economic or social, but political, to turn those clients into their supporters who could be mobilised to campaign and vote for them. Some cadres involved in the programmes admit that they are not able to punish their clients for the latter's incompliance and that at times, even they have helped clients to return their debt so that they do not have to quit the programme too soon. This political motivation may work even more powerfully because each cadre is required to fulfil his/her quota of recruiting new members as part of their duty.[15]

Party elites are aware of the importance of keeping the management of welfare and social activities of associate institutions separate and autonomous from party and political affairs. On the surface, they are not willing to admit that these organisations are linked to the party, despite their close association and coordination because of regulations imposed on NGOs as well as suspicions among people that they may be politically exploited. Instead, they use *informal* communication channels once their relations with clients (and hopefully future supporters of the party) are established initially through their community work. Additionally, these organisations are in principle run on non-partisan humanitarian principles and do not discriminate against non-party members/supporters. Likewise, in principle, clients are not punished if, after receiving services and benefits, they still do not support the party.[16] Overall, these religious organisations intend to attract donors

and clients based on their professional and good services. As a result, they have attempted and managed to protect the reputation of the party and these social organisations, respectively, as being professional and committed to *daʿwa*.

It is primarily due to this policy of functional separation – and its political motivation – that these welfare organisations have been effective in expanding their programmes and constituents.[17] This is especially true because state bureaucracies are typically politicised, corrupt, and ineffective, and do not necessarily work to deliver welfare goods and services to targeted communities to achieve intended development goals (World Bank 2007, 2008). The necessity of a so-called "strong state" for development is widely acknowledged in the political economy literature. The Indonesian state is constantly ranked among the lowest in the region in this respect (Hamilton-Hart 2002; Hutchcroft 1994; Khan and Jomo 2000; MacIntyre 1994). It is in this context of the absence of a disciplined and competent state bureaucracy that non-governmental welfare programmes and services including PKS' are not only in demand, but also able to develop in the post-transition period.

Although there is no hard data to determine the extent of the effect these programmes have brought about on people's lives, their reputation and impact are in stark contrast with some of the other similar institutions and programmes that are almost bankrupt or known for corruption and inefficient management.[18] The importance of "non-partisan" policy is more apparent when we compare the operational success and long-term impact of these organisations with the impacts on human development of highly politicised charity programmes, especially cash handout programmes, offered by other political organisations, political parties, and government alike. Among the best examples is the government's cash handout programme for the poor, known as BLSM (*Bantuan Langsung Semantara Masyarakat*) introduced by the government led by former president Yudhoyono in order to mitigate the negative impact of the increase of fuel prices.[19] As the distribution of cash was primarily prepared to protect the popularity of the president and his waning party, the programmes and data were not well prepared leading to either a delay or non-distribution of the money to the targeted groups of people.[20] Moreover, the distribution of free cash to some groups (but not others) has caused resentment among those who think that they deserve the financial aid but are not given it, thereby leading to unnecessary tension within some communities. Some communities even chose to return the money to the government.[21]

While the distribution of free money may give them some short-lived satisfaction, it will not help the impoverished class of people gain any additional skills or funds to improve their socio-economic conditions in the long term, let alone gain financial independence. Quite to the contrary, they develop a "dependence" mentality towards the government and politicians.[22] A member of parliament's Commission on Social Welfare and Religious Affairs laments such a popular attitude among the Indonesian electorates, saying "they think that we, members of parliament, are ATMs."[23]

In short, it is important to emphasise that political motivations are crucial for PKS cadres' commitment to social and welfare services to make their social welfare programmes work. Party cadres' hard work is compensated by higher positions in the party and government with material incentives given by the party leaders who emphasise circulation of powers and merit-based promotion (Hamayotsu 2011a). However, as the party grows larger and gains state positions and powers at both national and regional levels, PKS elites have also gained access to state patronage, projects, and money that are easily misused to personally benefit some top elites. Their more recent involvement in patronage politics, scandals, and corruption charges has led to public and media accusations against their involvement in money politics and double standards. This has caused devastating damage to their reputation and image.[24] Furthermore, it is damage done to perceptions among the rank-and-file cadres towards their leadership and internal party discipline that appears to be most alarming for the party leadership. Party elites still need the grass-roots networks of party cadres and the latter's labour and skills nurtured through their *daʿwa* activities in order to regain trust and credentials more broadly.[25] This is especially true because the development of their welfare and social programmes is heavily dependent on not only the *lack* of a disciplined and competent welfare state apparatus, but also the professionalism and commitment – and religious and political motivations – of party cadres in running those programmes.

Islamic Party of Malaysia: "Islamic state" and spiritual rewards

In stark contrast to PKS and other Islamist parties elsewhere, Malaysia's major Islamic party, PAS, has placed less emphasis on welfare and social programmes as a strategy to mobilise electorates and expand the support base.[26] Instead, they were more actively engaged in ideological debates on the religious and social front against the Malay Muslim based ruling

party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) to promote the spiritual well-being of the followers and the legalistic and ethical aspects of the Islamic faith. In particular, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, PAS fought hard to establish an Islamic state and to implement more stringent forms of Islamic law, especially *hudud* (Islamic criminal codes). However, since the mid-2000s, when PAS joined *Pakatan Rakyat* (People's Front) – the three-party, multi-ethnic and multi-religious opposition coalition – these demands have been publicly muted.

The PAS' relative inattention to welfare and social services does not mean that they are unconcerned about welfare conditions of their targeted constituents, especially Malays (and thus Muslims) in the lower strata of Malaysian society.[27] They do offer some minor low-maintenance religious and social services such as charity and roadside services during *Ramadan*, and some of the party leaders donate to some Muslim orphanages to fulfil their religious duties. Since the 2000s, they have also launched humanitarian aid programmes, although their primary focus is more on international conflicts involving the Muslim communities *outside* Malaysia.[28] An important exception in this regard is religious preschools (*Taska Pasti*) run by – or associated with – PAS religious leaders.

Without doubt, PAS is traditionally concerned about the welfare conditions of the underprivileged class of Muslim community. However, they tend to focus more on welfare programmes *after* they have accepted state office; religious and social programmes are devised and advanced as *state* services in ways to compensate their party constituencies. Overall, their party activities intended at development and welfare services are relatively limited in terms of scale and scope. Moreover, the party's religious elites often maintained that Muslims should not just be concerned about material aspects of life, but more about spiritual well-being, a stance taken in opposition to the government's (UMNO's) aggressive development policies and growing trends of materialism and consumerism in society. PAS elites and supporters value and promote modesty as an ideal religious way of life while often dismissing pursuit of material gains as greedy and unholy. A prominent example is the spiritual leader of PAS and former chief minister of Kelantan state, Nik Aziz Nik Mat. His modest life style, attire, and personality are widely regarded by his supporters and opponents alike as exemplary characteristics of a Muslim leader that all Muslims, especially politicians, should follow.

The relatively small focus PAS has given to social and welfare services needs to be explained in light of the broader debate about the strategic use of such services by religious parties to expand their support base. Concerned about the welfare conditions and economic predicaments

of the underprivileged communities, especially in rural states such as Kelantan, Kedah, and Terengganu, PAS could have been another Islamist organisation such as PKS or the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, there has been growing pious and self-consciously Islamic Muslim middle- and working-class constituencies, both in rural and urban areas that the Islamic party could have readily tapped. Two factors in particular have conditioned PAS' strategy. The first is the origin and nature of the organisation and the second is the presence of a dominant welfare and religious state skewed in favour of the majority Malay Muslim community. These factors also help to explain why other religious parties, especially PKS, have adopted the particular policy that they have.

The origin and development of PAS

In contrast to PKS and other Islamist parties elsewhere, PAS was born and subsequently developed as a political party and not as a social movement or *da'wa* movement.[29] It is also not a cadre party committed to recruitment and ideological training of loyal party members, though it has a hierarchical organisational structure. As such, the party has been constrained by the given political and institutional contexts, especially its rivalry with UMNO.

PAS was founded in 1951 by members of the religious section of UMNO, mainly *ulama* (religious elites) who considered UMNO leaders too secular. It was due to their disagreement with the overwhelmingly Western-educated and English-speaking secular Malay elites in UMNO over the place of religion in the new nation and government that they chose to split from UMNO (Funston 1976). Although from its inception PAS entailed strong religious identity and characteristics, its ideological position was never rigid, and changed over time according to the leadership as well as political conditions. During the 1970s, PAS was more ethno-nationalistic and concerned about defending Malay ethnic identity and interests, just like UMNO. It is only in the early 1980s that PAS became more committed to an Islamist ideology and associated platforms, especially after *ulama* assumed greater control of the party leadership. Since then, the party began campaigning for the establishment of an "Islamic state" and enforcement of a code of Islamic law based on a literal interpretation of the Quran (Mohamed 1994). Their stringent and rigid ideological position grew especially conspicuous when they proposed the introduction of *hudud* in the two state governments they controlled: Kelantan and Terengganu.[30] Moreover, the party elected one of the most radical religious leaders, Abdul Hadi Awang, as the party president after

the death of the more moderate Fadzil Noor in 2002. All these radical postures of the party alienated not only non-Muslims but also a large number of the urban middle-class Muslim community through the mid-2000s (Liew 2004; Liow 2004; Noor 2002). After the onset of the Anwar crisis and the anti-regime movement (*reformasi*) that ensued in the late 1990s,[31] PAS has begun moderating their ideological and dogmatic positions in order to remain in a multi-ethnic coalition led by Anwar Ibrahim, as well as to expand their electoral base in both rural and urban constituencies.

PAS was created as a political party primarily seeking political and state power. Its "membership" has been open to any Muslim and not primarily dependent on their religiosity or commitment to religious or social services. After the Anwar crisis, a number of UMNO leaders and supporters who were kicked out by, or pushed aside in, the party structure quickly joined PAS, resulting in a rapid more than doubling of party membership in less than one year.[32] Overall, member loyalty or commitment to social services does not seem to count for their recruitment or promotion as much as it does in other cadre-based Islamist parties such as PKS. Such a system does not give party rank-and-file members strong enough incentives to commit themselves to religious and social works.

The dominant welfare and religious state

Another more important factor constraining PAS' strategy is the presence of a dominant welfare and religious state in a powerful regime overtly biased in favour of the Malay Muslim community. Since the race riots in 1969, the state dominated by UMNO has been committed to the provision of an extensive range of welfare services and goods under the auspices of the *bumiputera* policies intended to upgrade the socio-economic and welfare conditions of the Malay Muslim community to a degree unparalleled in other developing countries such as Indonesia and Thailand (Kuhonta 2011; Shamsul 1983). In addition, government has officially adopted an Islamisation policy after Mahathir Mohamad came to power, expanding the function of state religious agencies in order to provide a range of religious-based social and welfare programmes in the Muslim community. Extensive state involvement in the major religious functions – such as enforcement of the Shari'a, Islamic schooling, and zakat and other charity and financial services including Islamic banking – was primarily intended to accommodate the interests of Malay Muslim communities, UMNO's primary constituencies, to live a more religious life. Yet, the religious programmes were carried out in tandem with the *bumiputera* policies aggressively pushed by the powerful state to

upgrade the welfare conditions of the Malay Muslim communities, at a time when the Malaysian economy was growing rapidly (Crouch 1996, 168–73; Liow 2009). They were also intended to pre-empt the political influence of PAS whose religious credentials were seen as superior to UMNOs. Thus, extensive state involvement in religious and social programmes has primarily been politically and ideologically motivated, having had a significant effect limiting the scale and scope of the policy and strategy available to PAS and other NGOs both in ideological and material terms.

It is important to note that from the beginning Malaysian Muslim elites have been endowed with comparatively well-organised institutional and cultural structures in devising and enforcing religious and social programmes. In Malaysia, Islam is constitutionally the official religion of the federation and falls under the jurisdiction of the constitutional monarchs and sultans, and the religion ceremonially heads the government in the individual states. The respective state governments inherited from the British colonial regime religious bureaucracies and authorities (e.g., Councils of Religious Affairs) to sponsor a range of religious affairs. After the introduction of Mahathir's Islamisation policy, UMNO elites have sought to centralise these religious agencies and authorities to expand and run religious programmes to cater for the welfare of Muslim populations. To this end, they have made a massive political and economic investment to train and employ an unprecedented number of religious officials, teachers, and judges who would be deployed to run Shari'a courts, Islamic schools, zakat administration, and other religious-based social and financial programmes. Today, the government is the single biggest employer of religious-educated elites and religious organisations to serve the spiritual as well as welfare needs of ordinary Muslim citizens (Hamayotsu 2006; Liow 2009, chap. 2).

One of the strategic sectors the government has heavily invested in is religious education; training and recruiting an increasing number of religious teachers to run new schools, religious schools, and programmes on Islamic subjects within the formal national schooling system. For example, national religious secondary schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Agama*, SMKA) which combine both secular and religious curriculum have steadily expanded since the 1980s. By the mid-2000s, almost 70 such schools had been founded nationwide. This has continued to grow because of their reputation for providing better teaching quality and facilities, as seen in Figure 7.2 (various sources from the Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia).

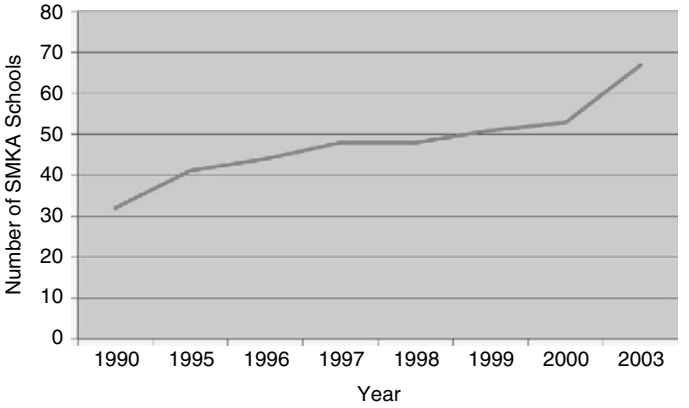

Figure 7.2 The number of national religious secondary schools (SMKA)
Source: Ministry of Education, Government of Malaysia

These government-sponsored religious schools have become very popular among Muslim parents, especially among better-educated middle-class parents who are eager to get their children a solid religious foundation. Moreover, by the mid-2000s, the federal government managed to take over the management of private religious schools (*madrasa*) and religious teachers. This level of state involvement is unthinkable in Indonesia where a wide range of mass religious organisations run their own schools relatively autonomously.[33] As a result, the majority of private religious schools and teachers receive financial and technical assistance from the federal government in return for their compliance with government-sanctioned curriculums and regulations.

Another welfare sector on which the government, especially Muslim politicians, has focused is the administration of zakat. This is not such a surprising development if we take into account the political value of zakat institutions and programmes as an instrument allowed for Muslim politicians to build their clientelistic networks and electoral support base (Hamayotsu 2004). In contrast to Indonesia and other Muslim nations, in Malaysia, the government constitutionally monopolises the administration of zakat and *waqf* (Islamic endowment), barring other non-governmental religious organisations or individuals including PAS to collect or spend zakat. In order to improve the management of zakat funds and programmes, some state governments founded a corporate body and introduced new charity schemes to fund a range of programmes for the Muslim poor.[34] The expanded state provision of

religious and welfare services is primarily due to *political incentives* of the ruling Muslim politicians to build their electoral support base through the provision of religious and social patronage. As a result, the Islamist opposition was left with few strategic and policy options in religious terms: fighting to enforce a narrowly interpreted Shari'a, the laws that the ruling politicians strongly opposed as being only a hindrance to their development and modernisation goals.

Against this backdrop, PAS has emphasised spiritual well-being and moral aspects of the Islamic faith – a stance taken to disdain UMNO, whom they consider too materialistic and secular. Even after they joined the multi-ethnic opposition coalition and somewhat moderated their ideological position to pledge building a more modern national party, their social visions and welfare programmes are not entirely clear. According to a Malaysian political economist, Terence Gomez, PAS as a religious party could have focused on development of welfare policies and programmes along the line of Christian democratic parties in Europe. But, they have failed to do so thus far.[35]

Conclusion: Lessons from Indonesia and Malaysia

My comparative analysis of two prominent Islamic religious parties in Indonesia and Malaysia suggests that they adopt different strategies to expand their support base according to their institutional and political situations. PKS has strategically devised welfare programmes and made use of the provision of welfare and social services to build close informal linkage with targeted communities and expand their support base beyond their core urban middle-class constituencies. In contrast, PAS places much less emphasis on provision of welfare services and material rewards despite their stated concern about welfare conditions of underprivileged Muslim communities. Instead, they focused on the enforcement of a narrowly interpreted Shari'a and moral aspects of the Islamic faith.

The striking variation can be primarily attributed to two factors. One is the origin and nature of the organisations. The other is the presence (or lack thereof) of a welfare and religious state. Indonesia's PKS was born and remains a religious and social movement committed to *da'wa* while developing a well-institutionalised cadre party. The party recruits and trains young cadres ready to commit to religious and social services in return for political rewards. Moreover, they have managed to expand their networks to the extent that they have because of an absence of an effective welfare state that is able to provide adequate welfare

programmes and services intended for long-term human development. At the same time, the party sought to minimise "overt politicisation" of the programmes as much as they could to run the programmes professionally and to have a great impact on the improvement of welfare conditions of Muslim communities.

On the other hand, Malaysia's PAS was created as a political party primarily seeking political and state powers while maintaining a pronounced religious identity. As a political party, their membership is very open and religious services and commitment do not seem to matter as much as in other Islamist organisations including PKS, giving members and supporters very little incentives to commit to social services. Moreover, non-governmental Islamic organisations cannot match a powerful and reasonably effective welfare and religious state in Malaysia that is ready to deliver a wide array of welfare and social programmes for the majority Malay Muslim communities. The expanded function of the state in providing religious and social services was primarily attributed to the electoral incentives of UMNO to win Muslim votes in the context of growing political Islam. Without such political motivations, these social and welfare programmes would never have been implemented to as large an extent as they have.

