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## 1

# Introduction: The Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia—Paradigmatic Change in Regional Perspective

*Thomas DuBois*

In 1982, the sociologist Jonathan Z. Smith famously called religion a “product of the scholars’ study.”<sup>1</sup> That it certainly is, but it is equally a product of state regulation, legal rulings, the neighborhood PTA, the news media, and lest we forget, of its preachers, believers, saints and charlatans. What one might identify as “religion” is always a shifting entity, composed of a variety of ideas, discourses and interests. Even a single religious tradition comprises a variety of actors and voices, and when a change occurs, it concerns not only the ecclesiastical elite, but also each of these levels as well.

Consider some of the many choices that shape religion today, such as whether to consecrate homosexual bishops in the Anglican Church or to ordain women into the Catholic priesthood. Officially, the final word in such decisions is that of a small group of high-level church leaders who shape doctrine, based largely, if not exclusively, on interpretation of an internal tradition of scripture and precedent.<sup>2</sup> However, their considerations are also shaped by the opinions of their own lay faithful, and by external forces, such as the law of the land, and political and social pressures from a wide variety of interest groups outside the church. The exact relationship between these internal and external forces (in other words, between church and society), is itself mediated by a number of structural factors, such as the inclusivity of theological debate, the ability of different public advocacy groups to organize and recruit effectively, and to express their views freely and the intrusiveness of official political power into the process.

Broadly speaking, religious change occurs at these three levels: society, theology and the structural context, which I will refer to as technology. Of course, these categories are not absolute. Although the secular and the religious are often treated in opposition to each other, it is of somewhat limited use to seek any substantive distinction between the two. Rather than asking whether theology evolves to reflect society or the reverse, I see the two as two sides of

the same coin, with simultaneous change to both of these realms often initiated by the technologies through which the two interact. Used in this sense, technology refers simply to how things are done—ways of ruling, educating, organizing and communicating—and to the ideological agendas these practices invariably bring.<sup>3</sup> New technologies create new realities and possibilities, instigating a cascade of effects on society, theology and the relationship between the two. Returning to one of the examples cited above, it is by no means new for certain people within and outside of the Catholic Church to support the ordination of women into the priesthood. What does change is the context in which it all takes place. Compared to one or two hundred years earlier, current debates within Western theology are fundamentally different because (among other reasons) they are now far-more inclusive. Not only do opinions on all sides reach millions worldwide by television, newspaper and the Internet but, perhaps more importantly, many of those so reached have been educated in national schools, and taught to channel their political and social activism into a florescence of highly specialized advocacy networks.

This volume will examine how this triad of influences combined to transform the definition, practice and social significance of religion in East and Southeast Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The choice to combine East and Southeast Asia is significant. Despite their proximity, the two regions are rarely discussed together, and indeed there is a great deal to separate them. Speaking in the broadest possible terms, East Asia belongs to a generally Sinic world, mainland Southeast Asia owes its greatest debt to Indian culture, and island Southeast Asia also to India and China, but also Islam, as well. Yet this entire region, covering an area from Japan to Burma to Indonesia, has been linked for centuries by commercial, political and demographic, as well as religious networks, as well as a degree of artistic, linguistic and ritual interaction significant enough to greatly compromise any idea of absolute cultural boundaries.<sup>4</sup> In more recent times, the history of the region was bound by a series of shared experiences: the multifarious impact of Western imperialism during nineteenth century, joined in Asia by American and Japanese ventures in the twentieth, and successive waves of globalization in the postcolonial era. Here we are presented with yet another fundamental divide; while most of Southeast Asia was formally colonized by European powers, East Asia for the most part was not. However, such a divide is itself misleading; even those areas that were never directly colonized were still heavily influenced by a variety of Western ideas and models—it could be argued that the reason why countries such as Japan escaped colonization is essentially that they became European.<sup>5</sup> The question then is whether the long-term history of this region is simply a process by which local identities and ideas were replaced by global, and in particular Western ones.