To conclude, my comparative analysis of Indonesia and Malaysia suggests that political motivations and informal relations built through provision of material incentives may not always have a negative effect on the building of effective social welfare programmes, if programmes are strategically tailored in ways to generate long-term development. In fact, those programmes built by political organisations, either a state or a party, could not have been developed to the degree that they have without the political elites' motivations to expand their support base. The case of Indonesia's PKS also supports the proposition that informal networks built by a political party could help to improve welfare conditions of underprivileged populations in the absence of an effective welfare state. Finally, I would like to emphasise that *religious* motivations proved to be equally important for the expansion of welfare programmes not only to encourage members' commitment to serve the Muslim community, but also to imbue among clients a sense of community that comes with a shared religion. The religious identity of political organisations such as PKS has helped to avoid turning their relations with clients into purely materialistic exploitative relations as conventionally expected in clientelistic relations, hence confirming the powerful potential of religious parties in contributing to human development.

Notes

1 In this chapter, I use the concept of "human development" along the line advanced by Amartya Sen's "Development as Freedom" unless otherwise specified (Sen 1999). According to Sen's concept, development should be understood as freedom from not merely material grievances but also any other exploitative relations and conditions.
2 The categorisation of PAN has been increasingly complicated with the influence of Muhammadiyah, the second largest mass Islamic organisation. The leadership and management of the party have diminished considerably over the years. Amien Rais, former chairman of Muhammadiyah and a founder of the party, still remains influential both at the national and grass-roots levels.
3 This chapter does not include the outcomes and assessment of the 2014 elections which have just ended unless they are directly relevant to my analysis in this chapter.
4 The latest corruption scandal involving the Ministry of Agriculture (headed by a PKS politician) and beef imports is a case in point (e.g., *Tempo*, 20 March 2011; 3 April 2011; 12 June 2011).
5 The party cadres internally call their strategy "direct selling."
6 For the debate within NU under the authoritarian New Order regime, see Barton and Fealy (1996) and Feillard (1995).
7 For the debates within NU and Muhammadiyah after the regime transition, see Bush (2009) and Jung (2009).
8 For their programmes and activities, see their websites: PKPU (http://www.pkpu.or.id) and Rumah Zakat (http://www.rumahzakat.org/).
9 *Tempo*, 11 August 2013. *Dompet Dhuafa*, another private *zakat* institution, is ranked the largest, collecting 202 million rupiah.
10 Field visit to Rumah Zakat headquarters, microfinance programme office, and clinic, Bandung, 10 July 2008; Rumah Zakat monthly reports, *RUMAH LENTERA*.
11 *Pikiran Rakyat online*, 22 June 2008.
12 Author interview with PKS leaders involved in welfare and social works, Jakarta, Depok, and Makassar, June–July 2008.
13 In Kota Bandung, PKS female activists run a programme called "Sekolah Ibu (Schools for Mothers)" which provides useful business skills for mothers to attain financial independence and run households well.
14 My personal participation in the programmes and communications with programme leaders in Depok, West Java.
15 Karim's studies on microfinance programmes in Bangladesh offer an insightful case study to comparatively assess the effects of NGO linkage with political parties on human development (Karim 2001, 2011).
16 The former head of the Women's wing of the party expressed her disappointment after the 2009 legislative elections that a number of people and areas she and her teams helped did not after all support the party though she emphasised that they would not give up or withdraw their activities regardless of the election results. She is one of the four female Members of the Parliament from PKS elected in 2009 and the only one re-elected in 2014 (Author interview, Jakarta, 3 July 2009).

17 Annual reports owned by the author.
18 Most prominent in this respect are the religious-based welfare programmes run by the government, especially the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry has drawn much media and public attention due to an alleged involvement in corruption. It is also known that some of the welfare/financial programmes of major religious organisations such as NU and Muhammadiyah are in financial trouble. The management of NU's micro-finance programme, for example, was recently taken over by a Singaporean investment company (*Jakarta Post*, 12 July 2013).
19 For example, *Tempo.com*, 18 July 2013, http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/07/18/058497504/Salah-Informasi-Warga-Tak-Jadi-Terima-BLSM; *Tempo.com*, 25 July 2013, http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/07/25/087499733/Realisasi-Pembayaran-BLSM-Capai-88-Persen.
20 *Pikiran Rakyat* online, 24 June 2013.
21 *Koran Tempo*, 29 July 2013.
22 Karim claims such a problem is a typical consequence of politicised microfinance programmes in the context of Bangladesh (Karim 2001).
23 My personal communications with a member of parliament (DPR), Bandung, 22–23 July 2013.
24 *Tempo*, 26 May 2013.
25 *Kompas*, 2 June 2013.
26 For a comparative analysis of various Islamist organisations and the function of patronage and social provision in their political mobilisation across the Muslim world, see Sinno (2009).
27 PAS was known for a long time for fighting for the interests of rural Malay communities who are usually poor in the Northern belts of the peninsula, especially Kelantan (Kessler 1978).
28 This tendency also applies to the Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), another prominent Islamic organisation in Malaysia. I thank Zainah Anwar for this point. My personal communication with her, Sisters in Islam office, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, 11 June 2013.
29 See also Masoud (2008) for a discussion of the categorisation and characteristics of Islamist parties.
30 PAS won the Terengganu state in 1999 but lost it again in 2004.
31 Then Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was dismissed by then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad from the government and party offices and jailed for sodomy and corruption in 1998, spurring an unprecedentedly large-scale anti-regime movement.
32 PAS claims to have a million members and has branches in all states in the country, including Sabah and Sarawak (Liew 2004, 5). Accuracy of the membership is not entirely clear because they are not card-holding members.
33 Interview with Professor Rosnani Hashim, the Department of Education, International Islamic University of Malaysia (UIAM), Kuala Lumpur, 15 December 2009. For overall development of the religious schools in Malaysia, see Rosnani (2004).
34 The discussion in this section on zakat institutions is mostly drawn from my PhD dissertation (Hamayotsu 2006, chap. 6).
35 My personal communication with Gomez, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 10 June 2013.

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8

Between Ideology and International Politics: The Dynamics and Transformation of a Transnational Islamic Charity

Zoltan Pall

This chapter aims to demonstrate how theological debates play a role in the evolution, development, and inner working of transnational Islamic charities based in the Arabian Gulf. Most of these charitable institutions are connected to a social movement. Therefore to understand their dynamics, it is crucial to examine the internal debates and divergence of the Islamic social movement of which the charities constitute an integral part.

I will show how the fragmentation of the transnational Salafi movement affected the Kuwaiti *Jamaʿiyyat Ihyaʾ al-Turath al-Islami* (Revival of Islamic Heritage Society – RIHS) and led to a change in its profile and policy. In turn, these transformations have also had impacts on the structure of Salafism in several localities, where RIHS had welfare activity. I demonstrate this with two case studies on Salafism, one in North Lebanon and one in Indonesia.

Salafi charities are part of a broader project aimed at establishing a pious Islamic society. This can usually be understood as poverty alleviation, the distribution of food aid, and providing free or heavily subsidised medical services. These are carried out alongside religious lectures, building mosques and religious colleges, and distributing religious literature. In other words, aid and development programmes serve as avenues for the Salafi message to reach society.

Islamic charities and ideology

Much has been written about the roles that charitable organisations play in various Islamic movements and how these charities serve the wider movements' goals. Much attention has been paid to how these organisations facilitate the mobilisation and recruitment activities of these

movements. Many publications discuss how charities channel resources for militant organisations to carry out armed actions (Burr and Collins 2006; Singer 2008). Another strand of literature deals with transnational Muslim charities as faith-based organisations (FBOs) and inquires whether transnational Muslim charities are useful tools to implement development programmes. These publications usually seek an answer to the question of whether Muslim FBOs effectively help people to escape poverty, or whether they are possible partners for donor organisations in carrying out relief work.[1]

Rarely discussed, however, are issues related to how ideology plays a role in forming the policy and strategy of transnational Muslim charitable organisations. The works of Marie Juul-Petersen constitute an exception. She explores how Islamic charities produce, express, and contest meanings associated with "aid" and Islam (Petersen 2011, 2012). Petersen provides thorough analyses of different organisations and explains the motives behind their charity activities. However, the existing literature does not address how ideological debates and rifts influence the inner working of transnational Muslim charities, and how such debates alter the policies and strategies of these organisations. There is hardly any scholarly analysis on how schisms in a given Islamic movement affect its relief institutions. Inquiries about how such developments might reshape the transnational networks of Islamic charities are entirely missing. But questions should be asked about how theological debates influence who Islamic charities support and how ideological transformations alter their attitudes towards the state.

Academic studies have also largely neglected discussion of charities influenced by Salafism. Although the literature on Salafism is rapidly growing, and scholars admit the crucial importance of charity and relief institutions for the movement, they have largely failed to give detailed analyses on how these organisations work and how they facilitate the spread of the Salafi message.[2] Paying closer attention to this issue would facilitate our understanding of the dynamics of Salafism in the Middle East and South East Asia where charities constitute a very significant part of the mobilising structures of the movement.

Social movement theory provides an appropriate framework to explain the reasons behind the radical transformation of one of the most important Salafi charities, the Kuwait-based RIHS, and understand how it affects Salafism on the international level. I conceptualise Islamic movements, and among them Salafism as a "social movement." Mario Diani defines social movements as "networks of informal interactions, between a plurality of individuals, groups or associations, engaged in a political

or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani 2000: 13). Within these "networks of informal interactions," unequal power relations exist. The nature of the dynamics of these relations is fluid; they constantly change and rearrange. These transformations occur both due to internal evolutions in the movement and shifts in the external environment.

Since providing material aid is an important way of maintaining and increasing the constituency of Islamic social movements, charities usually constitute organic parts of their networks. Therefore changes in the power structure of these movements naturally affect these organisations. This is particularly true regarding Salafi charities due to their philosophy of aid and relief work.

Salafism is one of the most influential Islamic movements in the contemporary Muslim world. Although its roots go back to the 2nd century after the death of Prophet Muhammad (632 AD), it gained prominence only from the beginning of the 1970s, due to support from Saudi Arabia. Salafism provides the ideological foundation of the kingdom, and the Saudi state bankrolled Salafi proselytisation worldwide by building mosques, religious schools, and providing salaries for preachers. Furthermore, Riyadh provided thousands of scholarships for students from around the Muslim world to study in one of Saudi Arabia's Islamic universities as a means of disseminating state-sanctioned Islamic ideology.

The main distinguishing feature of Salafism is its literal understanding of the Quran and the Prophetical Tradition (*hadith*). Salafis refuse any kind of metaphorical reading. Their main aim is to purify Islam from what they identify as foreign additions to the once pristine religion. They are especially hostile towards Sufis (Islamic mystics) and Shi'ites.[3] Salafis target the identity of Muslims by their intention to transform their religious beliefs and practices. When they engage in a charitable activity, they use it as a tool of their proselytisation. According to Salafis, the aim of relief work should not only be poverty alleviation and the fulfilment of other material needs; charity work has to be done for the sake of God. This means that recipients should benefit regarding the prospect of their hereafter. In other words, material aid should serve the aim of bringing the beneficiaries closer to believing and practicing the correct form of Islam, and by doing so, attain salvation.[4]

For instance, Salafis do not donate food only to save others from starvation, and nor do they provide medical aid only to help others to avoid physical suffering. They rather use a charitable activity as an avenue to spread their message and convert others to the "correct form of Islam"

(Brown 2013: 254–259). Employees of Salafi charities from the Gulf countries regularly travel to Syria to distribute aid among refugees who fled because of the current conflict. When they do so they always bring leaflets and books which propagate Salafi topics along with food and medicines. They also use the opportunity of relief delivery to organise religious lessons and lectures for the refugees.[5]

What distinguishes Salafi charities from charities that are associated with other Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, is their lower level of institutionalisation and relative lack of expertise. The institutional framework of these organisations is usually less elaborate and informal networks or personal ties play crucial roles (Pall 2014: 247–249). The leaders and decision-makers of Salafi charities are usually religious scholars and not professionals trained and competent in the management of charity work.[6]

There are several streams within Salafism with significant differences among them in their theological discourse. Salafis often label those who have major differences in their opinion in religious matters as heretics. Since for Salafis aid and proselytisation (*da'wa*) are intimately intertwined, the relief work of those who do not possess the "right creed" is seen as harmful because they inevitably "lead astray" their beneficiaries. Therefore intra-movement debates on theological issues often lead to secessions within the Salafi charities.

A major restructuring of power relations within Salafism took place after the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis. This conflict was primarily over disagreements between differing theologies of politics and the state. The movement in Saudi Arabia – which is the main centre of Salafism globally – split into two factions over their disagreement on the appropriate role of the ruler and the permissibility of wider socio-political activism. Historically, the Saudi rulers as guardians of an Islamic social order gained their legitimacy from Salafi religious scholars. The latter have been granted wide autonomy to control the social sphere in exchange for giving religious legitimacy to the decisions made by the ruling family, and for ensuring the submission of the citizens by emphasising the religious necessity of the obedience to the Muslim ruler (Commins 2006: 104–129).

However, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, those whom I label "activists" or in Arabic *haraki*s openly reinterpreted the doctrine of obedience by criticising the decision of the Saudi government to allow American soldiers onto the soil of the Kingdom (Al-Rasheed 2007: 59–101; Fandy 2001: 21–60). They argued that the ruler has to be accountable to his subjects, who even have to possess the right to remove him. These Salafis

mostly belonged to the so-called "Sahwa movement," which launched a large-scale political insurgency that lasted until 1994 (Lacroix 2011).[7]

Another faction of Salafis, whom I call "purists," rejected the demands of the harakis. They emphasised the need for unconditional obedience to the Muslim ruler, which, in their view, is required by Islamic Law. Purists condemned any action that they saw as opposing the Muslim ruler. They labelled harakis as "innovators" (*mubtadi'*) and trouble makers who were attempting to destroy the social order prescribed by God. This order, according to purists, is based on an obedient population under a Muslim ruler (who is not necessarily just and may even be corrupt and oppressive).

It is necessary to mention that there are also diverse streams and networks within each major faction. For example, among the purists there are groups which see participation in institutional politics permissible within certain constraints, while others reject such participation altogether. Among the harakis, some want to change political regimes by being directly involved in parliamentary politics, but others believe that violence is the only way to change the political status quo in order to establish a true Islamic social and political system (Pall 2013: 22–28). These latter believers are commonly known as Jihadi Salafis.[8] In this chapter, I exclude the Jihadi stream and discuss only the Salafis who intend to achieve their aims largely by peaceful means.

This intra-movement split between purists and harakis has reshaped the structure of Salafism worldwide. These two factions have emerged in almost every locality where Salafi activism can be observed. The fractionalisation of the movement also inflicted major changes in the philosophy and strategy of certain Salafi groups in carrying out relief work. I demonstrate this transformation in the following sections.

The evolution and fractionalisation of RIHS

Before I examine the debates which led to the transformation of RIHS, I shall briefly discuss Salafism in Kuwait before the eruption of the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis. The movement in Kuwait gained a foothold within the tribal segments of the society in the early 20th century, but became a significant social movement only in the 1970s when Salafism started to grow among the economically and politically dominant urban (*hadar*) population. During this period of growth, one of the most prominent figures of the movement was Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq, an Egyptian religious scholar who had settled in Kuwait in the 1960s. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman did not conform to the stereotype of

the average Salafi religious scholar (ʿ*alim*) of the time, which can only be described as pursuing extreme isolationism and being thoroughly parochial in outlook. He can be regarded as one of the founders of the activist stream of Salafism, which tend to be most politically active. Mostly due to Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman's and his associates' proselytisation activities, the pre-Gulf war Kuwait Salafi movement could be regarded as being activist in nature.

By the beginning of the 1980s, the Salafi movement in Kuwait had achieved an unprecedented level of organisational development. While most aspects of the movement's organisational strategy retained an informal character, Salafis gained a strong presence in labour organisations and student unions, where they competed with the Muslim Brothers. In the next stage of their organisational development, the Salafis of Kuwait established their first charity, RIHS. The society was founded in 1981 with the support of the Kuwaiti state and wealthy merchants who shared Salafi ideology. Although, according to its founding documents, RIHS was created for charitable purposes, from the beginning it covered a much wider range of tasks.

In the 1980s RIHS served as an umbrella organisation for Kuwait's Salafis, and provided an institutional framework to engage in the political process. In 1981, for the first time anywhere in the world, Salafis were nominated for parliamentary elections. At this time, Salafis elsewhere did not support any kind of political participation in secular and parliamentary regimes, since they were heavily influenced by the Saudi religious line, which abstained from any serious political involvement aside from legitimising the autocratic rule of the royal family. Most Kuwaiti Salafis, however, took a different stance, due in large part to the revolutionary ideology propagated by their main religious authority, ʿAbd al-Rahman.

The thought of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq

It is necessary to briefly discuss the thought of ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq, since his ideas and the debates he inspired played a crucial role in the development of RIHS. Unlike those of purist Salafis, the majority of the writings of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman are related to politics. In the second half of the 1970s he began publishing weekly in *Al-Watan*, one of the biggest Kuwaiti dailies, mainly on contemporary political affairs. In one of his articles he argued that politics and human development are more important than mere religious practice. According to him, Islam is a total system; politics forms a part of this system, and cannot be neglected by religious scholars.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman criticises the argument that the Prophet did not practice politics in the first Meccan period. According to Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman, this claim is false because politics is not only about governing a state. In his words,

> The Prophet from the first day of his *da'wa* intended to apply a different teaching from the dominant worldview and wanted to gather people around this . . . The Prophet also created a secret society [when the Muslims were oppressed in Mecca], a society that worked publicly to change the social system. He used every available media, like personal conversations, sermons . . . the media war against the belief of the pagans, and all of this is politics.[9]

ʿAbd al-Rahman thinks that the purist stance on politics only serves the enemies of Islam who support weak rulers in Muslim countries in order to safeguard the interests of the West. As these rulers refuse to govern according to Islam, the purists who legitimise their rule are serving the enemies of their religion. Unlike the purists, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman also justifies the establishment of Muslim political parties on the grounds that they can raise the flag of Islam. He also argues that there is no evidence in the Quran and the Hadith (the foundational texts of Islam) that prohibits such organisations. He thinks that parties are effective tools of proselytisation in a democratic system, and that it is in the interest of Muslims to pursue their goals through this system, since the alternative is military dictatorship.

RIHS after the liberation of Kuwait

The Salafi movement in Kuwait was quite united under the umbrella of RIHS until 1990. However, after the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation, this was no longer the case. The fragmentation occurred due to debates within the Salafi movement in Saudi Arabia, which I briefly described above. During the Gulf War, most Kuwaiti Salafis escaped to Saudi Arabia, where they began to play active roles in these debates. They were able to integrate quickly into the different Salafi networks and groups in Saudi Arabia, as they were often connected to the Saudi Salafis through kinship.[10] Many of them became active participants in the *Sahwa* movement. Upon their return to their home country after the war, these individuals became pioneers of the haraki wing of Kuwaiti Salafism.

During the occupation of Kuwait, others sided with the purist camp, which was represented by the official Saudi religious establishment.

Most probably, their main reason for doing so was the fact that the purists did not oppose Kuwait's liberation, even though it was undertaken by Western forces. After the liberation, when most Kuwaiti Salafis returned home, the debates had reached Kuwait, and in the 1990s the local Salafi community split along activist and purist lines. This schism, in turn, had an impact on RIHS. Until that time, the organisation had been firmly under the influence of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman.

In the first half of the 1990s, ʿAbd al-Rahman was suddenly ousted from RIHS and the organisation's ideological direction changed radically. In around 1996–1997, a purist stream gradually gained control over RIHS, led by Shaykh ʿAbdullah al-Sabt, a former pupil of ʿAbd al-Rahman. According to some of my informants, the purists were given intensive state support, since the ruling family no longer trusted ʿAbd al-Rahman and his followers. There were two reasons for this. First, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman had personally sympathised with Saddam Hussein prior to the invasion, due to the Iraqi president's anti-Shiʿa stance. Although Shiʿites were not the only victims of Saddam's persecution, many Salafis sympathised with him because he harshly repressed Shiʿite Islamic movements. Second, the Kuwaiti state was threatened by haraki Salafis due to their ambiguous stance towards Arab rulers. Harakis in general considered the leaders of the Arab world as corrupt and incompetent dictators and often emphasised that the fall of their regimes was inevitable in the long run.[11]

The direct result of the expulsion of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman and most of his followers from RIHS was an open feud between ʿAbd al-Rahman and Shaykh ʿAbdullah al-Sabt. ʿAbdullah al-Sabt criticised his mentor's views on *tawhid* or the unity of God. Salafi theology mainly revolves around this concept, namely, that nothing can be associated or compared to the one, omnipotent God. Salafis traditionally distinguish *tawhid* as three parts: first, the unity of Lordship is such that God is the only possessor of supernatural powers and everything depends on His will in the universe; second, only God can be worshipped; and third, God is unique in all of His attributes such that nothing is comparable to Him. In his writings Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman proposes a fourth component to *tawhid*, oneness of governance (*tawhid al-hakimiyya*), which, according to him, means that divine revelation represents the only legitimate source of legislation and governance (ʿAbd al-Khaliq 2000). Purist Salafis interpreted this as the application of the famous Egyptian ideologue, Sayyid Qutb's concept on God's sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) in a Salafi context.[12] According to Qutb, a government should be based on the sovereignty of God, which means that the legal system must be

entirely based on Islamic Law. Furthermore, for Qutb, the ruler must rule justly, and must be chosen by the ruled, who must then obey the ruler. However, this obedience is based on the ruler's obedience to God (Shephard 1996: 117).

ʿAbdullah al-Sabt therefore accused ʿAbd al-Rahman of making a covert call for a revolt against the ruler and subsequently called him a "Kharijite," after a notorious sectarian movement in early Islam. ʿAbdullah al-Sabt argued that while "there is no intelligent Muslim who thinks that governance is not for God," nevertheless an undue emphasis on this can be misleading and may cause political difficulties. In one of his articles, ʿAbdullah al-Sabt explained that Salafis believe in the "application of God's rule on the Earth," but that this does not mean the "narrow-minded" concept of the "Kharijites." According to him, God's rule means having a strong Muslim ruler, who assures that his subjects can follow all the practices and rulings of Islam. He rejected the arguments of activist Salafis, who envision an Islamic state where the ruler is elected by his subjects, and who are free to criticise and remove him.

ʿAbd al-Rahman responded to ʿAbdullah al-Sabt in a religious communiqué.[13] He emphasised that revolution against the ruler is obligatory only if the ruler is openly an apostate and thinks that man-made law is as good, or better, than Islamic Law. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman explained that the inclusion of "oneness of governance" among the pillars of *tawhid* was a matter of choice, not a matter of sacred principle. There is no reason why a Salafi should strictly hold on to the idea of three aspects of *tawhid*. According to him, one may also speak of just one pillar of *tawhid*, or of ten, if one so wishes.

It should be noted that when I asked ʿAbd al-Rahman whether it was permissible for the people to overthrow the ruler under certain conditions, he refused to give me a clear answer, while the purists today who control RIHS responded to the same question with an unequivocal no. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, however, when the Muslim Brothers openly criticised the legitimacy of contemporary Arab regimes, including Kuwait, he had always argued that it was not in the interests of Muslims to touch on political issues such as these. According to him, the political situation then was not appropriate to revolt.[14]

After the emergence of the current activist wave of Salafism, the Gulf regimes began to worry about potential criticism of hereditary monarchical systems and their alliances with the West. The Kuwaiti state had had enough problems with the Muslim Brothers in the 1980s, and it did not want to count the Salafis among its opponents. Therefore the government began to support the purist Salafi faction led by

ʿAbdullah al-Sabt against ʿAbd al-Rahman. By supporting a loyal faction and gaining control over RIHS, the state expected to ensure the loyalty of the majority of Salafis, or at least to depoliticise them.

As the result of the internal strife in the organisation, the majority of the followers of ʿAbd al-Rahman left the organisation in 1997 and created their own group under the name of "The Salafi Movement" (*Al-Haraka al-Salafiyya*). After that, the nature of RIHS rapidly changed. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman's books disappeared from the organisation's publishing houses, which instead began printing the works of the Saudi religious establishment and of Kuwaiti scholars with purist views. These publications focus on two main issues: the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and the question of jihad.[15]

Purist Salafism and relief work

The ideological transformation of RIHS had a deep impact on Salafism on the international level. In the period between 1981 and 1997, the charity successfully established a significant presence in about 50 countries in the Middle East, South East Asia, South Asia, and the Balkans. RIHS contributed to the growth of Salafism in these regions by building and supporting thousands of mosques, providing material aid to locals in post-conflict and post-disaster areas by distributing food and clothing, and building healthcare and educational institutions (mostly religious colleges). The organisation also gave significant support to minority Muslim communities in Asia, such as Thailand and Cambodia, and Europe. RIHS usually employed pre-established social networks[16] as avenues to channel the material aid and implement projects in different localities. From this period until the second half of the 1990s, most of the recipients of the charity used to belong to the haraki faction. In some cases RIHS endorsed Salafis to participate in parliamentary politics, as was the case in Yemen, for example, in the beginning of the 1990s.

After the purists had taken over the leadership of RIHS and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman was ousted, the organisation changed its aid policy abroad. RIHS mostly abandoned its haraki beneficiaries and started to support purist groups worldwide. Adopting purist ideology and following the *fatwa*s (legal opinion) issued by high-ranking Saudi purist scholars became an essential criteria for receiving sponsorship from the charity. RIHS did not object to participation in parliamentary politics as long as this participation matched certain criteria. First, they were not allowed to form opposition against the ruler, but had to support the ruler in legislative councils. Second, they could only propose and

support legislation that concerned daily religious practices, such as banning the sale of alcohol, or imposing gender segregation in public institutions.

Before the purists took over the organisation, RIHS did not assert this level of control over those groups and institutions which received financial aid from it. The only condition was that they had to use the funding for proselytisation purposes, such as building mosques and religious colleges.[17] After the ousting of the harakis, RIHS also changed its methods of providing material support to its beneficiaries abroad. Often it established branches in foreign countries, which were under the immediate control of the mother organisation in Kuwait. Those institutions which did not belong directly to the organisational structure of RIHS, had to precisely follow guidelines provided by the charity in the way funds were spent.

RIHS chose a similar strategy to what Davis and Robinson call "bypassing the state" (Davis and Robinson 2012: 24). According to them, certain religious movements set up networks of religious, cultural, and economic institutions, which are largely autonomous from the state. These institutions often provide economic services to the population in localities where the state's welfare network is weak or missing. Along with giving economic support, this network of alternative institutions provides avenues for religious movements to transmit their ideology to the wider population (Davis and Robinson 2012: 24–40). By taking over large parts of civil society, religious movements are able, if they desire, to effectively challenge the state itself. For example, as Davis and Robinson show, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt's revolution used its control of vast numbers of civil society institutions to grasp power after the 2011 revolution.

However, the purist Salafis in Kuwait who managed RIHS utilised their abilities to bypass the state in a different way from that of the Muslim Brothers. Instead of building up an alternative to the state, RIHS always demanded its beneficiaries in Muslim countries to pledge loyalty to the leader of the state.[18] The charity actively sought cooperation with the government of host countries by facilitating the work of the law enforcement or assisting the authorities to limit the influence of militant Islamic movements. By doing this, RIHS intended to secure the autonomy of local purists to continue their proselytisation activity and to extend their network of religious and welfare institutions.

RIHS thereby contributed to the implementation of a project that Mona Atia (2013) calls "pious neoliberalism." According to her definition: "Pious neoliberal ideology represents the merging of a

market-orientation with faith; it is a productive merger that leads to new institutional forms, like private mosques, private foundations, and Islamic lifestyle market. Pious neoliberalism generates self-regulating and ethical subjects as faith and the market discipline them simultaneously" (Atia 2013: xviii). RIHS does not only finance the building of networks of private religious, relief, and educational institutions. It also donates capital for income-generating projects. The latter can be understood as helping the needy to launch their own small-scale businesses.

RIHS and the emergence of purists in North Lebanon

In the first period of its history, in the 1980s and 1990s, Lebanese Salafism was equated with the Al-Shahhal family, whose members were among the first who engaged in preaching Salafi ideology in the country. The most influential member of the family, Daʿi al-Islam al-Shahhal had access to funds in the Gulf and the support of political bosses in Tripoli and by this became the main patron of Salafis in North Lebanon. Most participants of the movement worked in his religious colleges and charitable institutions, and their preaching activities were financially supported by him. Most Lebanese Salafis at that time followed al-Shahhal's haraki line, purists were very few in number and constituted only marginal groups.

In 1990 RIHS became one of the main donors of Al-Shahhal, donating hundreds of thousands of dollars for his charity network *Jamaʿiyyat a-Hidaya wa-l-Ihsan* (Society of Guidance and Almsgiving). During his studies at the Islamic University of Medina in the 1980s, al-Shahhal befriended many members of RIHS. These individuals saw potential in Shaykh Daʿi to be their agent in Lebanon. The charity probably donated to him millions of US dollars to extend his network of charity and religious institutions. However, when the leadership of the charity changed in 1997, al-Shahhal fell out of grace. Initially, the new administration of RIHS tried to convince him to follow a purist *manhaj* (theological methodology) and distribute purist literature among his followers. When he refused, the charity cut all contacts with him.[19]

For a few years following the split of RIHS with Al-Shahhal, the organisation sent only a small amount of money for a few purist individuals in Lebanon to publish booklets or make *iftar* (fast breaking) for the poor. The field opened for the post-ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq RIHS, when the Lebanese authorities together with the occupying Syrian army and intelligence launched a series of crackdowns on the Salafis in the North. In 2000, after a battle between a group of militant Salafis and the Lebanese army, the authorities blamed Al-Shahhal with nurturing "terrorist" groups.

To avoid prosecution he, together with his brothers, had to escape to Saudi Arabia, while his main associates ended up in prison.

Large-scale charity work in Tripoli resumed in the mid-2000s. Those Salafis, who had previously received funding from Al-Shahhal, in his absence started to look for alternative sources. RIHS offered material support for those who were inclined to purist thinking and agreed not to propagate haraki ideas. A member of RIHS' leadership spent some time in Lebanon as a tourist when he accidentally met a young Salafi, Safwan al-Zaʿbi, who at that time was in his early thirties. Al-Zaʿbi was invited to Kuwait where he spent some time studying *halaqat* (informal religious lessons usually held in the mosque or private homes) and was introduced to the leading figures of RIHS. Around 2004, Al-Zaʿbi started to build an Islamic centre and a clinic in the Abu Samra district in Tripoli using the funds he received from RIHS. In 2005, he officially established the local branch of the Kuwaiti charity under the name *Waqf al-Turath al-Islami* (Islamic Heritage Endowment – IHE).

IHE became the backbone of purist networks in North Lebanon. Safwan Al-Zaʿbi became the main agent of RIHS in the country and he distributed the funds he received from the Kuwait charity. This gave him considerable influence over the North Lebanese Salafi scene until he left the organisation in 2011. He launched several projects that drew the majority of the purists to his circle of patronage. IHE opened several medical clinics in Tripoli and in the villages of the surrounding regions of the city (ʿAkkar and Dinniyah). At the same time, the charity sponsors mosques and local *waqf*s (endowment) where the needy can receive material aid. Al-Zaʿbi built an orphanage, which provides basic amenities and health care, and finances education for hundreds of orphans.[20] He also provided small financial donations to some Salafi individuals in Tripoli to open small-scale businesses, such as restaurants, shops, and bakeries.

To increase cooperation with the state authorities, which fit the profile of a purist charity, RIHS endorsed its local branch to integrate Salafis to the official Sunni religious authority of Lebanon, *Dar al-Fatwa*. By gaining the recognition of the official *ulama* (religious scholars), the Salafi schools and colleges would gain accreditation, which would enable their students to continue their studies at Lebanese universities. Since the Salafi *maʿahid* provide free education, purists hoped that many of the less well-off Tripolitan youth would choose their schools. By this, they would be able to disseminate their ideology even more effectively.[21]

When RIHS launched this proposal, Dar al-Fatwa seemed open to this initiative. The mufti of Tripoli, Malik al-Shaʿar hoped that by

incorporating the purists into the official Sunni religious institutional system, the position of the harakis would be weakened. Harakis had traditionally been hostile to Dar al-Fatwa and were seen as a bigger challenge, and they were often criticised very harshly by Dar al-Fatwa shaykhs. By establishing an independent institutional system, harakis had further weakened the official religious authority.

By the end of the 2000s, with RIHS' support, a relatively strong purist stream emerged in North Lebanon, which was able to compete with the harakis in popular support and influence. The success of RIHS' Lebanese activities, also served the interest of the Kuwaiti state. The Gulf States traditionally employ "soft power" using their financial abilities to further their interests abroad (Kamrava 2013: 69–104; Nye 2004). The Kuwaiti ruling family, Al Sabah, has traditionally patronised a number of charities and NGOs which have presence and activities abroad. These organisations are officially independent from the state, but in reality, they have strong ties to Al Sabah. RIHS, for example, receives most of its funds from members of the ruling family, or individuals, financial institutions, and companies, which are closely associated to it.

In exchange, RIHS often represents the interests of the Kuwaiti state abroad. For example, in Lebanon, the local branch of the charity mobilises voters at the time of the parliamentary or municipal elections. Although the number of votes that RIHS controls is not that high, it can be enough to change the balance between candidates if the competition is close. Due to its ability to influence the outcome of the polls, RIHS is able to make deals more effectively with the local political patrons.

Safwan Al-Zaʿbi tried to further boost his patronage over the purist Salafis by signing the so-called Memorandum of Understanding (*Wathiqat al-Tafahum*) between a coalition of purist *ulama* led by him and Hizbullah on 15 August 2008.[22] The document itself contains numerous clichés, such as accepting the other with their differences or solving problems through discussion instead of confrontation. At the same time, however, it proposed a plan to set up a body of *ulama* between the Salafis and the Shiʿites, in order to research the differences between Sunnism and the Shiʿa. This can be regarded as a unique initiative from the side of the Salafis, since they usually refuse any such proposition unless the Shiʿites denounce their sect and "return" to Sunni Islam. The real significance of the memorandum lies in the motives and reasons of the Salafi faction in approaching Hizbullah and signing an agreement with it, despite the Salafis' inherent hostility towards the Shiʿa.

The event happened three months after Hizbullah and its allies launched a military operation and occupied most of Beirut on 8 May 2008.[23] As one of the participants of the Salafi delegation that signed the memorandum explained, after 8 May 2008, fears were raised that Hizbullah would try to uproot Salafism in Lebanon. By approaching the party and establishing contacts with it, Al-Zaʿbi's network hoped to protect itself and rather turn the militia's and its allies' attention of military security[24] towards the harakis.[25] By that they would secure their autonomy to practice their *daʿwa*, which is – being purist in nature – not concerned about the power struggle between 8 March and 14 March elite blocks. Al-Zaʿbi also believed that the crackdown on the haraki Salafis would come sooner or later. This would lead to the imprisonment or exile of most Salafi leaders in the country. If he could secure his position with Hizbullah, he would have a chance of becoming the most powerful Salafi patron of Lebanon.

The attempt to secure an agreement with Hizbullah, however, proved unsuccessful. Al-Zaʿbi and the other participants had to withdraw due to harsh criticism they faced from the harakis. Their own purist constituency also reacted differently from what they had expected. Many of them expressed open hostility towards Al-Zaʿbi and the *ulama* who supported his initiative. In the long run, the Memorandum of Understanding led to a split with RIHS as well. The Kuwaiti charity initially supported the idea of trying to make an agreement with Hizbullah and protect the purist *daʿwa*. According to one of the leading figures of the Kuwaiti politico-purist stream, the organisation convinced Al-Zaʿbi to take the step and approach Hizbullah.[26]

The reason as to why the Lebanese Salafi leader had to break up with RIHS three years later is due to internal divisions within the lines of the latter. At the time when the Lebanese group signed the memorandum, RIHS was dominated by a faction that endorsed tightening the Sunni–Shiʿa gap, even within Kuwait. However, this stream lost its influence at the eve of the Arab Spring in 2011 when a radically anti-Shiʿa faction took over.[27] They ousted Al-Zaʿbi and appointed a new administration for the Al-Sunna mosque and Islamic centre. Al-Zaʿbi started developing his own local charity network *Jamaʿiyyat al-Ukhuwwa* (Brotherhood Association) and at the time of my fieldwork, he was progressing in building up contacts with individual sponsors and received financial aid from Saudi state actors.[28] His primary aims were building medical facilities and schools, and distributing food and clothing in the poverty-stricken areas of North Lebanon.