In terms of religion, many would say that it was, and that as a result, a fundamentally European definition of religion now lies at the center of a hegemonic world discourse. The discourse itself is generally construed in one of two

ways, as being modeled either on post-Enlightenment Christianity, or on secular modernism. For the former, the civilizing drive of imperialism (and of the globalized culture left in its wake) was fundamentally inseparable from the ideas and institutions of Christianity. Knowingly or not, a variety of European imperialists took Christianity as a model for religion and its place in society, such that native religions were forced to adapt and recast themselves in a Christian image. Missionaries were naturally at the forefront of this process, holding up religion as a path not only to personal salvation but also to civilizational reform, dazzling the unsaved with what one scholar has called the “evangelical modernity” of the Christian West.<sup>6</sup> Even when sympathetic to native religion, colonial administrators and jurists created and enforced categories in deciding what constituted real religion, granting secular authority to certain religious structures, while denying it to others. The academic study of religion (especially the comparative study of “world religions”) itself developed out of Christian theological apology, and despite its later pretensions to scientific objectivity, retained racial and cultural trajectories of progress that ranked religions according to their degree of development.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, these would place Protestant Christianity at the pinnacle of religious evolution, interpreting the founding figures, teachings, rituals and scriptures (or lack thereof) of what they considered advanced religions such as Buddhism, or hopelessly backwards ones, such as Hinduism, through this same matrix of Christocentric criteria.<sup>8</sup> This legacy is so pervasive that some have persuasively questioned the validity of the discipline altogether.<sup>9</sup>

The second of the two models, otherwise known as secularization theory, says simply that with ever-advancing progress of science, the light of reason and a new, all-encompassing role for the state, the arrival of the modern world gradually overwhelmed and marginalized religion. Beginning with the controversies surrounding the likes of Galileo, a variety of discoveries increasingly called scripture into question as a literal expression of scientific and historical truth (more than astronomy, the evolutionary implications of paleontology seemed to have been the real spirit breaker, as it were). More fundamentally, the overwhelming confidence in empiricism and reason characteristic especially of the late nineteenth century denigrated subjective belief in other realms, as well. For inveterate modernists such as Max Weber, the heart of Western superiority lay precisely in the ability of its rational institutions of administration to operate free of ideology.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the state came to occupy something resembling a religious role. The rise of citizen nationalism redefined local and ethnic identities, and secularized religious ones, subverting both to a tier of secondary significance, and transferring the air of sacrality and transcendence from religious institutions to what Renan famously termed the “spiritual principle” of the nation.<sup>11</sup> The hegemony of this modernist complex did not destroy religion, but rather pushed it out of public life, and relegated it to the private spheres of the home, and individual conscience.<sup>12</sup> According to this theory, such processes took shape within Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and quickly spread throughout the world. They continue to serve as a basis

for misunderstanding when, for example, the United States insists that nations adhere to a definition of personal religious freedom that derives from these ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Leaving aside the question of world hegemony for a moment, it is clear that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did see sweeping changes to the concept of religion in Western discourse, and that many of the changes to European thought were in fact prompted by imperialism. Colonial rule bureaucratized vast expanses of daily life, at home and in overseas possessions, requiring a standard understanding of religion that would apply across cultures. Needless to say, this process of standardization was also one of reification. Perhaps the greatest change to the European understanding of religion came as a result of Christian mission. In contrast to the Iberian clerical missions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the wave of lay missionary activity of the late nineteenth century was itself a very new phenomenon, a new form of Christianity that had its roots in the vast changes undergone by European society during the intervening period. The call to mission that first swept Europe and the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was in many cases prompted by social reform movements at home, what might be thought of as the internal mission of the lower classes. In England, fears of Jacobin ideals crossing the Channel prompted a new attention to the welfare of the laborer, who was suddenly faced with a plethora of temperance societies, Sunday schools and moral legislation. The moral plight of the working classes was often compared to that of the heathen in newly acquired overseas possessions, who were suddenly discovered to be living in darkness and in need of salvation in the most urgent way.<sup>14</sup> Missionary piety was itself also a reflection of opportunity. Imperialism brought the world home to Europe; through a variety of products and images, the world came literally into the sitting rooms of the emergent middle class. This new knowledge, and the opportunities created by expanding European power itself created a new wave of interest in spreading the gospel overseas (although without significant formal colonies, American and Canadian missionaries were also very active overseas, and an obvious parallel can be drawn with the missionization of the American frontier), what might be described as a “supply-side” explanation for the explosion in popular piety.<sup>15</sup> Even when they were not especially successful overseas, these new missionary societies radically transformed Christianity at home, presenting new modes of organization, and a new “relationship between civilization and piety, between social transformation and individual conversion.”<sup>16</sup>