The fragmentation of Salafism in Indonesia

The Islamic resurgence in the Indonesian society, which started in the beginning of the 1980s, provided a favourable context for Salafism to spread. With the increase in the number of participants of the movement, Gulf-based charities, among them RIHS, also gained a foothold in the country.

By the second half of President Suharto's "New Order" regime (1966–1998), a substantial pious Muslim middle class had emerged in Indonesia. According to William Liddle, one of the main reasons for this development was the expansion of the state's school system. Extensive religious education, which was mandatory in public schools, was combined with the New Order regime's economic success. The fact that attendance to modern education was the prerequisite of upward social mobilisation led to the association of personal piety with economic success (Liddle 1996: 622–623). This resulted in the emergence of a more uniform Muslim population and the wide abandonment of the rituals of the local, syncretistic versions of Islam (Liddle 1996: 623).

Suharto's government, while opposed to any attempts by Islamic movements to play an active role in institutional politics, nevertheless actively supported personal piety. The increasing religiosity of the population seemed to be an antidote for the possible re-emergence of Marxism in Indonesian society. Therefore the government actively supported the building of mosques and other Islamic institutions. Starting from the 1980s, more openly pious Muslims were granted higher political positions. The law, which had forbidden the wearing of Muslim headscarfs (*jilbab*) in public schools, was also abolished (Liddle 1996: 625–631).

In this environment, piety movements flourished, which led to the emergence of Salafism and the appearance of Gulf charities in the country. RIHS, beginning from the mid-1980s, supported some of these movements. Probably the most important of them was *Dewan Dakwa Islamiya Indonesia* (Indonesian Council for Islamic Propaganda –DDII). The organisation was established in 1967 for proselytisation purposes, and served as an important gateway for ideas coming from the Middle East.[29] Initially, DDII propagated the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideologues, such as Sayyid Qutb or Sayyid Hawwa'.

Since the 1970s, DDII received financial support from Saudi Arabian charities, and many of its cadres were granted scholarships to study at the Islamic University of Medina, one of the main centres of Salafism. This was probably the most important factor in leading many members of DDII to turn to Salafism. The organisation even provided the

foundation for the establishment of Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab (LIPIA – Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic Language) in 1980. LIPIA became the main training institute for Salafi preachers in Indonesia. Many of LIPIA's students received scholarships to study at the Islamic University of Medina (Hasan 2006: 47–51). During their studies in Saudi Arabia, many cadres of DDII established contacts with Kuwaiti Salafis, who were connected to RIHS.[30] The charity started to support Islamic centres and institutions, which were under the surveillance of DDII in the second half of the 1980s.[31]

Al-Irsyad became another important element of RIHS' Southeast Asian network. The organisation was established in 1913 by Indonesians of Arab descent, and originally supported reformist ideas which had emerged in Egypt during the end of the 19th century. The Salafi turn happened within Al-Irsyad in the 1980s when many of its participants, returning from their studies in Saudi Arabia, adopted Salafism and rejected "modernist" ideas. Since the end of the 1980s, RIHS has served as the main donor of the organisation, by sponsoring its two religious colleges (*pesantren*) in Salatiga, Central Java, and Surabaya, East Java.[32]

In 1992, RIHS established an official representative office, the *Lajna Khayriyya Mushtartaka* (Joint Charity Committee – LKM), in Jakarta. Originally the charity wanted to channel its financial resources to Islamic centres around the archipelago, exclusively through LKM (Wahid 2014: 95). However, according to the local representatives of the office, this never took place. Those with strong interpersonal connections with Kuwaiti Salafis and officials of RIHS were still able to receive funds independently.[33] Despite this, LKM probably became the most important body distributing RIHS' funds in Indonesia.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, RIHS played an important role in shaping the structure of Indonesian Salafism. The charity was in the centre of the first major rift between the Indonesian participants of the movement. In 1996, the network of Salafis in Yogyakarta, which emerged around the Al-Sunna foundation, established by an ex-DDII cadre Abu Nida, split into two groups. This split echoed the broader purist – haraki debate in the Gulf.

In 1995 a young purist Salafi leader, Ja'far Umar Thalib accused Abu Nida of being haraki because of the latter's connections with RIHS, still at that time under the domination of ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq (Hasan 2006: 81–84). According to Thalib, Abu Nida and his close associates affiliated with those who called for revolting against the ruler, which would lead to chaos and disorder among Muslims. The result was a rift between the followers of Thalib and the followers of Abu Nida,

which ended with the former leaving Al-Sunna foundation to pursue their proselytisation activities independently (Hasan 2006: 81).

The split of the group of Ja'far Umar Thalib from Al-Sunna foundation had a wider impact on the Indonesian Salafi scene. It hallmarked the beginning of the fragmentation of Indonesian Salafis, along the pattern of the fractionalisation of the movement in the Arabian Gulf. The discourse pursued by Thalib and his followers has its roots in the thought of such Middle Eastern authorities as the Saudi Rabi' al-Madkhali and the Yemeni Muqbil al-Wadi'i. These scholars represent a radical stream within the purist faction, which I call purist-rejectionist (Pall 2014: 40). They reject, for example, the establishment of charities, because, according to their views, such organisations are not mentioned in the Quran or the prophetical tradition. While most purists consider political participation permissible if it takes place in order to support the ruler, followers of the latter stream consider even that as a forbidden act.

It has to be noted here that the subsequent military activities of Thalib might seem contradictory to his purist creed. He led the Laskar Jihad militant group, which fought against Christians in the Maluku conflict in 2001–2002.[34] However, as Hasan explains, the followers of Thalib first asked the Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid to announce jihad in Maluku to defend Islam. When Wahid rejected this outright, the members of Laskar Jihad relied on *fatwas* of Middle Eastern purist scholars which excommunicated the president. According to the tenets of purist Salafis, if the ruler is an apostate his subjects are not obliged to obey him (Hasan 2006: 152–155).

Following the secession of Ja'far Umar Talib from Al-Sunna foundation, other Salafis, who sympathised with the purist-rejectionist ideas, split from those groups where the majority did not accept their way of thinking.[35] Beginning from the second half of the 1990s, a distinct purist-rejectionist faction emerged, which is commonly called by others as "Yemeni," as a reference to their affiliation to the school of thought of the above-mentioned Shaykh Muqbil al-Wadi'i.[36]

The internal conflict within RIHS in Kuwait and the ousting of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq contributed to the further fragmentation of the Indonesian Salafi movement. According to some leading figures of Salafism in Java, both the activist and the purist streams were represented in the institutions which were supported by RIHS until 1997.[37] However, after the ideological transformation of the charity, the situation has changed.

Similar to the example of Lebanon, RIHS stopped sponsoring all Salafi institutions and groups in Indonesia which were regarded as *haraki*. Among these was the *Yayasan Fathul Muin* (Fathul Muin Foundation) in South Sulawesi, which later changed its name and became *Wahdah Islamiya* (WI) – probably the most influential Salafi organisation in contemporary Indonesia.[38] RIHS also severed its relationships with the Ngruki boarding school in Solo, Central Java.[39] Both institutions are known as important centres of activist Salafism in Indonesia.

Many Salafi individuals who had a haraki mindset or who simply disagreed with RIHS' policy of cleansing its lines off perceived activists left the institutions which were connected to the charity.[40] Many of these activist Salafis ended up in the newly established charitable and religious institutions of WI, which at that time started to establish a presence outside of Sulawesi as well.[41] For example, in Yogyakarta, those who had left Al-Sunna foundation constituted the core of WI's local branch.

RIHS' strategy also radically changed after the purist takeover of the Kuwaiti organisation. Again, similar to the case of Lebanon, the charity started to closely monitor its beneficiaries in Indonesia as well. As Ustadz Setiawan, one of the prominent Salafi preachers in Lombok told me, one of the most important requirements of RIHS was close cooperation with the state.[42] RIHS translates this as obeying the ruler, who is, according to purist views, the president of the republic in Indonesia. Working with the state's institutions means obeying the ruler, which is one of the cornerstones of the purists' ideology. At the same time, having good relations with the authorities also secures the autonomy of Salafis for proselytisation.

As Ustadz Arif Syarifuddin, one of the prominent Salafi leaders in Cirebon, West Java, told me, cooperation with the state usually manifests in two forms. First, Salafis often cooperate with the police in detecting and arresting suspected members of jihadi cells. Second, they organise seminars and lectures, where they clarify why terrorism contradicts the rulings of Islam. Many of my Salafi informants in Indonesia claimed that by working with the authorities, they managed to convert members of the police and the army to purist Salafism.[43]

Purists in general, and in Indonesia in particular, oppose militant Salafi groups because the latter's actions fundamentally contradict the purist view of the ideal order. According to this, there should be a strong Muslim ruler who assures security. If security is provided, Muslims can

create their own autonomy for proselytisation, which also includes setting up their own network of Islamic institutions and the freedom of economic exchanges.[44]

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that ideological debates can significantly contribute to the restructuring of power relations within a social movement. In turn, this often leads to the altering of the policies and strategies of transnational Islamic relief organisations, which are connected to the given social movement. After discussing the transformation of RIHS due to theological disagreements between its leaders, I demonstrated, with two case studies, how this transformation has had impacts on the international level. As these case studies show, the fragmentations along ideological lines determine where material resources are allocated. The leadership of Salafi charities is keen to sponsor Salafi groups whose discourse is closer to their own.

In Lebanon, the change of the ideological direction of RIHS contributed to the reconfiguration of the Salafi scene and led to the strengthening of the purist faction. Similar to Lebanon, RIHS in Indonesia also played a role, although less significant, in the fragmentation of the Salafi movement and strengthening the purists. In both countries the strategy of the local branches of RIHS changed markedly after the ideological transformation of the organisation. The organisation started to place a stronger emphasis on the obligation to "obey the ruler." In the interpretation of RIHS, this meant cooperation with the state authorities and the exclusion of suspected militant elements.

In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of change within an Islamic charity, it is necessary to observe the organisation's external environment. Social movement theory provides an excellent tool for this, because most relief organisations constitute organic parts of larger social movements. Examining the dynamics and transformations of the latter enables us to better understand the factors that lead to internal change within a charity. The power relations within a social movement are continuously changing. This affects the leadership structure of the charities, which in turn often leads to different methods and strategies of these organisations.

It also makes possible the prediction of potential developments in relief organisations. For example, the orientation and policy of RIHS might change again in the future due to developments in the Middle East related to the Arab revolutions in 2011. Many scholars within the

larger purist faction in Kuwait started to question the necessity of unconditional obedience to the rulers. This already led to internal disputes and fractionalisation within RIHS (Pall, 2015). At the point of writing, there is no sign of disagreement regarding RIHS' charity projects; however, this also might change in the future.

Notes

1 For a good review of the literature on FBOs, see Petersen (2011).
2 My book is somewhat of an exception, where I shed light on some aspects of the function of Salafi charities (Pall 2013).
3 Both Shi'ites and Sufis believe in intercession with God by deceased holy persons on behalf of the believers. Salafis identify this as a violation of monotheism.
4 Series of interviews conducted with the officials and donors of Salafi charities in Kuwait and Qatar between 2009 and 2012.
5 Interview with members of various Salafi charitable organisations, Kuwait, 4 July 2014.
6 I had the chance to observe this while doing fieldwork in Lebanon, Kuwait, Qatar, and Indonesia between 2009 and 2014.
7 The Sahwa emerged in Saudi Arabia in the 1970s. The participants of the movement were dissatisfied with the dominant Salafi discourse in the kingdom, which lacked any broader social and political outlook and was interested only in daily religious practices. Their thought has been influenced by other Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, whose focus is predominantly on institutional politics and social development. The Sahwa launched a major political insurgency with a series of protests and petitions during and after the 1990–1991 Gulf crisis.
8 I regard Jihadi Salafis as part of the haraki group, though some other researchers regard them as a separate faction (e.g. Wiktorowicz 2006).
9 ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq, *al-Muslimun wa-l-ʿAmal al-Siyasi*, undated book, accessible online at: http://www.salafi.net (accessed 5 February 2010).
10 Most Kuwaitis have numerous relatives in Saudi Arabia, especially those who have tribal origins. All of the tribes that are present in Kuwait have extensions in Saudi Arabia.
11 See, for example, Al-Mutayri 2008.
12 Interview with Nasser al-Khalidi, 26 January 2010.
13 Undated audio recording of the debate between Shaykh ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq and ʿAbdullah al-Sabt.
14 Interview with ʿAbd al-Rahman ʿAbd al-Khaliq, Kuwait, 13 February 2010.
15 For good examples of this trend of literature, see ʿAbd ul-Karim (2009) and Al-Sulaymani (2008).
16 These networks were usually constituted by Salafis who studied in Kuwait, or who had met members of RIHS while being their fellow students at the Islamic University of Medina.
17 Interview with ʿIssa al-Qaddumi, one of the chief policymakers within RIHS, Kuwait, 8 February 2009, and also, interview with Ustadz Zarkashi, Jakarta, 11 December 2012.

18 Interview with a number of RIHS officials in February 2009 and February–March 2012.
19 Interview with Daʿi al-Islam al-Shahhal, Tripoli, 9 August 2011.
20 Here the category of "orphan," according to the Islamic definition, includes those who lost their fathers but whose mothers are still alive. See "Yatim," Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd edition.
21 Interview with Safwan al-Zaʼbi, Tripoli, 3 October 2009.
22 'Wathiqat al-Tafahum Bayn Hizb Allah Wa Baʿd al-Jamaʿiyyat al-Salafiya Bayn al-Tarhib wa-l-Tahaffuz' *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 20 August 2008.
23 This confrontation erupted as a result of a three-year long political conflict between the governing 14 March and the opposition 8 March alliances. The Sunni-dominated government decided to shut down Hizbullah's telecommunication network and sack the pro-Hizbullah airport commander Walid Shukayr. Hizbullah interpreted these measures as the first step to disarm the movement. As a response, armed brigades of Hizbullah and its allies, among them the secular Shiʿite Amal and the Syrian Social-Nationalist Party, took over the Sunni districts of Beirut, the power base of the al-Mustaqbal-led government. Fighting erupted between militants of the 8 March alliance and pro-government guerrillas not only in the capital, but also in other regions of the country, among them Tripoli. During the confrontation, Hizbullah outgunned its opponents, which led to the weakening of the 14 March alliance. Therefore the 14 March had to make concessions to Hizbullah. On 21 May 2008 in an agreement in Doha, the 14 March coalition granted veto power for the 8 March coalition in a newly formed government.

"Lebanon: Hizbollah's Weapons Turn Inward," International Crisis Group Policy Briefing (15 May 2008). http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/lebanon/b023-lebanon-hizbollahs-weapons-turn-inward.aspx (accessed 15 November 2012).
24 It is an "open secret" on the Lebanese street that the leadership of the Lebanese military intelligence consists mostly of Shiʾites with a strong affiliation to Hizbullah.
25 Interview, 3 December 2009.
26 Interview with Salim al-Nashiʾ.
27 Interview Sami al-ʿAdwani, al-Zahraʾ district, 7 March 2012 and interview with Safwan al-Zaʿbi, Tripoli, 26 April 2012.
28 Interview, Tripoli, 26 April 2012.
29 DDII was established by members of an Islamic political party, one of whom is Masyumi, who was banned by president Sukarno in 1960. Since the New Order regime did not allow the re-establishment of Masyumi, DDII provided a platform for its cadres. Hasan, p. 39.
30 Interview with Ustadz Setiawan, Jakarta, 19 December 2012.
31 Interview with Abdullah al-Ajmi, a former member of RIHS, who was responsible for the organisation's aid programmes in South East Asia, Kuwait, 7 November 2013.
32 Interview with Ustadz Zarkasyi, Jakarta, 27 November 2013.
33 Interview with Ustadz Zarkasyi, Jakarta, 28 November 2013.

34 The conflict was going on between 1999 and 2002 along sectarian lines between the Christian and Muslim communities of the East Indonesian Maluku Islands.
35 Interview with Ustadz Ridwan Hamidi, Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, 17 December 2013.
36 The learning institution of Muqbil al-Wadi'i in Dammaj in North Yemen traditionally has been an important destination for Indonesian Salafis to pursue religious studies. Noorhaidi, pp. 74–77.
37 Interview with Usdadz Ridwan Hamidi, Yogyakarta, 17 December 2013, and interview with Ustadz Arif Syarifudin, Cirebon, 11 December 2013.
38 The most important sponsor of this group was the Saudi Haramayn Foundation, but they received some material support from RIHS as well.
39 Interview with a former official of RIHS, Kuwait, 5 November 2013.
40 Interview with Ustadz Mustafa Yono, Yogyakarta, 8 December 2013.
41 Interview with Usdadz Ridwan Hamidi, Yogyakarta, 17 December 2013.
42 Interview, Jakarta, 13 December 2012.
43 Interview with Ustadz Arif Syarifudin, Cirebon, 11 December 2013.
44 This kind of thinking is well described in a number of purist publications. For a good example, see Al-Utsaimin (2012).

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9

Remaking the Russian State from the East: The Role of Asian Christians as Civic Activists

Melissa L. Caldwell

With a rueful look on his face, Pastor Ivan recalled a comment that he has heard frequently from impoverished Russians who have been helped by his church in Moscow: "It's great that you care for us, [because] our people don't care for us." Pastor Ivan reflected that while he appreciated such expressions of gratitude from recipients of his church's assistance projects, comments such as this one were troubling. In the post-Soviet period, Russians have commonly blamed both the Russian state and Russian society in general for abandoning the country's most vulnerable citizens in the move towards a neoliberal economy. At the same time that Russian citizens criticise the Russian state for dismantling and reducing welfare programmes, they accuse one another of acquiring capitalist-inspired qualities of "individualism" and "selfishness." Both developments are presented as at odds with deeply rooted cultural traditions of mutual support, assistance, and compassion (see Kenworthy 2008; Lindenmeyr 1996). For Russians like Pastor Ivan who are deeply engaged in assistance activities, however, such comments are disturbing because they suggest a widespread pessimism that may not, in fact, be warranted and an increasing demand on non-state services that may not be sustainable.