However, the fact that such developments first occurred in Europe and were carried on the winds of expanding European influence should not be taken to as evidence of a simple imposition of Western ideology. Naturally, those holding the reins of political, military and commercial dominance did voice their ideas with a greater, but by no means complete authority. During the nineteenth century, the political elites of the colonies, the social institutions of well-backed Christian missions and the scholarly societies of European metropolises would

all exert a disproportionate influence throughout Asia, as would their images of what religion was and should be. Yet, focusing exclusively on these elite portrayals, as did Edward Said with European Orientalism, without examining how these images were received and understood, runs the risk of assuming that the “positional superiority” of Europe in the colonies translated into absolute discursive authority.<sup>17</sup> Clearly it did not. While European actors may have had a dominant position in the process of defining culture, civilization and progress, they were by no means alone in it. Nor were they unaffected. Just as the expansion of overseas mission changed the nature of European Christianity, the globalized culture that emerged from imperialism was a dialogic process that shaped both observer and observed. If the English came to see their Indian colonies as exotic, yet backward and mired in superstition, the reverse view saw the English as rational and secular yet lacking in spirituality; the two images reinforced and created each other in an “interactional” exchange that equally involved London and Delhi.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the discourses of the powerful could be quickly turned against them. Even if ideas such as “civilization,” “enlightenment” or the ever-maligned “modernity” became hegemonic in the Gramscian sense—as concepts they retained a universal validity in an increasingly global discourse of political legitimacy and social progress—their precise content remained beyond the power of any one party to dictate.<sup>19</sup> Certainly by the beginning of the twentieth century, a critical number of elites throughout the world had become wholly conversant in these ideas, and were very able to accept, reject or manipulate them. In communication with each other, subjects from throughout the colonial and postcolonial world could hear ideals of Christian brotherhood, Wilsonian self-determination, or free market access and complain to each other that the West was failing to live up to its own rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the reach and longevity of these concepts derives from precisely this type of ambiguity, and many of the watchwords that drove imperialism also retained their currency in postcolonial political discourse, even when it physically circumvented or opposed the West. At the first meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1955, Anwar el Sadat closed one of many speeches expressing opposition to Western domination with a call for “justice, equity, liberty and peace,” words that could have just as easily come from the mouth of any European political leader of the previous hundred and fifty years.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, the globalization initiated by European imperialism did transform the world, and far more than discourse alone, the engine that powered what historian Marshall Hodgson once called the “great Western Transmutation” of the world was technologies of practice.<sup>22</sup> Colonial rule introduced new institutions of governance, such as public education, national censuses and a modern military, along with the new configurations of citizenship, ethnicity and national spirit that developed in tandem with them. What is most significant is that these technologies transcended the boundaries of power and outlived the retreat of formal imperialism. Just like they did with Western discourse, later actors subsequently

adopted many of the technologies of rule first put in place during the colonial period. Not only postcolonial states like Malaysia and Indonesia, but also outside admirers, such as the short-lived but deeply influential Japanese empire, directly emulated discourses and techniques of European imperialism.<sup>23</sup> Like the technologies of rule, the organizational and proselytizational technologies of religious mission were adopted by native actors. When they did so, they equally adopted the logic inherent in these techniques—ideas of piety, true conversion and clerical authority (in short, much of what one might consider a transcendental definition of religion) that had developed decades earlier in the missionary transformation of European Christianity.<sup>24</sup> Other types of structural change, such as the increasing concentration of specialized knowledge in the hands of academic disciplines, and the global penetration of market mechanisms (what might be thought of as technologies of knowledge and commerce, respectively), not to mention the exponential growth of communications and transportation, each instigated new forms of scientific or social innovation, and each made an impact on the definition and practice of religion on a continental scale.

The tactic of this book is to focus on these techniques by presenting case studies arranged around specific issues within four major themes: scholarship, mission, policy and commerce, each of which is discussed in some detail below. Although we remind the reader to note the use of the plural—various areas, ethnicities, classes and religious groups experienced these changes in very different ways—our thesis is that these represent different manifestations of the same process, one that shaped not only the region, but the entire world, transforming metropolises as much as colonies, the powerful as much as the powerless. That these global transformations were more than simple Western or any other domination can be seen by comparing different configurations of power, between the formal colonization experienced in Southeast Asia, the informal yet no less transformative influence of the Western powers and Japan in East Asia, and the rise of postcolonial states following the Second World War.

### **Scholarship—Orientalism and the definition of Asian religion**

The Orientalist encounter is at its core an issue of knowledge, how ideas and images of self and other are produced, consumed and authenticated, and is often epitomized by Victorian scholarship on Asian religion. For many European writers of the nineteenth century, all that was essential to Asia was expressed in condensed form in its religion, particularly when compared with that of the West. Asian religion was alternately portrayed as decadent or spiritual, primitive or sublime, depending as much as anything else on how the writer felt about particular aspects of Christianity. Through religion more than anything else, armchair anthropologists of the nineteenth century saw themselves and their societies in reflection. The irony is that although many of these authors wrote with a shocking lack of experience or even interest in Asia itself, their portrayals developed an air of authority that mirrored the power of empire; the institutions

of European imperial academia, its scholarly societies, journals and academic titles spoke with a universalizing legitimacy that marginalized Asian traditions and voices. The example, mentioned in the chapter by Judith Snodgrass, of two of the most promising young scholar monks from a major Buddhist institution in Japan who left in 1876 to study Buddhism under Oxford philologist Max Müller, would on the surface seem to represent this process taken to a point of absurdity. Again, the claim is thus made, that on the whole, the Western study of religion stacked the deck against Asian religions. With the concepts, terms and teleologies employed by academics in the study of religion being fundamentally Christian in origin, Asian religions could only be found lacking. Like its authority to speak on the “true” nature of Asian religions, Western academic discourse on the nature and evolution of religion attained a worldwide hegemony, such that the new concepts, terms and biases that it introduced have been unquestioningly accepted by precisely those people to whom they do the greatest disservice.

Two chapters in this volume confront this view. Alexey Kirichenko and Judith Snodgrass discuss the portrayal of Asian religion in colonial Burma and the emerging imperial power of Japan, respectively, each demonstrating the degree of agency enjoyed by native actors to engage and shape the ideas and forms that accompanied Western scholarly discourse. Kirichenko begins, appropriately enough, by examining changing terms used for “religion” in Burmese over the nineteenth century. Throughout Asia, the arrival of Western ideas was reflected in the transformation of language. New terms were coined, often by scholar-missionaries, for such Western uniquely concepts such as democracy, race and religion, a fact that could easily be taken as the baldest proof both of the fundamental foreignness of these concepts (it is not uncommon for Asian scholars reject the term by declaring that their countries have no “religion”), and of the intellectual domination of those Asian languages that adopted them.<sup>25</sup> However, the process was hardly so simple. Even when imbued with new meaning, the terms introduced into Chinese and Japanese during this period often had an intellectual genealogy that far predated the Western impact. Legal terms introduced into Japanese had originally come from Tang dynasty (618–907) jurisprudence, the well-traveled term for “revolution” from the political philosopher Mencius (372–289 BCE), and that eventually chosen for “religion” (Ch. *zongjiao*, Jp. *shūkyō*) was employed in Chinese sources as early as the fifth century, here in reference to Buddhism. Moreover, these new terms were themselves coined and employed most extensively by native actors; the creation of political and legal neologisms in nineteenth-century Japan was primarily undertaken by native actors in the interest of treaty revision, and reaccepted into Chinese for the same reason one generation later.<sup>26</sup> Kirichenko traces similar processes in Burma, where the precolonial terms equated religion and Buddhism. Although the new, foreign terms for religion were coined by American scholar-missionaries, they were first employed by the anticolonial movement of the Young Men’s Buddhist Association. Rather than domination,

the use of neologisms by native actors demonstrated an adaptation of nationalist movements to use the ideological weapons of the Europeans against them.