Yet these were not the issues that troubled Pastor Ivan the most. Rather, what he found problematic was the suggestion that it was foreigners, and not Russians, who were providing assistance to Russian communities. As Pastor Ivan explained, the belief that non-Russians were assistance providers revealed a profound misunderstanding not just about who was helping whom in Russia, but also about who was an authentic Russian. Notably, such beliefs suggested that congregants of Pastor Ivan's church were foreign Christians who lived and worked in Moscow. To some extent, this misrecognition was logical: Russian

attention to the assistance activities of religiously affiliated organisations has focused primarily either on the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) or on those sponsored and administered by "foreign" Christian organisations. Largely absent from public awareness are the efforts of domestic, non-Orthodox religious congregations. Even though Pastor Ivan's church has official relations to a mainstream American Protestant denomination and his congregation's membership includes expatriate citizens, notably South Korean citizens, his congregation does not, in fact, belong to the community of "foreign" Christians. Instead, Pastor Ivan and the majority of his church's congregants are Russians who are ethnically Korean by ancestry. Thus because Pastor Ivan's church is comprised of Russian citizens who are practicing a religion with deep historical roots in Russia, it is a Russian church, not a foreign church.

That Pastor Ivan's church is legally, culturally, and historically a Russian congregation is a critical distinction in a context where domestic and foreign organisations have been alternately praised, criticised, and misunderstood for their involvement in activities that are presumed to belong to the public or even civil sector. Because Russian Orthodoxy enjoys official recognition as Russia's indigenous Christian religion, non-Orthodox Christian congregations have been typically perceived and labelled as "foreign" and consequently censured, even penalised, for allegedly attempting to convert Russian believers away from the "true" faith of Russian Orthodoxy. At the same time, "foreign" religious congregations have been publicly acknowledged for their social welfare work in Russia. In Moscow, "foreign" religious communities have supported both impoverished and disenfranchised residents with material resources and local and federal governmental agencies with guidance for improving assistance policies, programmes, and funding (Caldwell 2012), while simultaneously being sanctioned by federal tax and immigration authorities. This is within a larger context in which domestic aid programmes have been criticised for failing to meet the needs of Russian citizens, and "foreign" NGOs and development programmes have been restricted and even exiled by the Russian state for allegedly acting against the best interests of the Russian nation (BBC 2012; RFE/RL 2013).[1]

These complicated circumstances reveal the precarity and ambiguity of religiously affiliated assistance organisations, especially those that are non-Orthodox and potentially viewed as "foreign." Yet today, Russian congregations with Asian ties are major players in Russia's assistance and development spheres and enjoy strong relations not only

with Russian authorities but also with religious communities in Korea, Vietnam, Japan, China, and the Philippines. Nevertheless, because both popular sentiment and official legal codes make determinations of who and what qualifies as "Russian" according to national, ethnic, and racial qualities, the experiences of non-ethnic, non-Orthodox Russians elude easy classification. As a result, perceptions of what constitutes "real" Russianness can obscure the actual contributions of domestic congregations like Pastor Ivan's as well as make invisible the members of these communities and their needs.

While this misrecognition and invisibility may be frustrating to Asian Russians, it is not always detrimental, however, as it can enable forms of civic engagement that are not available either to "foreign" communities or to religious congregations that are more publicly identified as "Russian." The low-key visibility of Asian-Russian religious communities in Russia belies their active engagement in a wide range of critically important domestic initiatives: poverty alleviation, health care, education reform, immigration reform, and human rights advocacy, among many others. Thus misrecognition and invisibility can empower congregations like Pastor Ivan's to do work that might be problematic for other organisations. It also allows Russian-Asian congregations to do work that supports critical aims and needs of the Russian state and its citizens and residents, most notably those directed at Russia's Asian populations and its foreign policy relations with Asian countries.

This analysis focuses on the types of civic projects that Asian-Russian religious communities pursue and how the coordinated efforts between Asian-Russian communities and their supporters, on the one hand, and Russian state entities, on the other, allow these groups to work with and against the Russian state. Of particular concern is how these religious communities trouble existing modes of classifying religion and citizenship in Russia, especially differences between "non-Russians" (i.e., non-Orthodox Christians) and "Russians," in ways that create new opportunities for religious organisations to participate in modern state-making projects at national and global scales.

This discussion draws on ethnographic research that I have been conducting among faith-based assistance and development programmes in Moscow since 1995. Data include, but are not limited to, interviews with clergy, parishioners, social justice advocates, state officials, and recipients; observations at assistance programmes and religious services; and documents collected from religious organisations, state agencies, human rights organisations, news sources, and other relevant groups.

Developing religious assistance in post-Soviet Russia

The extensive assistance efforts of religious communities in the post-Soviet period continue a long history of religious involvement in civic life and state-building projects in Russia. Already by the 16th century, religious communities were involved in Russian state-making practices. Russian Orthodox clergy assisted in projects to expand and formalise the boundaries of the Russian Empire and its population through cartographic work and the delivery of material assistance (Khodarkovsky 1996; Kivelson 2006), while Lutheran clergy and congregations harnessed publishing ventures to encourage public support for voting, military activities, and emerging state bureaucracies. More generally, Orthodox, Catholic, and other Christian denominations supported voluntarism and charitable works by providing public health care; helping the elderly and disabled; and fighting poverty, homelessness, and civic unrest (i.e., hooliganism) (Kaiser 1998; Kenworthy 2008; Lindenmeyr 1986, 1996). Russia's Asian territories were prime settings for this work, as the imperial government used clergy to promote "civilising" and "modernisation" projects in what is now Russia's Far East, Mongolia, and Central Asia (Khodarkovsky 1996).

Religiously affiliated assistance work was interrupted during the Soviet era, when communist authorities effectively eliminated public forms of religious expression and charitable assistance. Religious expression was transformed into secular (i.e., non-religious, humanist, state-centred) political ideologies, and charity was replaced by a state system of social welfare as a basic provision for all citizens (Lindenmeyr 1998; White 1993).[2] Only in the late Soviet era, during the period of *glasnost* initiated by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s, did both religious and charitable organisations re-emerge as public institutions invested in civic affairs, first with the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, which prompted religious communities and religiously affiliated assistance programmes from around the world to respond with material and medical assistance, and later with the millennium of the ROC in 1988, which opened up spaces for religious communities to position themselves more publicly in Russian life (Bourdeaux 1999; White 1993). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent repeal of the official state ban on religion, religious communities have actively sought to rebuild their presence as spiritual, moral, and civic institutions in Russia. Concomitantly, post-Soviet civic life has expanded as private non-state assistance programmes have proliferated and increasingly taken over activities formerly supported by state social welfare agencies (Caldwell 2004; Hemment 2007; Zigon 2011). Perhaps not surprisingly,

these two sectors have overlapped: not only have religious organisations founded charitable assistance programmes, but secular (*svetskie* or non-religious) and religious organisations have established productive, collaborative relationships to launch and sustain assistance projects (see Caldwell 2010).[3]

Most visible are the activities of the ROC, the de facto state church of Russia. The diverse projects of the ROC include rebuilding and renovating church and monastery buildings, opening new parishes, and training new cadres of priests and monks, as well as pursuing financial ventures, creating a media empire, operating a range of commercial industries, and instituting a broad array of charitable initiatives administered both through individual congregations and through the patriarchate's official development department (Caldwell 2008; Köllner 2011; Tocheva 2011; Zigon 2011). The activities of the ROC have been complemented by those of many other religious communities, most notably Protestant, Catholic, Anglican, and Jewish communities who work through individual congregations, national and transnational denominationally affiliated development organisations (Catholic Charities, Caritas, Lutheran World Relief, Oxfam, Salvation Army, Jewish Joint Distribution Council, etc.), and collaborative ventures across denominational affiliations.

Collectively, religious communities have pursued extensive forms of charitable and development work in Russia that have both supplemented and surpassed the assistance provided by federal and local government agencies. For the specific case of Christian charity and development organisations, their activities have included medical clinics and hospitals; treatment programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention and drug and alcohol addictions; hospice services; food, clothing, and other material support to the elderly, invalids, orphans, single parents, the homeless, prisoners, and other marginalised persons; food banks, soup kitchens, and other permanent food relief programmes; schools; job and skills training; legal aid services for citizens and other residents, including support for asylum and resettlement applications and hate crimes reporting; and monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses. These activities complement the more ordinary forms of assistance performed privately by individuals affiliated with religious communities: informal micro-credit lending schemes, transportation assistance, tutoring of low-income students, child care, and other assistance with domestic matters.

In many respects, Russia's religious communities have cultivated an alternative charitable and development-oriented sphere that exists alongside those of both the Russian governmental sphere and the secular non-governmental agencies that have emerged in the post-Soviet

period. Recognising the symbolic and practical value of this religious sphere, Russian officials have reached out to religiously sponsored charities and development programmes and asked their staff and volunteers for assistance, including advice for government programmes on best practices for service delivery, fundraising, voluntarism, and working compassionately with clients (see Caldwell 2012).

Despite these significant contributions, the charitable and development work performed by Russia's religious communities has been largely overlooked and misrepresented. Public and scholarly perceptions both inside and outside Russia have focused primarily on the transfers of funds, materials, and personnel from "Western" Christian communities, with particular attention to American "missionaries" and their church-building activities in Russia (Mandel 2012). American scholars and Russian officials alike have complained that charitable activities are merely a way for unscrupulous foreign (most commonly labelled as "American") Christians to convert Russians away from their "traditional" religious cultures.[4] Concerns with the effects of proselytism and church building by Western Christian groups lie behind Russian legislation restricting the activities of "foreign" religious groups in Russia and limiting congregational membership only to "foreigners."

Far less attention has been given to East-to-West transfers of assistance, both from Russia's own "eastern" regions and from its neighbours to the East.[5] As a result, Asian-Christian communities are largely invisible in Russia, especially in big cities like Moscow. During my long-term research among a diverse group of Christian communities in Moscow, my introduction to Asian-Christian congregations occurred only via word-of-mouth from clergy and aid workers I interviewed, friends who attended those congregations, or acquaintances who received services from their programmes. In most instances, the fact that these were Asian-Christian congregations emerged only as a point of curiosity, not as a defining feature, for my Russian acquaintances who mentioned that detail as an afterthought.

Misrecognition of religious communities and their activities has had profound consequences on the identification and institutionalisation of development and charitable activities in Russian social practice more generally (Mandel 2012: 231). The prevailing institutional logics that have defined "development" in Russia, often taken directly from Western development models, have overwhelmingly excluded religiously affiliated assistance programmes (Aksartova 2009; Sampson 1996), even as individual development staff often work directly with religious organisations. Ironically, this exclusionary move has protected religiously

affiliated assistance programmes. In a pushback against perceived Western "intervention" through the guise of development, over the past ten years the Russian state has restricted and even closed the networks and programmes of international funders and development organisations such as USAID, the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, and the Peace Corps, among others.

Religiously affiliated assistance programmes, however, have not, by and large, been subject to the same closures and have continued to provide their services, largely because the ambiguous nature of religiously affiliated development programmes has created a loophole for religious communities. In order to comply with Russian laws forbidding foreign religious groups from proselytising to Russian citizens, the development programmes affiliated with and operated by religious groups have conventionally operated as "secular" (*svetskie*) entities. Their assistance programmes are explicitly non-religious and completely separate from their spiritually focused activities, and their employed staff and volunteers are often Russian citizens not affiliated with the sponsoring congregation in any way. By capitalising on these qualities of being "non-religious" and "domestic," religiously affiliated development programmes can then apply for legal registration as secular Russian – and not religious or foreign – NGOs. As a result, some communities that would otherwise not be entitled to qualify for legal registration as Russian religious congregations because they do not meet the requirements for being traditionally "domestic" religious, can register their assistance programmes as secular Russian NGOs, and then use that status to bolster their claims to legal registration for their congregations.

The shifting and ambiguous nature of religiously affiliated assistance programmes has challenged both denominational and legal categories of religious identity and affiliation, thereby opening up opportunities for approaches and partnerships that are oriented more to social justice philosophies that can take precedence over individual denominational concerns and theological traditions. Most of Russia's Christian congregations are affiliated in some fashion with at least one internationally recognised denominational organisation. These affiliations are marked in various ways – by name of the congregation, professional training or sponsoring employer of their clergy, the use of a particular liturgy and form of worship, or financial sponsorship or other material forms of support (publishing, meeting space, or legal assistance). Within Moscow's Christian community, although the ROC is the primary denomination and the one form of Christianity officially recognised by the Russian government as a "state" religion, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist,

Lutheran, Catholic, and Anglican denominational organisations are also key players with an established presence and extensive relations with communities at home in Russia and abroad. Tracking the flows of money, materials, equipment, manpower, expertise, and even lobbying and legal assistance that move among these communities reveals that both forms and philosophies of assistance cross denominational divides, often creating seemingly odd partnerships, as Protestant congregations, Catholic, and Orthodox communities support one another, both publicly and privately.

Beyond establishing partnerships with other religious communities, these Christian communities are creating relationships, alliances, and referral networks with state-level and transnational governmental agencies and their affiliated organisations. This is where the activities of Russia's Asian Christians are most significant and have the most potential for intervening in the civic activities of the Russian state, and where the relative invisibility of these groups is most beneficial. The invisibility of Russia's Asian-Christian communities and their unique capacity to contribute to the state's strategic interests and initiatives are in many respects made possible because of the way religion, ethnicity, and tradition have been correlated in Russian cultural practice.

Making Asian-Russian Christians

Despite the deep historical roots of non-Orthodox Christian denominations in Russia, not all non-Orthodox Christian groups have been recognised officially as being authentically Russian in the sense of being acknowledged as autochthonous religions. This is at the heart of how "foreign" and "domestic" religions have been classified and recognised in Russia today. The Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, adopted in 1997 and subsequently amended in 2008, affirms "the right of every person to the freedom of conscience and faith as well as the quality before the law regardless of the attitude towards religion and convictions" (Russian Federation 2008). Yet the law also acknowledges that the Russian state "[recognises] a special role of the Orthodox Church in the history of Russia, the formation and development of its spirituality and culture, [and] respect for . . . Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia" (Russian Federation 2008).

This statement affirming the "special role" of a particular set of religious traditions has been the basis for how religious communities

have been legally recognised and registered in Russia in the post-Soviet period. According to the classificatory schema used for legal registration, only those religious communities that can demonstrate that they belong to the "historical heritage of the peoples of Russia" can receive official status as domestic religious associations. Other religious communities can, in many cases, qualify for lesser bureaucratic statuses, but with fewer rights, less legitimacy, and greater likelihood of being perceived as "foreign."

Historically in Russia, religious practice or affiliation has been a latent component of ethno-national identity (Agadjanian 2001), thus making religious identity an ethno-national identity. For instance, Russian Orthodoxy was correlated with Slavic, and then specifically Russian, ethno-national qualities; Jewishness was a separate ethno-national identity, albeit with further distinctions according to region of origin (e.g., Russia, Georgia, or Armenia) (Goluboff 2003). Under the Soviet identity structure, individuals who were not ethnically Russian had their ethno-national identity entered into their passports: Evenki, Georgian, Jew, Gypsy, and so on. According to this logic, religion was thus a cultural feature of a particular ethno-national group. Although Russian Orthodoxy was the dominant Russian religion, Russia has long been home to many other Christian traditions: Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, and Anglicans, to name but a few. Historically, each of these Christian traditions has been associated with a particular ethno-national minority immigrant population: Catholicism with Poles, Lutheranism with Germans and Finns, Methodism and the Baptist Church with other German and Central European populations, and Anglicanism with English immigrants. Consequently, non-Orthodox Christianity has not been historically recognised as part of an ethno-national Russian identity, and in the current period, congregations affiliated with these denominations have struggled to gain the legal recognition that they enjoyed in pre-Soviet Russia.

Russia's Asian populations have been similarly recognised as ethno-national minorities with distinct cultural traditions that include religious practice. Yet there is one notable exception that sets some of Russia's Asian communities, Korean Russians in particular, apart from other minority groups and that has facilitated their legal status as domestic traditions. During the Soviet era, when religion was officially excised from public life, thus eliminating the formal practice of Orthodoxy and other religious traditions, the religious identities and practices of ethno-national minorities were reclassified as forms of folk life. They were no longer recognised as "religious" or "spiritual" but were instead transformed into

cultural relics to be preserved, although these lofty goals of celebration and tolerance were not necessarily always fully achieved in practice (e.g., Balzer 1999; Goluboff 2003: 22–23). As such, these ethno-national religious traditions were effectively granted protected status and allowed to exist in restricted ways that were forms of de facto state institutionalisation and recognition: museum exhibits, folk life performances, and even personal "cultural" practices. Consequently, during the Soviet era, ethnic minorities in Russia and the other republics of the Soviet Union were granted special status that enabled them to retain their cultural heritage, including religious practices. While this is not to suggest that Soviet minority citizens were encouraged to perform their religious "cultures" publicly or to retain their religious "faith," it does mean that religious heritage and traditions were not completely erased but allowed to continue, sometimes completely under the radar and sometimes out in the open.[6] For the specific case of Pastor Ivan's congregation, because Korean ethnicity is considered an indigenous ethnicity, the religious practices of ethnically Korean Russians are considered indigenous cultural traditions, thus creating a legal loophole for his congregation.

The relative cultural autonomy afforded to ethno-national minorities has thus uniquely positioned Korean Russians and other Asian minorities in Russia vis-à-vis social justice efforts. On the one hand, the practices of Asian Christians do not necessarily conflict with the interests of the ROC, because the ROC is prioritising its outreach to ethnic Russians, not to minority groups. On the other hand, because of the special cultural heritage status afforded to Russia's indigenous minorities, Asian-Christian communities can position themselves as legitimately indigenous civic actors within Russia, and thus work with (and even against) the Russian state from a very different vantage point than their "foreign" counterparts, who are subject to laws regulating the activities of foreign groups and the legal status of foreign nationals living and working in Russia.

Yet despite the fact that Asian Christianity has technically been allowed to exist in Russia over the past century, this does not mean that Asian Russians have performed their religious heritage or claimed their identity as Christians. Pastor Ivan noted that after a Soviet past in which atheism was the prevailing doctrine and practice, his congregation was still relatively "young and inexperienced." After 15 or 16 years of existence, his congregation was just learning to function. "Most [of my] colleagues weren't [practicing] Christian[s] before," he commented. As a result, his congregation's staff and members were learning everything – religious liturgy, practice, and theological history – anew.

Beyond educating newly practicing Christians about church history, theology, and religious liturgy and practice, a critical task for Russian congregations more generally has been to mobilise their members' interests in service work and turn these into productive activities that benefit the larger community. During the Soviet period, the state officially ended private and religious charity and retooled benevolence into civic activities of mutual welfare or mutual support (Bourdeaux 1999; Lindenmeyr 1998; Shlapentokh 1989; White 1993).[7] Assistance was provided both through governmental social welfare agencies and voluntary political associations. While ethics of assistance persisted in Russia during the Soviet period, the structural and ideological knowledge of how to operate assistance programmes, solicit funding, and motivate volunteers was lost. Now in the post-Soviet period, religious communities and non-religious grassroots groups have had to relearn how to organise themselves as assistance communities and train individuals on how to volunteer and donate (Hemment 2007, 2012). This is a critical difference from "foreign" Christian congregations in Russia that can draw on their members' experiences doing outreach and charity through their home churches in North America and Western Europe. As a result, Russian congregations have looked to foreign congregations and experts (both those located within Russia and those abroad) to help them learn how to operate both as churches and as social services organisations. Pastor Ivan stated that it was very helpful for his church to receive mission groups from abroad, not to learn about religion from them, but to learn about social action as both philosophy and practice.

But whereas Orthodox congregations and non-Orthodox Christian congregations with Anglo-European members tend to work closely with their counterparts in "the West," Europe, North America, and Australia most notably, Asian-Russian congregations have created networks with both "West" and "East." From the point of view of donor-beneficiary politics, this means that Russian-Asian congregations are situated as one node between and within multiple global flows, rather than simply being the Eastern recipient of Western largesse. For instance, in Russia's Far East where there are communities of Sakhalin Koreans who were forced to migrate to Russia by the Japanese government during the 1930s and 1940s, financial and social support from within this community as well as from the Korean and Japanese governments circulate back and forth across borders through multigenerational networks, especially as elderly Sakhalin Koreans return to South Korea for retirement subsidised by the Korean government (Szawarska 2013).

At the same time, these networks across West and East mean that the resources that Asian-Russian congregations receive, and the problems they can tackle, are a bit different. While Asian-Russian congregations are deeply invested in the more usual charitable and development activities focused on poverty alleviation that all of Russia's Christian churches have tackled, they have also addressed issues that are not strictly correlated with poverty, such as education. While education is a key priority for many of Moscow's church groups, their attentions are focused primarily on providing basic educational resources for low-income children. St. James Protestant Church, Blessed Redeemer Christian Church, and Catholic Charities are just a few of the groups that provide basic school supplies, school clothing, meals, and supplemental food bags for children from low-income families, as well as after-school enrichment programmes and summer camps that double as day care facilities for children of low-income working parents. Some congregations also support schools, educational programmes, and skills training programmes for homeless children and orphans who are otherwise outside the formal school system in Russia.

While Moscow's Asian-Christian communities participate in these activities, they also support a very different population with a different set of needs: college students and prospective college students. Notably, Moscow's Korean-Russian Christians are primarily middle-class working professionals with university degrees, often advanced graduate and professional degrees. Additionally, many of these congregations and their individual members have participated in cultural and educational exchanges with Korean and North American universities; many congregants have relatives, colleagues, and contacts with fellow Christians who live in Korea and the United States. As a result of these contacts and the financial and social resources that flow through these networks, Moscow's Korean-Russian Christian congregations have contributed to new private institutions of higher education in Russia, including seminaries, and to scholarship programmes that support high-achieving college students and even enable them to study abroad in Korea and the United States.

One Korean-Russian Presbyterian congregation in Moscow has been especially successful in these endeavours. At a service that I attended, the two ministers and the elderly ethnic Russian friend who had invited me spent a good portion of our conversation telling me in great detail about the many university-aged students in the congregation who had studied abroad or were currently enrolled in foreign university programmes. Both children of the two ministers (a husband-wife clergy couple) had earned doctorates, one in Korea and one in the United

States, achievements that were noteworthy but not unusual in this community. For members of this congregation in particular, these types of "success stories" were solid markers of how well this community was contributing to Russian state-level concerns with reforming the country's higher educational system.

The civic side of religious intervention

Russia's Asian Christians are engaging issues far more politically sensitive than those of education and poverty alleviation, however. Rather, these congregations have taken up a range of critical policy issues such as immigration, labour reform, criminal justice reform, and even human rights. While these are issues that other Christian communities have also addressed, the focus of these other Christian communities has been largely oriented to the problems faced by ethnic Russians or, more frequently, refugees and economic migrants from Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. By contrast, Russia's Asian Christians are focusing on issues that concern their own members and their members' extended families, thus making these domestic issues. Yet at the same time, the political sensitivity of these issues has meant that while they are of great concern to the Russian state, they have been largely out of public view.

These civic-oriented activities extend beyond working relationships with state-sponsored welfare programmes and state social workers and include quiet, but mutually respectful and effective, cooperative partnerships with local, regional, and federal police, migration services, and members of the criminal justice system, to name just a few unexpected partners. While there is some suspicion among the general public that these are nefarious partnerships intended to harness religion for authoritarian state efforts to control, monitor, and punish ordinary people – a not unfounded belief given the secret alliances purportedly forged between the ROC, KGB, and other Soviet state security forces to spy on and control Soviet citizens – these contemporary relationships are described by their participants and recipients as explicitly oriented to fostering social justice values and projects that lead to a more humane, human rights-oriented, civically responsible nation-state.

The Catholic Church has been a crucial, if mostly invisible, resource in providing support and advocacy for Russia's Asian populations, both those who are citizens and those who are migrant residents. Although the European members of Russia's Catholic community are relatively visible and worship in several large, publicly recognised Catholic

churches, Russia's Asian Catholics are mostly hidden from the public gaze. These individuals are primarily migrants from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines who work in the most invisible of Russia's labour sectors: outdoor markets, construction, textile factories, and as home care workers. They are also physically relegated to living on the margins of Russian society. In Moscow, Asian migrant labourers have been discovered living in makeshift tent communities in city forests, basements, and attics in decrepit and abandoned apartments and factory buildings in the city's periphery, and in homeless encampments at the back edges of the city's huge outdoor markets and along little-used roadways.[8] Their access to worship spaces is similarly marginalised; Catholic services for Asian migrants tend to occur in out-of-the-way spaces such as private apartments and basements of other churches. Information about worship services, congregational activities, and charitable programmes passes informally through word-of-mouth, rather than publicly via printed notices in local newspapers or on church bulletin boards.

Church groups offer safe spaces for these individuals to gather, share their problems with one another, and solicit advice. Other parishioners and clergy can extend assistance by making their own personal networks available and circulating material resources. Family support is especially significant, as Asian Catholic parishioners often include young families with children. In recent years, forms of assistance that have been especially valuable have focused on improving working conditions for minorities, especially undocumented Asian migrants, and raising awareness of racially motivated discrimination. While these are issues that other religious communities are addressing, these other groups are most often focused on ethnic minorities from post-Soviet republics or from Sub-Saharan African and Middle Eastern countries – groups that have a more visible presence in Russia and are protected in ways that Asian migrants are not such as through labour unions and international refugee resettlement organisations. Largely through informal channels, Asian-Russian religious groups have worked with local authorities to promote and provide advocacy and legal aid to Asian migrants who need resolution for workplace disputes over pay, housing, visa support, and discrimination. Such activities bring Asian Christians into direct contact and collaboration with lawyers, security authorities, migration officials, political leaders, and other state-affiliated agents who are responsible for the country's employment policies, housing services, and anti-discrimination enforcement.

In addition to engaging directly with Russia's employment sector, Russia's Asian Christians are also involved in the criminal justice system, with most activities far from public knowledge. A very well-kept secret in Russia is that non-Russian prisoners are not housed with Russian prisoners but placed in separate detention centres, labour camps, and prisons specifically for Asian migrants and other foreigners, including North Korean defectors.[9] A handful of journalists and other civilians have been granted access to these spaces to provide medical, social, legal, and clerical support to detainees; the few clergy who have been given access have been invited to provide cultural resources, not religious resources, to ethno-national minorities. Even more secretive are the work camps that house North Koreans who are employed in Russia's timber industry in the Far East and the assistance groups who help defectors from these camps. Aside from a very few newspaper articles (e.g., Higgins 1994), there is practically no information about these camps.

Finally, perhaps the most secretive, politically sensitive area in which Russia's Asian-Christian communities are working, and that for which there is virtually no corroborating evidence, is that of family reunification, both to reunite families separated by labour migrations and to reunite families separated by the division of Korea. Information about these reunification activities, and support for North Korean citizens more generally, is difficult to gain, with details imparted furtively in whispers and presented as "rumours" and stories heard about "friends of friends of friends." Yet there are just enough "rumours" circulating with just enough lack of denial from persons who would be positioned to have firsthand knowledge to suggest that these stories are credible.[10]

Thus, the relative invisibility and misrecognition of Russia's Asian-Christian communities in cities like Moscow is also an asset that allows these communities to do far more than provide a spiritual home for their members. Instead, these communities can actively, albeit quietly, participate in civic issues that concern their members, Russian society more generally, and by extension the Russian state. Whether it is by supporting and advocating for those individuals who do the largely invisible but yet necessary labour that supports the nation, or by monitoring and intervening in criminal justice issues that are off the radar for virtually all other Russian citizens, these Christian communities are engaging in very real and very important issues pertaining to public safety, the economy, and human rights that are fundamental to the overall stability of the Russian state.

The potential of invisibility for civic action

The kinds of priorities and activities pursued by Asian Christians in Russia raise intriguing questions about the nature of religiously inspired civic action and the role of religious communities in Russian state-making activities. In particular, the experiences of Asian Russians invite reflection on whether civic action must necessarily be publicly visible or whether quieter, even invisible, forms of advocacy and intervention are productive for achieving the goals of a strong and robust state and society. Additionally, the cooperative efforts between Asian-Russian religious communities and governmental bodies present productive models for challenging and correcting assumptions that state–religion partnerships must necessarily be coercive and destructive.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, secular, non-state assistance programmes in Russia have focused primarily on civil society initiatives geared at creating a "Third Sector" separate from the state and the market in which citizen-focused voluntary initiatives can emerge (Hemment 2004; Urban 2010). Both by engaging and resisting Western ideals of democratisation – namely, values such as equality, autonomy, and individuality – these programmes have prioritised projects geared at gender equality (especially programmes for women), market capitalism (especially entrepreneurship and small business development), and democratic politics (especially election reform, voter emancipation, training attorneys and judges in best legal practices). Projects aimed at reintroducing volunteerism have focused on helping Russian citizens distance themselves from the state as a means to create a sphere separate and autonomous from state interests. Yet it is the explicitly Western democratic political values pursued by these groups that have also prompted the Russian state to restrict their activities amid concerns that they will undermine Russian autonomy and distinctively Russian values and cultural heritage.

Religious communities, by contrast, have emphasised something a bit different. Russia's religious communities have frequently been quite sceptical of such moves to introduce political models like American-style neoliberal democracy that distance individuals from the state in which they live, largely because religious communities have witnessed how such moves further disenfranchise – materially, socially, and morally – those individuals who exist at the margins of Russian society. Consequently, what have emerged from religious communities are efforts to engage the state directly, even at the possible expense

of becoming visible to and ultimately risking sanctions from the state (Caldwell 2012).

What is especially intriguing and significant is that when Asian-Russian religious communities are pursuing activities focused on humanitarian and human rights issues, theological concerns play a minor role, if at all. Rather, Asian-Russian Christian communities focus on very practical issues pertaining to civic needs (humane treatment, labour reform, migration policies), not the more traditional moral issues that have been promoted by other domestic religious groups, especially the ROC. Moreover, this emphasis on non-theological civic problems responds to social and political problems as they are articulated from an internal Russian perspective, thereby further instantiating Asian-Russian religious communities' status as something other than fully religious but more ethno-national.

For the case of the Asian-Christian communities described here, there is an additional factor that plays into their civic action work – that of their notional marginal status. Their position at the margins of Russian society – either because their religious practices are defined not as forms of religion but as forms of cultural heritage belonging to ethno-national minorities, or because they work with those individuals who are most marginalised and invisible in daily life – actually affords them possibilities to concentrate on some of the most subtle and sensitive issues affecting state interests. Populations such as defectors or illegal labour migrants are politically problematic for the Russian state and require delicate finessing at multiple levels, as well as careful attention to the consequences of legal and political precedent. Because these are issues that are of concern also to members within Asian-Russian Christian communities, these communities can mobilise their own networks and resources and use them both to leverage and to support the Russian state.

Perhaps more importantly, because these are Russian communities, they can voice their views as insiders, not as "foreigners," and thus present these issues and responses as legitimately Russian. Yet at the same time, these communities can draw on their ambiguous, misrecognised status as Asian "foreigners" to navigate, deflect, and mitigate criticisms from other members of Russian society. Another way to interpret the comment recalled by Pastor Ivan at the beginning of this discussion is that when fellow Russians praise his community for doing the work that "their own" (i.e., Russian) community will not do is that these are observations that somehow Pastor Ivan's community is going above and beyond what is ordinarily expected in Russia. It is not a comment on the

presumed foreignness of Pastor Ivan's community, but rather a positive assessment of the degree of their engagement.

Ultimately, the case of Russia's Asian-Christian communities reveals that quieter forms of lobbying and diplomacy may have greater impact than the more visible and public forms of engagement used by non-religious groups or religious communities that are officially "foreign" and without deep, intimate, insider connections in Russia. At the same time, these quieter forms of lobbying, diplomacy, and activism are mutually beneficial to the Russian state, which can play on the simultaneous insider/outsider status of these religious groups. The state can delegate both moral authority to these religious groups and the responsibility to reach vulnerable populations of individuals who are presumed to share ethnic and even national ties, even while it uses the misrecognising façade of outsiderness to distance itself from the messiness of human rights and political issues that may not have widespread support among the general public. In so doing, the rights to freedom of faith and expression as outlined in the Russian federal legal code do not simply protect the traditions and identities of Russia's Asian populations, but also enable those same communities to support the aims and needs of the state itself, thereby highlighting their deep roots as intrinsic to the Russian nation-state.

As cultural institutions with historical and civic claims to matters that are of critical significance to the Russian nation-state, these Asian-Christian communities offer important insights and provocations about the nature of "development" as a project and about development as a field of study. As the experiences of religious institutions like the Asian-Christian communities described here demonstrate, religion has long been an important part of development activities, both as partner and foil to state and international organisations and their goals. To ignore the role of religious institutions in development work, as has been the case in most accounts of post-Soviet development (Aksartova 2009; Sampson 1996), as well as in development studies more generally (Bush and Fountain n.d.), is to disregard an entire community of participants and to devalue their approaches and contributions. Religious communities are not just "charities" that do the less glamorous work of feeding the poor and tending to the homeless (as a USAID official once told me in her argument for why religious communities do not qualify as "development"), but rather they are indispensible partners in larger-scale "political" matters such as social stability, state security, and foreign policy.

Moreover, because religious influences have always been fundamental to state concerns at all levels, presumed distinctions between "secular" or "non-religious" and the "religious" invite rethinking of the very relationships that cohere between states and religious bodies. Just as states are not always secular (Fountain, Bush, and Feener, this volume), religious institutions are also not always religious but can take on issues that move beyond the immediately moral or cultural. At the same time, as the Russian case demonstrates, religious communities and political entities may be positioned differently in local, national, and international networks and able to do different kinds of work, such as critical human rights activities. This does not mean that religious institutions are complicit or coterminous with the state, but rather that there are limits to what states can do.

Finally, religious communities like Russia's Asian Christians present an intriguing counterpoint to the "will to improve" imperative (Li 2007) that is often part of development paradigms. For the Russian individuals and communities described here, it may not be so much about "improving" their local communities and the world around them as it is about simply "doing good." Through quiet and even invisible efforts and diplomacy, these communities are actively invested in doing what is "right" by their family, neighbours, and country. They are not outsiders but insiders who are good and active citizens deeply invested in the well-being of their country.

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Notes

1 Despite its privileged position, the ROC has been especially vulnerable to popular accusations that it has deliberately shirked its moral responsibility to provide material and social assistance (Caldwell 2010; Köllner 2011).
2 See Luehrmann 2011 (especially pp. 1–12) for a thorough discussion of how "secularism" was imagined, implemented, and practiced in the Soviet Union. As Luehrmann discusses, the Soviet project of secularisation entailed prioritising a human-centric approach by removing non-human agents from daily life and recalibrating people's affective frames of reference for moral, cultural, and social relations. Thus, while Soviet-style "secularism" shares some similarities with movements described by Talal Asad (2003) or Charles Taylor (2007), it also derives from a very different set of political and philosophical contexts.
3 In Russian classificatory terminology, the official word used to denote "secular" things is *svetskie*, which also means "lay" or "worldly," thereby referencing the this-worldly, humanist orientation described by Luehrmann (2011). Thus in this discussion, when I use "secular" it is to reference the distinction by which particular organisations or activities are bureaucratically defined and classified in Russia, either officially or unofficially. As I have described elsewhere (Caldwell 2012), these distinctions often do not match up with practice, as religious communities can be legally recognised as "religious" while their charitable outreach programmes are classified as "secular," and as explicitly non-religious groups such as USAID partner with religious organisations.
4 I discuss this in more detail in Caldwell (2008).
5 Perhaps the most attention to Eastern religious traditions in Russia has been given to shamanism and other forms of "native" religion (e.g., see Balzer 2012; Luehrmann 2011).
6 See Luehrmann's discussion of the paradoxes of secularism in the USSR (2011).
7 Even the terminology for different forms of charity was removed from the official lexicon (White 1993).
8 While touring a construction site with staff from one of the European Christian denominations in Moscow, we entered the basement of a building under renovation in order to judge whether this would be a viable future site for the church's charitable projects. The space was mostly rubble filled with trash. As we walked through the dark space, our Russian real estate guide casually cautioned us to be careful not to step on anyone. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I realised that there were construction workers sleeping on the ground. The guide confirmed that these were construction workers (East Asian, Central Asian, African) who were living there informally (and hence illegally) while they worked on the building.
9 The existence of these prisons and detention centres is so closely guarded that my searches for information have turned up only a very few, and very spotty accounts from journalists who were allowed to visit them.
10 While I would like to discuss this point further and provide supporting evidence, information was given to me confidentially and I cannot share it here. I cannot risk jeopardising the privacy, security, and efforts of those individuals who shared their experiences with me.