Similarly, Judith Snodgrass traces the early career of D. T. Suzuki, perhaps the best-known exponent of Japanese Zen in the West. When Suzuki arrived in the United States, the academic study of Buddhism was firmly a project of philologists, who separated the “true” teaching as recorded in Pali texts, from what they characterized as the degenerate superstition of popular practice.<sup>27</sup> This represented not only the Judeo-Christian bias for iconic founders and texts, but also the linguistic basis for the academic hierarchies of Buddhology and Indology. After failed attempts to convince Western readers of the unique value of Japanese Buddhism according to its own criteria, that the teaching of the Buddha evolved through revelation, and that Japan represented the perfection, rather than degeneration of Buddhism, Suzuki accepted the criteria established by his audience. Like the Japanese monks at Oxford a generation earlier, Suzuki joined the Western academy on its own terms, publishing widely in academic journals and gaining respect for his philologically attentive translations. However, like these monks, as well as the Buddhist nationalists in Burma, Suzuki’s apparent acceptance of Western academic institutions was not so much a matter of subjection, as a strategy to subvert the existing paradigm. With his reputation established, he embarked on the task of presenting his characteristic image of Zen, one that was specifically tailored to meet the religious crises being faced by Western audiences.

### **Mission—Multivalenced meanings of Christianity in Asia**

When Christian missionaries arrived in Asia, they brought not only their beliefs, but also a vast array of organizational and proselytizational techniques that reshaped the practice of religion itself. Nor was this influence confined to Asian Christians. Like those of statecraft, the techniques of mission were adopted by native actors because they were effective. When faced with missionaries in their midst, native religious (and later political) actors often responded with what might seem to be characteristically Christian means—by adopting Sunday schools, catechisms, hymnals, lay support groups and, finally, the missionary drive itself.<sup>28</sup>

The techniques of mission had an implicit ideology that left a deep imprint even in those areas where Christianity itself never took root. The development of sustained Christian mission not only fomented the creation of mission journals and financial support institutions, it also had far deeper theological effects, played out in changing ideas of social transformation and individual piety and as “both indication and cause of a fundamental discursive shift in the relation between religion and politics in the West.”<sup>29</sup> Perhaps the most striking contribution of mission Christianity to Asia, the concept of individual conversion, with its emphasis on irreversible personal transformation and religious exclusivity, was a result of this genealogy. Broadly speaking, many of the patterns of

religious affiliation seen in much of precolonial East and Southeast Asia were based more on community than creed, with regimens of practice structured around village temples, sacred sites or clan propriety. In contrast, the notion of conversion associated with nineteenth-century Christian mission presented a new array of idioms—strictly defined sectarian membership, rituals of initiation, a clear concept of the saved and a policy of distancing converts from native tradition, often by segregation into separate communities.<sup>30</sup> This notion of transformative conversion and voluntaristic membership engenders a sense of distinctness and destiny among its converts, making it especially attractive to marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, when Christianity adapted to friendly or unfriendly local circumstances, it was forced to redefine itself and its boundaries in the process. Scholars have shown how Christian missionaries included in their teachings a wide array of ideas—about gender, sexuality, the body, economic productivity and the individuated self—that were not specifically related to theology. As China lurched from crisis to crisis during the early twentieth century, more than a few frustrated reformers gravitated toward Christianity not so much because they believed the religious content, but because the missionaries, particularly the Anglo-American Protestants, seemed to embody all of the social ideals they felt their country so desperately lacked. Missionaries also interacted with commercial networks. John and Jean Comaroff famously portrayed Christian mission in Africa as a way of training the bodily habits of natives for participation in a global “millennial capitalism.”<sup>32</sup>

On its own, such scholarship might give the impression that Western missionaries, confident in their own superiority, and backed by the power and prestige of imperialism, simply projected their ideas onto a passive native audience. Clearly, this was not the case. Experience in the field shaped both the practices of evangelism, and the beliefs and sympathies of the missionaries themselves.<sup>33</sup> In this volume, Roberta Wollons traces the conflict over American Christian education in early-twentieth-century Japan to show how the goals and parameters of mission were defined both by the missionaries and by the society in which they worked. She begins in the United States of the mid-nineteenth century, where mistrust of education as a proselytizing technique was beginning to give way to the influence of a new generation of single women missionaries, many of whom had a background in education and were eager for the opportunity to build institutions, such as hospitals, orphanages and especially schools overseas. Annie Howe, who arrived in the Japanese port city of Kobe in 1887, was typical of this new breed of American missionary educators. Howe worked to establish kindergartens that employed the cutting-edge pedagogical techniques she had learned in Chicago, artfully blending the formative content of this new style of education with Christian liberalism. Japanese reformers appreciated and admired Howe’s accomplishments, but as universal education became increasingly tied to their own program of citizen formation, they grew wary of leaving the schools in control of Christians, particularly foreign ones,

and gradually wrested the schools from Howe's control. In this case, at least, formative kindergarten education may have begun as a technique of mission, but an aggressive Japanese response ensured that the socializing content of Howe's pedagogical style would be dissociated from Christianity, and redirected toward nationalist ends.

Changes in missionary attitudes can be seen not only within the lifetime, but even within the mind of a single individual, such as the German missionary and painter Eduard Fries discussed by Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz. Like many of his contemporaries of the late nineteenth century, when Fries arrived on the Indonesian island of Nias, he brought with him a strong Calvinist rejection of religious materiality, and a particular revulsion for what he saw as native "idolatry."<sup>34</sup> Two decades of life in the field softened his tone. As he came first to respect native culture, and later to nostalgically mourn its passing, Fries saw native material culture in a more benevolent light. In this sense, Fries was typical of much of his generation, who gravitated toward an understanding of Christianity that was personal and internal, such that they could tolerate certain aspects of native worship, seeing these no longer as idolatry, but as a variant expression of a natural human longing for God. At the same time, this internalization of Christianity was equally conditioned by a modernist sense—just as in places like the Philippines native statuary might once have been reinscribed and resacralized by moving it into the Catholic cathedral, collectors such as Fries' own Missionary Society in Germany came to house ritual objects collected in the field in the ultimate cathedral of imperial modernity—the museum of primitive art.<sup>35</sup>

For the converted themselves, the creation of Christian communities large and small implied a range of meanings. Just as conversion to Christianity was defined by missionaries and the outside world in a variety of terms—an expression of class, education, industry, purity or (as Jennifer Connolly discusses in a later section) ethnicity—so too was the nature of authority within more established Christian communities conditioned by a number of factors. In his chapter on the 1954 resettlement of Catholic refugees from North Vietnam in the South, Peter Hansen discusses the evolution of clerical authority within these transplanted communities. Historically, the propagation of Christianity in Vietnam had been quite centralized, especially after mid-nineteenth century. In contrast to the diverse and occasionally competing interests faced by Protestant denominations, the dominant portion of Catholic mission within Indochina was conducted by priests affiliated with the Missions Étrangères de Paris, while significant segments of the native Church were organized into orders such as the Amantes de la Croix, which retained close ties to Rome.<sup>36</sup> Rather, a combination of political and social factors during the colonial period caused Catholic communities to evolve unique traditions of solidarity and clerical authority: those in the embattled north developing as tighter communities, who were willing to grant far-greater temporal authority to village priests than their southern counterparts. When northern Catholics embarked on their mass exodus over the seventeenth parallel, they were not expected to assimilate into southern

Catholic communities. Instead, a variety of political interests attempted to use the unique nature of clerical authority within northern communities both to control the refugees, and to keep them separate from southern Catholics.

### State policy—Religious ethnicity

The role of political institutions in shaping society can take many forms, but is perhaps best seen in the process of creating the categories that society must live with. Like the neologisms discussed above, the crux of the argument is hegemony—that categories originating in control and domination become accepted through habit or time by those who are least served by them. British administration in India, for example, strictly categorized natives by race and religion, at the same time giving a variety of religious laws authority over very particular realms of custom and personal life. Thus, a Hindu or a Muslim was defined by British authorities according to race, rather than by religious belief or preference, and issues such as his divorce, inheritance or marriage were adjudicated according to what colonial authorities recognized as religious law.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, such as the formation of “customary law” (*adat*) in the Dutch Indies, the gleaning and systemization of local custom was a decades long intellectual exercise in which colonial scholars took an active part.<sup>38</sup> Although British authorities in India rarely intervened directly in the content of native religious law, they did exclude certain aspects of religious custom, the 1829 ban on the practice of widow burning (*sati*) being the most famous, in a way that set moral parameters for what would constitute the legitimate exercise of religion.<sup>39</sup> In some places, such as colonial Singapore, civil cases involving religious law might actually be tried by a British judge.<sup>40</sup> The longevity of these categories is clearly evident in many former British colonies, such as Malaysia and Singapore, in which racially defined religious categories remain the law of the land.