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10

The Politics of Nonreligious Aid: A Japanese Environmental Ethic in Myanmar

Chika Watanabe

Introduction

In the spring of 1994, Nakamura,[1] from the Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA), a Japanese NGO, headed to Myanmar for the first time. He was accompanying a Japanese official from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Japanese and Burmese government officials to investigate the possibility of starting an agricultural training programme there. The group travelled all over the central region of the Dry Zone, one of the poorest parts of the country, in search of potential OISCA project sites. This was the dry season when there is no rain and temperatures can rise to as high as 50 degrees Celsius, and the conditions were difficult everywhere. They covered most of the area to the east of the Irrawaddy River, but one day they decided to cross to the other side to Pakokku District where no international agency or NGO had gone. Partly out of curiosity, they headed to a monastery in Yesagyo Township where a small, famous Buddha statue was kept.

The statue was usually hidden from the public, but the monks, seeing that there were special visitors from Japan, granted a viewing of the precious figurine. The men paid respects to the statue. When they walked out of the monastery, they were surprised by sudden heavy rains. Seeing this rare and unexpected downpour, Nakamura looked up at the sky and uttered, "This is a message from god – OISCA is going to work here." The others suggested that perhaps they should work on the east side of the river where the weather and soil conditions would be more conducive to an agricultural training programme. "No," Nakamura insisted. "This is the place."

Throughout my fieldwork from 2009 to 2011, I found that no one aside from Nakamura seemed to know the exact reasoning for selecting this particular project site for one of OISCA's newest programmes. I heard the story above from the UNDP official who had accompanied the team, and Nakamura himself did not elaborate further. What interests me in this story is not so much Nakamura's reasoning, but the silence on the question of religion that followed this moment, which permeated the organisation. Although OISCA derives from a Shinto-based new religion, Ananaikyō, and all of the senior Japanese staffers are members of Ananaikyō, staff told me that OISCA was not a religious organisation. At the same time, I contend that this claim of being "nonreligious" did not mean that they defined OISCA as secular. In this chapter, I explore the politics of what I call techniques of obfuscation, through which OISCA's aid actors blurred the lines between religious and the secular categories. I will demonstrate how these techniques of obfuscation were built upon two steps: first, turning the question of religion into an issue of culture that seemed "unremarkable" (*iwakan nai*, in Japanese),[2] and second, what I call "ecological abeyance" or the principle of suspending human agency in the face of nature. These steps in evading both categories of religion and the secular, and creating a nonreligious approach to sustainable development, were at the core of OISCA's activities, and they ultimately enabled claims about "Japanese cultural values" to appear as universal environmental ethics.

It is important to note that by "nonreligious" I do not mean an erasure of the religious. Talal Asad (2003) famously argued that religion and the secular are historical categories that are mutually constituted in specific and variable ways, and others have followed to show that the opposition between the two is constantly shifting and renegotiated (e.g. Calhoun et al. 2011; Dressler and Mandair 2011).[3] Specific to the case of Japan, it is useful to refer to Jason Josephson (2012) who has elucidated what he calls "the Shinto secular." He defines this as a doctrine of the 19th century that did not erase religion but contained it, embraced modern European science, attempted to eliminate not religion but superstition, and most importantly, made a particular Japanese subjectivity formulated in relation to the nation-state and the emperor. As Josephson emphasises, the Shinto secular is not a subtraction of religion; it is a process that incorporates and transforms religion, as well as simultaneously opposes it, under the rhetoric of Shinto as Japanese national culture. Given that OISCA derives from

a Shinto-based new religion, it appears that the Shinto secular might apply to the organisation.

As we will see below, there are affinities between OISCA aid workers' claims to do nonreligious work and the Shinto secular, but I maintain the term "nonreligious" for two reasons. First, I follow scholars who argue that the core workings of secularism today is not in the separation of church and state, but in the making of a worldview and subjectivities (religious and otherwise) compatible with a form of liberal political rule that upholds individual and collective liberties, reason, and science (see Asad 2003; Mahmood 2006). While OISCA aid workers adhere to the Japanese state's injunction to maintain religion in its proper place by claiming that they are not a religious organisation, their claim to be nonreligious and their appeal to a Shinto ecological worldview is not about liberal subjectivities. Thus, to use the term "secular" would be misleading. Second, while scholars argue that the distinction between religion and the secular is unstable, their objects of study are usually concerned with how social actors make claims about what is religious and what is secular. Although OISCA staffers were also engaged in boundary-making practices, these actions involved a distancing from both categories rather than a claim of one over the other. A crucial point here is that their assertion of being "nonreligious" is not necessarily a statement of the secular; I am arguing for an analytical pause, to attend to the fact that people distanced themselves from "religion" but neither did they claim the idea of the "secular." Their aim was to change the terms of engagement. The word "nonreligious," which includes the term "religious" in its negation, is an attempt at capturing the ambiguous position that OISCA staffers sought to create.

In recent years, a number of scholars have begun studying the intersection of religion and development. In anthropology, for example, there is a growing body of work on faith-based aid (Bornstein 2005; Hefferan and Fogarty 2010; Occhipinti 2005). However, few studies have looked at non-Western religious aid, and even fewer still have examined aid actors who are ambivalent about their religious legacies. I suggest that tracing how OISCA's Japanese staff members articulate a nonreligious position as its vision of the future is important because it demonstrates that aid actors' blurring of the distinctions between religion and the secular – or even how these categories are sidestepped altogether – has an impact on the effects and politics of aid. Specifically, claiming to be nonreligious can transform particularistic arguments into universal

values – in this case, ideas of "Japanese culture" as a global environmental ethic – which can ultimately obscure hierarchical relations as if politics did not exist.

(Non)Religious legacies

Established in 1961, OISCA is one of the oldest NGOs in Japan and derives from a Shinto-based new religion called Ananaikyō. It is known for its environmental projects and agricultural training programmes, which are conducted at four training centres in Japan and 16 training centres around the Asia-Pacific. As in the other programmes, the OISCA Myanmar training centre teaches rural youth techniques in organic agriculture and animal husbandry through an 11-month course in which staff and trainees live together in a communal lifestyle.[4] There are other international and local NGOs in Myanmar that focus on agricultural aid, but OISCA is one of the few organisations that conduct long-term training programmes in a training centre.

The man who created OISCA, Yonosuke Nakano, was also the founder of Ananaikyō. Although the NGO and the religious organisation are separate in terms of legal registration, there are significant connections between them, beginning with the shared founder. Currently, OISCA's senior Japanese staffers are all members of Ananaikyō, OISCA's history is inseparable from Nakano's position as a religious leader, and OISCA's mission to create world peace through sustainable agriculture and environmental efforts echoes Nakano's teachings.[5] Furthermore, a scratch beyond the surface reveals that OISCA was able to amass powerful political support thanks to politicians' interests in religious leaders, such as Nakano. This support led to the creation of the National Diet League to Promote OISCA's International Activities ("OISCA Diet League") in 1967, composed of dozens of prominent politicians from the ruling conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Members of the OISCA Diet League – LDP politicians – have been instrumental in promoting OISCA's activities overseas, and securing political and financial backing for OISCA's projects.

Yet the younger non-Ananaikyō Japanese staffers at OISCA often told me that they did not know that OISCA was connected to a religious organisation until they joined the NGO. The senior Ananaikyō staff members never spoke of OISCA's religious legacy because people outside the organisation had told them over the years that OISCA's connection to a new religion should not be publicised if they did not want to be seen as a strange, cultish organisation. This learned silence also permeated

inside the organisation, as the senior staff members, Ananaikyō men in their sixties and seventies, almost never mentioned Ananaikyō or OISCA's religious roots to the younger staff who were mainly non-Ananaikyō women and men in their twenties and thirties.

This kind of silence has been prevalent among other NGOs in Japan. Although Japanese NGOs are not usually explained in terms of religion – unlike Euro-American histories of charity, humanitarianism, and development (Barnett 2011; Bornstein 2005; Taithe 2004)—I suggest that it is helpful to look at the trajectory of NGOs in Japan through the lens of religion as well. Like OISCA, many of the other early NGOs also derived from religious groups.[6] Also like OISCA, these NGOs have struggled against the public suspicion of "religion," and especially new religions in Japan.[7] Particularly since Aum Shinrikyō's terrorist attacks on the Tokyo subway in 1995, the general public has tended to see new religions with apprehension, almost fear (Hardacre 2003). Against this background, many of the religiously derived NGOs have tried to distance themselves from their religious roots, such as the Japan Sōtōshu Relief Committee – Sōtōshu being a Buddhist sect – which changed its name to Shanti Volunteer Association in 1999. OISCA is no exception: a quick search of the terms "OISCA" and "Ananaikyō" online (in Japanese) reveals comments by people who are alarmed at the connection between the two. It is no surprise that OISCA's senior Ananaikyō staffers cultivated a culture of silence regarding the NGO's religious history.

This silence is telling of the "nonreligious" position that OISCA's senior Japanese staffers have created – that is, rather than interpret this move as a misrecognition of the "real" religious nature of OISCA or an attempt to establish a secular group, I suggest that we look at their adoption of an ambiguous position between the two categories as producing its own social, political, and conceptual spaces. The argument of being nonreligious among Japanese senior staff derives from Nakano himself. Throughout the 1950s, Nakano invited religious leaders from around the world to create a new religious movement for world peace. However, Nakano was quickly disillusioned by religious leaders who tended to fight with each other. He subsequently sought to expand his vision, forming a spiritual and nondenominational movement that would unite the world under a utopian ecological aspiration. In 1961, he invited a wide group of participants from around the world and organised the Congress for Cultivating Universal Human Spirit.

Through the congress, Nakano aimed to bring about a global realisation that human beings are rooted in what he called the Great Spirit of

the Universe (*uchū daiseishin*). The summary of the congress stated that the only way to avoid the possible devastation of a nuclear war was "to return to nature" (OISCA 1961: 13). Nakano taught that the universe contains a Great Spirit whose energy runs through nature and thereby through all life forms, including humans. The goal was to realise a utopian future wherein humans would live according to the laws of this Great Spirit, away from the destructive direction in which modernisation and science had led humanity. A second congress was held later that year, and the precursor to OISCA, the International Organization for Cultivating Human Spirit (IOCHS) was established. The vision of development work in OISCA that centred around the teaching of organic agriculture ultimately derived from this nonreligious and utopian ecological aspiration to create a world in which all life forms live and labour in harmony according to the Great Spirit of the Universe. Japanese staff members have continued to promote this message, and it permeates OISCA's sustainable development activities.

The unremarkable

The environmental ethic based on the Great Spirit of the Universe required two conceptual steps: first, turning the question of religion and the secular into a matter "simply" of Japanese culture, and thus unremarkable, and second, defining Japanese cultural values as the basis of a universal environmental ethic of "living in harmony with nature." The first part of this organisational logic was often shared not only among staff members, but also by OISCA's supporters such as LDP politicians. In fact, changing the terms of discussion from religion/secularism to culture, specifically in reference to Shinto, resonated well with LDP politicians' own ideologies.

One of the jobs at the OISCA headquarters in Tokyo was to maintain relations with the LDP politicians of the OISCA Diet League. Shiraki, a staff member in his seventies who had been with Ananaikyō and OISCA since its beginnings in the 1950s, was in charge of these relationships. One day, he took me to the House of Representatives to interview one of the OISCA Diet League members, Yamamoto. Yamamoto's own father, another LDP politician, had been a member of the OISCA Diet League, and it was evident that political and social lineage – in addition to a familial one in Yamamoto's case – tied together the OISCA Diet League members. After hearing some of Yamamoto's experiences with OISCA, I ventured to ask about his views on OISCA's roots in Nakano and his

religion. Yamamoto paused. "I was not aware that – what's his name? Nakano something? – was a religious leader." It was hard to believe that he did not know of OISCA's founder and his background. Breaking the silence, Shiraki intervened: "Yonosuke Nakano was a man who studied *Kokugaku* [National Learning]."

Kokugaku was a movement in the 18th century that "strove to 'recover' an idealised, pure mentality and worldview ascribed to the ancient Japanese" and it was this school of thought "that most influenced the formation of State Shinto" (Hardacre 1989: 16). In fact, scholars have argued that the rise of Kokugaku's modern nationalism first systematised Shinto as Japan's indigenous tradition, thus making Shinto available to imperialists and militarists in the early 20th century as the ideological foundation for the modern Japanese state (Breen and Teeuwen 2000; Kuroda 1981; Yasumaru and Miyachi 1988). Notably, what Shiraki did not mention was that Nakano had also trained in *Reigaku* (Spirit Studies), a branch of Kokugaku that seeks to achieve an attunement with the spiritual world as described in the ancient texts of the *Kojiki*. Reigaku is a mystical tradition and practice, which involves divinations (*yogen*), spirit possessions (*kangakari*), and the power of words (*kotodama*) – all elements that have been present in Ananaikyō. This was precisely the mystical aspect of Ananaikyō that senior OISCA staffers such as Shiraki did not want to discuss with non-Ananaikyō people for fear of being called irrational or cultish, inappropriate for an international development NGO.

With the Reigaku legacies kept out of sight, the politician grasped onto the mention of Kokugaku with approval. "Oh yes, if he was a Kokugaku scholar, politicians of the OISCA Diet League must not have felt any sense of discomfort (*iwakan nai*) because the LDP is a party that protects Japanese traditions," he offered. He then made sure I had not misunderstood, and remarked that if Nakano had shown his religious colours openly, OISCA would probably not have succeeded as much as it had. "But as far as I know, OISCA hasn't done that [shown its religious colours]," he stated. Shiraki nodded. "Although," the politician backtracked rather vaguely, "even if Nakano had shown more of his colours as a Shinto leader and Kokugaku scholar, it would have been common sense (*atarimae*) as Japanese people, and thus as LDP, to support him."

Yamamoto seemed to gauge the question of whether or not LDP politicians had been supporting a religious person and organisation according to a barometer of comfort–discomfort, and ultimately determined that the issue was not a question of "religion" after all,

but rather a matter of Shinto and "common sense" Japanese cultural traditions – which he felt politicians could openly support. This argument is itself unremarkable in the context of Japan: as I mentioned above, framing Shinto as "national culture" rather than religion was a dominant stance in the Meiji era, and continues to appear in contemporary Japan.[8] The very familiarity and predictability, and hence acceptability, of the argument that "Shinto is Japanese culture" was crucial to people like Shiraki and Yamamoto.[9]

Ecological abeyance

If the unremarkable observation that Shinto is about Japanese culture seemed to fit into Josephson's theory of the Shinto secular, OISCA aid workers rearticulated this idea as not just "Japanese" but a universal environmental ethic. The religion scholar, Susumu Shimazono (2001), has argued that the "post-modern religious nationalisms" and "post-secularisms" in Japan since the 1980s have often contained a contradictory pursuit of hierarchical stratifications and ideals of ecological harmony as a response to the perceived loss of sociocultural values in the face of modernity. Although I do not see OISCA as a *religious* nationalist group, what he calls the complex entanglement of nationalistic and cosmopolitan orientations in these movements is apparent in the NGO as well. Specifically, I argue that the Japanese senior staffers' position of the nonreligious involved a second technique of obfuscation, that is, in transforming particularistic claims about *Japaneseness* as universal through what I call ecological abeyance, wherein human agency was subsumed into the greater workings of the natural world.

An important condition making this principle of ecological abeyance persuasive was the worldview of crisis in OISCA. Although in the day-to-day activities there was generally no immediate sense of urgency, there were periodic messages that reminded staff that we live in a world of environmental crisis. One way in which this happened was through a *listserv* that a staff member, Shimada, maintained. His emails went out to OISCA staff in Japan as well as to OISCA members around the world.[10] When I asked Shimada why he tended to emphasise messages about environmental crisis, he told me that his responsibility was to convey Nakano's philosophy to the OISCA members around the world. One such foundational teaching was, in his words, "human survival in a time of crisis." A few months later, he sent the following email to the listserv (the fonts are as in the original):

[world-ml:00964] Today's Rising Views = OISCA's Classic Views?

Dear OISCA Friends,

As repeatedly noted for you already, the points traditionally advanced by OISCA have been increasingly affirmed by the world's intellectuals in this century. Let me cite a passage from ***ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS*** (Spring 2010) just as one reflection of this welcome trend:

"The idea that Western culture — or perhaps, by now, global culture — needs a **new world view** seems indisputable in the context of the environmental disaster. . . . In whatever way we ultimately develop and articulate such a world view, its central tenets will likely include an understanding of the **Earth** as an **ecological system**, an explicit assumption that **economic production** must fall under the standard of **ecological sustainability**, and perhaps the acceptance that **humans** are. . . **'plain citizens'** of the **biotic community**, not master of it."

[A critical review of ***The Virtues of Ignorance: Complexity, Sustainability, and the Limits of Knowledge*** (2008) eds. Bill Vitek & Wes Jackson, by Wayne Ouderkirk, ***ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS*** (Spring 2010), Volume 32, Number 1, pp. 107-110; p. 107, emphasis mine.]

OISCAns, are you wondering which aspects of the above correspond to OISCA's classic views? Let me quote from **President Yoshiko Nakano**'s 1994 work, so that you can compare and find them out by yourself.

"Human Ethics ought to coincide with **Earth Ethics**. Unfortunately, our present human society has yet to see the connection. **Humanity** is still immature. We are not yet sufficiently conscious of the **greater laws of Nature**, and of the wider life cycles and of the **great unifying force of Life** that flows through all living things. . . . We must raise our vision beyond our own immediate environment and our own **material desires** to focus on the **greater whole** of which we are each but a **part**."

[Yoshiko Y. Nakano (1994) ***MIRACULOUS LIFE CHAIN: The Essence of Evolution from the Universe to Mankind***; p. 90, emphasis mine.]

OISCAns, don't you see the similarities — if not the essential sameness — between the two passages above? Any comments?