However, although the desire to count, codify and categorize citizens is common to many colonial and postcolonial states, how individuals understand and use these newly dominant categories of race and religion are beyond the control of the state. This is seen in three chapters that discuss the role of the state in the pairing of ethnicity and religious community, and the effect that this has had on ideas of religious identity.

The first begins with the most absolute expression of state policy—the creation of legal codes and structures. In her chapter on colonial Malaya, Iza Hussin shows how the division of power between Malay sultans and British officials necessitated a legal definition of religion. As in India, the ideal was to leave customary matters in the hands of local community leaders, and in this arrangement as well, the realms of religion and custom were to remain the exclusive purview of Malay powerholders. In the broadest sense, British law did remain the overarching authority. When conflict inevitably arose over the precise boundaries of this unique jurisdiction of religion, the entire question was referred to Crown Law. Yet the matter did not stop there. Even if the Crown

now possessed the ability to define religion, as a legal entity, it was still up to the sultans to adjudicate both its content and its relation to sultanic governance. Precisely because their power had been so severely restricted in other realms, the sultans bound their own authority with religion, Islam in particular, in a way that they had never done before. This process would eventually result in the politically and ethnically charged concept of Islamic Law seen in postindependence Malaysia.

A second comes from colonial Indonesia, where Jennifer Connolly discusses the conversion of the highland Dayaks to Christianity. Banned from proselytizing among the majority Muslim Malays, American missions focused their efforts on a diverse group of highland tribes. At the same time, these highlands were themselves being scrutinized by the Dutch colonial government. New policies, such as census-taking and religious registration, categorized subjects in new ways, with much of the highland population lumped together under the name Dayak. These policies and categories were actively employed by the postcolonial state, which further restricted the definition of religion to five monotheistic faiths, within one of which every citizen must be registered as a member. These dual pressures on ethnic and religious definition created new configurations of identities, such that for many, the rather new idea of a single Dayak ethnicity was not only readily accepted, it became inseparable from Christianity. Similar processes can be seen throughout Asia, the process of “secularizing religious identity” observed on the national scale also occurring among its component pieces. In particular among those perceived as minorities, such as increasingly Christian Hmong in Vietnam or Muslim Hui in China, their primordial difference is expressed simultaneously in terms of ethnicity and religion.<sup>41</sup>

The adaptability of imposed identities is discussed further by Donald Sutton and Kang Xiaofei, who examine the complex convergence of ethnicity, religion and tourism in Huanglong, a site bordering Tibet in the far southwest of China. This region has long been shared by a diverse population of Han, Tibetans, Hui and Qiang, among others, each marking out its own landscape of sacred sites. As late as the mid-twentieth century, these visions had coexisted largely by bypassing and ignoring each other—Tibetans worshipped in the mountains, Han in the lowlands and Muslims within their own communities. However, with the formation of minority policy and extension of local and central state power under the People’s Republic, and the more recent development of the area as a tourist destination, local ethnic and religious identities have been forced to accommodate various levels of external definition. These new realities bring different issues to bear on each community. Remembering especially the persecutions and physical destruction of the 1960s, Han faithful stubbornly refuse to accommodate the sanitized religious sites, practices and histories established by local tourism officials. Tibetans find their religious practices and identities merged into a visible and highly commoditized religio-ethnicity that is consumed increasingly by newly wealthy Han Chinese tourists. In contrast, Muslim Hui are largely excluded both from the tourism boom and from the evolving “ethnic”

history of the region, and thus produce their own interpretations often based, not surprisingly, around the mosque.

### Commerce—New religions and new media

In a similar manner, the ever-expanding reach of commercial networks and structures into new social realms shapes religion, but this influence is felt in many different ways. At the most basic level, the expansion of trade networks can facilitate religious mission by opening new routes of communication and transportation, and often by providing economic incentives for conversion. Trade carried all sorts of religious mission to and within Asia—Buddhism along the Silk Road, Iberian Catholicism to China, Islam throughout much of the Malay world and various denominations of Christianity to the entire region in the mission boom of the nineteenth century. Beyond simply facilitating communication, the constant refinement of the technologies of commerce also shapes the way that ideas are spread. Just as the promise of distant markets had once brought the ships that carried the missionaries, the rise of a consumer class also set the stage for the mass marketing of goods and ideas. The same Victorian housewife that might have purchased the cloth and domestic goods of the Industrial Revolution, also bought newspapers, attended exhibitions and fairs, and was probably a member of a few civic organizations, as well. With these new forms of communication and organization, one can no longer speak of a simple “marketplace of ideas,” as much as a mass market, with producers, consumers and distribution networks.