For Shimada, stressing the sense of global environmental crisis – in both the content and form of the emails – was a testament to Nakano's predictive powers and relevance in the contemporary world. The crisis necessitated a different approach to nature, and OISCA staff advocated an Earth Ethic that would place humans appropriately within a larger cosmology of the Great Spirit of the Universe, an alternative to dominant Western scientific worldviews today. Human agency, according to this principle, was secondary if not simply subservient to "the greater laws of Nature."

Against this backdrop of a sense of global crisis, OISCA's Japanese staff members articulated their interpretations of Earth Ethics in terms of an ecological abeyance, that is, an erasure of human agency in the face of nature. In an interview, a young Japanese staffer asked a senior staff member how he had been able to teach agriculture in different countries for over 30 years without being able to speak the local language or English. The senior staffer, who apparently had not thought about it before, replied:

> Oh, you're right. I've been speaking mostly Japanese to local people . . . But what I teach is agriculture, so we can just speak to the earth through the spade. Those who are learning are also farmers, so what I communicate to the earth, they'll learn from the earth . . . So our common language was probably this earth. The smell of soil is the same everywhere. The strong life force and unlimited possibilities of the earth have no borders. (Sakusa 1997: 155–156)

While, on the one hand, the ethic of ecological abeyance seemed to convey a human humility vis-à-vis the "unlimited possibilities of the earth," this view also advanced a particular politics. Specifically, the idea of ecological abeyance in OISCA often contained a hierarchical and nationalistic worldview of Japanese interests. It is still true that most senior Japanese staff members in OISCA, and even a large number of the younger staff, do not speak English. Most of them do learn the local language because they tend to spend years if not decades at project sites. Nevertheless, as was the case in the Myanmar project, the language of instruction and work was usually Japanese. The above staff member's statement that the "common language was probably this earth" glosses over the politics of asking Asian trainees and local staff to learn Japanese as their language of communication at work, and of obscuring the relations of aid as simply an expression of the earth's universality. While ecological abeyance in the face of environmental crisis appears as a

potentially universal principle that could transform the world, the idea can also distract our attention away from the particular interests and hierarchies on which such a principle is based.

Making bokashi

OISCA aid workers' claims that they were a nonreligious organisation diverted the question of religion and secularity into an issue of universal environmental ethics through the two-step techniques of obfuscation described above. I argue that the effects of these conceptual moves were ultimately to transform particularistic concerns into universal utopian values of ecological harmony, wherein the political was suspended as if power relations did not exist. The dominant thinking in the organisation was that labouring together in the fields, using organic methods that are true to the laws of nature, would help people transcend differences and connect with each other as equivalent parts of the natural environment.

Japanese and Burmese staff and trainees at the Myanmar training centre worked together on the same tasks of agricultural labour and communal duties such as cleaning. Although the one Japanese staff member in the training centre was the director who had ultimate authority over the Burmese staffers, this fact did not deter from the prevailing sense that they were all similarly working in tune with the laws of nature. One female Burmese staff, Ma Khaing, explained to me that despite the hard labour at the training centre, nobody complained because everyone, including the Japanese director, "worked together like family" in the fields. Everybody appeared equal in their adherence to "learning from nature."

Since 2005, the Burmese staffers have been running short-term agricultural training courses for villagers in Yesagyo Township. These three to five-day courses were part of OISCA's participation in the Food for Training (FFT) programmes under the World Food Programme (WFP), in which local participants receive rice from WFP in exchange for their participation in training courses designed by the implementing NGO. Between 2005 and 2010, OISCA conducted FFT courses in various topics in almost a hundred villages around Yesagyo Township.

As the process described below demonstrates, at first glance, training courses appeared to be just what they purported to do – programmes that impart techniques in organic agriculture in order to enable sustainable forms of community development. Observers might note that such training activities are ineffective, or that they enact projects of

governmentality (Cruikshank 1999; Li 2007; Welker 2012). Although these observations would not be wrong, here I examine OISCA's specific form of depoliticisation, which was less about the anti-politics of bureaucratic state power, governmentality, and technicalisation (Ferguson 1994; Li 2011), and more about the suspension of the political in nonreligious and utopian imaginaries of ecological harmony.

While the principle of "learning from nature" produced an abeyance of one's own agency as if one did not have authority over aid practices, the dissimulation of agency also had the effect of entrenching inequalities in practice. In September 2010, I accompanied by motorcycle three Burmese staff members to observe a WFP-funded training course on organic agriculture that they were conducting in a village 45 minutes away from the training centre. For four days, the Burmese aid workers took turns leading lectures and practicum on various organic farming techniques for the 31 men and women in attendance. On the second day, the youngest staff member, Ko Maung, introduced bokashi as a Japanese natural fertiliser (*thbawá myeáwza*, in Burmese) that uses waste products and other organic materials. On the chalkboard at the front of the room, he wrote down the bokashi ingredients that were locally available – cow dung, rice bran, oil scraps, ash, and so on. The final ingredient to be added to the mixture would be "bokashi seed" (*bokashi myo:zé*, in Burmese) which would be covered in subsequent lectures. Bokashi seed appeared as the most important ingredient, although its identity was not quite known yet. The last stage was to add water and mix the ingredients.

When Ko Maung finished his lecture, he took the participants outside for the practicum. As soon as the materials were ready, the participants began to make the bokashi. The women crushed the charcoal, brought the soil, and carried the water, while the men laid out the ingredients into a rectangular shape, using a wooden plank to straighten the sides and even out the top surface, just as the lecture had indicated. They were extremely careful with each step, combing the surface of each layer as if it were the most precious and delicate cloth of silk.

Ko Maung then took out the small plastic package of bokashi seed that he had brought from the OISCA training centre. The participants passed it around, looking over each other's shoulders to take a look at this mysterious substance. At first glance, it simply looked like soil. They traced the label with their fingers, which only said "bokashi seed" (*bokashi myo:zé*), and some of them sniffed the package to see if they could understand it in that way. A couple of the men opened the package and delicately sprinkled the bokashi seed on the top surface of the layers that

they had created. The women poured the water over the neatly shaped mound. One of the men took a shovel and pierced the flat surface, and everyone joined to shovel the mixture until the different ingredients were indistinguishable from one another in one large heap.

The third day of the training programme was conducted by Ko Myo, a cheerful man who was also one of the most studious staff members I had met. He asked the participants: "Do you know what is in the bokashi seed?" With his encouragement, several of them guessed that it might contain chilli pepper, rice bran, and garlic. After listening to their suggestions, he told them: "It is made of earth" (*myekyi: né loup ta*). He then wrote down "Effective Micro-Organism (EM)" in English and, knowing that the villagers did not understand English, told them that in Burmese it was called *akyo:pyú thekshí anúziwá* (literally, "micro life form with benefits"). He explained that EM is made from soil taken from 10 locations that neither people nor animals have treaded, such as underneath bushes and the bottom of the river. He proceeded to describe the steps of mixing the soil with rice bran and water, and fermenting it for several days, to make the bokashi seed.

The mystery of the unknown contents of the plastic bag had been solved, but the opacity of this knowledge remained. Concluding the lecture with a message of humility rather than empowerment, Ko Myo told the participants that one could know something such as knowing about bokashi seed and EM, but it did not mean that they could do it. He gave the example of making a clay pot. "You know that the pot includes horse dung, right?" "Yes," the participants answered. "But do you know how to make the pot?" he asked. They shook their heads. "So this is the same thing," he concluded. "You know, but you cannot do it, right?" Knowledge was not ability, he implied, and the making of bokashi seeds seemed to remain a technique out of reach for the participants.

During an afternoon break, I asked Ko Myo why he told the participants that knowing about organic farming techniques did not necessarily mean that they could do it. His answer was telling of the underlying organisational culture that informed his message. He told me that at the OISCA training centre, they were not making the EM themselves because they were using the EM-bokashi seed mixture that the previous Japanese director had made years earlier. Even though this director had retired to Japan the previous year, Burmese staff were still using his mixture. He explained that, as far as he knew, the former director had never taught EM-making to the Myanmar staff. "I asked him once, but for some reason, he never taught me," he added.

The purpose of the training centre and the training programmes for villagers were intended to empower participants by teaching them organic farming techniques and encouraging them to apply these skills in sustainable development efforts. Yet, what was communicated from the Japanese director to the Burmese staff, and from the Burmese staff to the Burmese villagers, was the value of erasing one's agency and authority. Although the mystification of bokashi seed-making techniques was not explicitly about ideas of ecological abeyance, much less about an overt statement regarding the nonreligious, I suggest that it was a manifestation of an environmental ethic and organisational culture that derived from arguments of the nonreligious. The erasure of one's authority among the Japanese aid workers was shaped by ecological visions of humanity as subservient to the laws of nature, such as the staffer who claimed to speak with cultural others through the earth. This created an organisational culture in which, first, challenge to authority became difficult due to its dissimulation, and second, the abeyance of human agency in the collective experiences of nature were upheld among Japanese and Burmese aid actors as ideal forms of subjectivity for a sustainable future. In this scheme, ultimately, there was little room for aid actors to upend existing hierarchies because politics disappeared from view.

Conclusion

Frederic Jameson proposed "that utopia emerges at the moment of the suspension of the political" (Jameson 2004: 43). In many ways, the nonreligious vision of environmental ethics in OISCA is utopian as it puts the political on hold, making it possible to imagine a world where humans and nature coexist in peace, following the universal forces of the Great Spirit of the Universe. Yet what the obfuscation between the religious and the secular in OISCA shows is that utopian aspirations can have their own political effects. Appealing to ideas about "Japanese cultural values," particularly relating to ideas of ecological harmony, enabled OISCA's Japanese aid workers and supporters to argue that their work had universal import in promoting sustainable development efforts. A cultural value that advocates attunement with nature, as the argument went, can surely be a universal value that can bring Japanese, Burmese, and others together towards a common utopian future.

Examining how Japanese aid workers articulate a nonreligious position is important because muddling the distinction and question of

religion and secularity shapes a particular politics of aid, specifically one that transforms particularistic claims of "Japanese values" into universals. This is not a predetermined formula, but in the case of OISCA, we see how the aversion to being labelled religious led staff members to define their organisation as Shinto and therefore about Japanese culture, which then became the framework for their environmental ethics. The particularly "Japanese" concerns and values were presented as a global ethic of ecological harmony, a universal ethos of "living in harmony with nature" for a sustainable future. By arguing for oneness with nature and others in long-term and collective agricultural life, OISCA aid workers strived to bypass both categories of religion and secularity, and change the terms of engagement. If acting as Ananaikyō or Japanese in Southeast Asia would seem like an imposition of a vested interest, or worse yet, as an imperialist project, the framework of environmental ethics allowed for a shift in interpretation. Under the universal values of living in harmony with nature, power inequalities were generally overlooked for the greater good of an Earth Ethic. I argue that this was the underlying framework of OISCA's development activities, in which hierarchical relations were unquestioned and maintained in the shadows of a hope for a sustainable future. In a world where "green religions (which posits that environmentally friendly behaviour is a religious obligation)" and "dark green religions" (in which nature is sacred, has intrinsic value, and is therefore due reverent care)" continue to grow (Taylor 2010: 10), an environmental ethic that espouses ideas of living in harmony with nature might appear as a possible solution to global environmental crisis. Nevertheless, the case of OISCA shows that such universal claims are also always vehicles of particular worldviews and interests, as well as products of specific historical processes that make utopian aspirations far from apolitical.

Notes

1 All names are pseudonyms.
2 "Iwakan" literally translates as "feeling uncomfortable" or "feeling out of joint"; "iwakan nai" is its negation. In this article, I translate "iwakan nai" as "unremarkable" in order to point to the desired effect of articulating something as "not uncomfortable"; that is, being so ordinary that it does not intrude upon one's consciousness or senses.
3 Scholars have also pointed out the analytical distinctions we must make between "the secular" (as an epistemic category), "secularisation" (as a conceptualisation of historical processes of the decline of religion), and "secularism" (as a worldview in projects of modernity) (see Calhoun et al. 2011: 5; Casanova 2007).

4 Japan has been one of Myanmar's largest aid donors, and one of its major areas has been in the agricultural sector. There are ongoing plans by the Japanese government and private businesses, and the Myanmar government to prioritise Japan's agricultural assistance to this newly opened country. The NGO face of this Japanese interest in agricultural aid in Myanmar is OISCA.

5 Reflecting Yonosuke Nakano's teachings, the organisational charter states: "We recognize that all life-forms are closely interconnected and that their source is in the universe. We envision a world in which people coexist beyond differences of nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, and culture, and strive to protect and nurture the basis of life on this earth . . . As a way to realize this vision, we have chosen the work of cultivating people who can put to action efforts towards the coexistence of all life on earth, with a heart grateful for the fact that we are allowed to live thanks to the benefits granted to us by the universe" (http://www.oisca.org/about/).

6 For example, the Asia Rural Institute (ARI or Ajia Gakuin) and the Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperative Service (JOCS) were founded in 1960, and they are both Christian organisations. Religious institutions such as Risshō Kōseikai have also funded many NGOs in Japan. Nevertheless, OISCA is unique in that it is a Shinto-based organisation.

7 Religious scholar Susumu Shimazono (1992) defines "new religions" (*shinshūkyō*) as those that were established between the early 19th century and the early 1950s. Ananaikyō was established in 1948, and would thus fall under this category. Shimazono calls religious groups that were established or rose to prominence after the 1970s and 1980s "new new religions" (*shin-shinshūkyō*).

8 For example, between 1969 and 1974, LDP politicians introduced a bill to the Diet (the parliament) to reconnect the relationship between the state and the Yasukuni shrine, a Shinto shrine that houses the spirits of the war-time dead including war criminals, based on the argument that Shinto is simply about Japanese cultural traditions (Shinya 2010).

9 Another point is that the issue here also seemed to involve an anxiety regarding a third element: superstition or the spiritual (for a historical account of this trinary in Japan, see Josephson 2012). In the context of Asia, an interesting question arises in various modern public phenomena that can be called "spiritual" – "events, practices and concepts associated with the other-worldly that cannot be easily contained within the domains of 'religion' or 'secular politics'" (Bubandt and Van Beek 2012: 4). Bubandt and Van Beek (2012: 7) argue that when the spiritual enters the public in many Asian societies, it is "often deemed illicit, embarrassing or problematic" because it challenges both categories of secularism and religion. Although beyond the scope of this chapter, I suggest that a similar "embarrassment" might have been taking place between Shiraki and Yamamoto.

10 In addition to OISCA-the-NGO, there is OISCA-International composed of 30 chapters worldwide, an international consortium of people who conduct environmental and other activities in accordance with OISCA's mission. The 30 chapters are in the following countries: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, Fiji, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Timor-Leste, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and the United States.

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Outlook: Research on Religion and Development

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This volume, and the discussions out of which it developed, has aimed to expand upon and redirect work on the intersections of religion and development through examinations – on both conceptual and ethnographic levels – of the changing configurations of these categories within and across particular political contexts. In the late 1990s, a number of major development donors "re-discovered" religion, and against a long history of neglect and omission, began a remarkable new phase of proactive engagement (Jones and Petersen 2011; Marshall and Keough 2004; Rees 2011). Following on from this, the topic of religion and development has received increasing attention in international development circles, as scholars, practitioners, and policymakers sought to understand religious actors and the relevance of religion to their work. This has generated a significant number of reports, conferences, policy statements, and academic commentary.

Our work here marks a new intervention into this literature by attending to the complex politics involved in dynamic interactions between development projects and religious communities in Asia. The basic framework for these examinations of religion and the politics of development is "interactionist" (cf. van der Veer 2001). Facilitating a constructive engagement with their encounter and exchange results in both conceptual and methodological implications. An interactionist approach to analysing religion and development is useful in moving beyond conceptual essentialisation to view both "religion" and "development" as dynamic, interrelated, and contingent formations (Feener 2013; Fountain 2013; Salemink et al. 2004). In such work, neither "religion" nor "development" should be seen as a fixed, stable category, but rather as "moving targets" tracked across complex and ever-shifting landscapes. Such work requires the recognition of and critical attention

to the historicity of both "religion" (Asad 1993; Masuzawa 2005) and "development" (Ekbladh 2010; Rist 2002).

While an interactionist framework does not necessarily privilege any particular discipline over any other, it does nevertheless call for specific methodological implications. On the conceptual level, these include the use of dynamic, rather than static, categories of analysis with attention to particular re-configurations over time. In such work, attention to detail, texture, and specificity enable clearer insight into the changing meanings, values, practices, and discourses of diverse parties involved with projects at intersections of religion and development.

The detailed focus of such work, however, is not intended to deflect attention away from larger-scale issues and arguments. The point is not specificity for its own sake, but rather to provide more material to better inform our understandings of the ways in which working conceptions of "religion" and "development" are constantly re-shaped and re-deployed over diverse contexts. Such an approach requires in-depth fieldwork in particular "sites" while remaining cognizant of the broader political ecology. These sites, however, should not be viewed as coterminous with spatially delimited locations, but rather such specific grounding should also attempt to pursue transnational connections and disjunctures (Mosse 2005; Tsing 2005). In short, more unabashedly empirical research is needed to provide case studies that can enable new understandings of on-the-ground religion–development dynamics in the key sites of negotiation of aspirations and the implementation of particular projects.

Moving through and across specific sites in this way requires attention to issues of translation on multiple levels. In the more technical sense, this requires critical analysis of ethnographic and textual materials – including scriptural traditions, institutional archives, official reports produced by development organisations, government agencies, NGOs, and more public media. Careful work on such materials helps not only to better appreciate the nuances of specific references to the categories of "religion" and "development," but also to the diverse ways in which those conceptual configurations are deployed in different discursive arenas.

Capacity for effectively communicating across different lines of conversation on issues of "religion and development" is essential for forging and supporting more meaningful engagements between academics, development practitioners, policymakers, and religious leaders. The challenge of such work should not be underestimated. Not only are there profound challenges relating to differences of analytical approach

and theoretical tools, but there are also considerable divergences over pragmatics such as timeframes, forms of output, and organisational constraints. And yet various forms of collaborative research will be invaluable, including team approaches cutting across policymakers, practitioners, religious scholars/leaders, and researchers. In such cases, we argue particularly for a *co-elaborative* approach in which sustained discussions between academics and practitioners figure prominently as part of ongoing learning processes. Work along these lines can, we argue, contribute significantly to our evolving understandings of the ongoing, and increasingly complex, interactions of religion and development.

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