New forms of media and distribution create opportunities, and shape both ideas themselves and how the individual engages those ideas. One only needs to look at the intensely emotional debates that have arisen among academics over the use of the Internet in the classroom, complete with apocalyptic predictions that electronic media will doom a generation of students to mental atrophy, to appreciate what is at stake. Looking back further in time, similar predictions were made at the advent of television and radio, and the removal of Latin from school curricula, the common argument essentially being the essence of mass marketing—that an abundance of supply creates a compliant consumer, in this case a passive and disengaged student. However, although innovations in media did allow the producers of information increasingly broad and direct access to individual consumers, these advances did not necessarily make readers passive, as much as they reconfigured communities of interpretation. Few could argue that changes such as the use of vernacular in commercial printing deadened intellectual exchange. Indeed, the new accessibility of information produced an explosion of ideas for the simple reason that even if people might consume information as individuals, they still interpret its content in groups. In a similar manner, the opportunities afforded by new media such as the Internet are remarkable precisely because they allow direct participation by users within virtual communities.

In this volume, two chapters examine the interaction of religion and mass communications from opposite angles—the power of mass media to shape images of religion, and the ability of religious groups to exploit the opportunities that new media present, respectively. My own chapter addresses the first of these by tracing the portrayal of religion in one particularly interesting publication—a Chinese-language newspaper produced under Japanese ownership in Manchuria both before and after the region fell under Japanese colonial control in 1932. Over the course of four decades, the portrayal of religion in this publication served different didactic ends, first the antisuperstition biases of the Chinese elite, and later the social engineering programs of the Japanese empire. Nevertheless, the newspaper remained a commercial entity, and whatever its social mission, still had to turn a profit. In between these two ideological extremes, the newspaper behaved more obviously as commercial product, dropping the pedantic tone of social reform through religion to focus on the type of salacious images of saints and sinners that would expand the readership.

In her chapter, Nancy Stalker demonstrates how emerging forms of mass media were effectively adopted by one religious organization in early-twentieth-century Japan. Using a supply-side explanation of religious development, Stalker argues that new, visual forms of commercial entertainment, including exhibitions and films, presented new opportunities for marketing religion to urban and rural audiences. As a result of what she terms “charismatic entrepreneurship,” Ōmoto, a Shintoist new religion, experienced a rapid expansion, and would eventually merge with similar movements brewing on the Asian mainland.

Beyond questions of supply, such as competition among providers of religious goods and services, the religious economy model also can account for a degree of elasticity in the market for, and thus definition of religion. While religions such as Ōmoto clearly bettered the monastic Buddhist establishment in marketing a new and exciting image, doing so did not necessarily draw off support from them. Emerging technologies of commerce opened up new markets for mass communication, for example, among new sectors of the urban public and in previously inaccessible rural villages, and in doing so also developed new religious idioms. Thus, recent developments like American televangelism may have been inspired by an earlier tradition of tent revivals, but the form of religious engagement that they represent are unique to the popularization of mass communication in the late twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> The commercial drive itself does not simply allow religion to reach new markets, it also expands the type of services available, a process seen when the introduction of an American-style funeral industry to Japan added new products, services and ritual obligations to that most important of ritual occasions.<sup>43</sup> Like any form of mass consumption, changes driven by the marketing of religion brought religious ideas and concerns into new homes, but more fundamentally into new areas of life and personal experience.

## Conclusion

Examining the big changes to religion over these two centuries and in such a geographically large and politically diverse region reveals two main points. First, the changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries might have been initiated by the powerful, but were never completely directed by them. What might have appeared to be the domination of discourse, or the political or economic realms, was never absolute, and was always fleeting. The longer lasting, more deeply pervasive influence of Western or Japanese imperialism, the transformation of precolonial states, or of the rise of various regimes in the postcolonial period, were the techniques that they introduced. New ways of communicating knowledge, seeking religious converts, ruling diverse populations and engaging in trade were beyond the ability of any one party to monopolize, and the ideas that these new practices implied transformed the entire region, former friends and foes alike.

Second, all of these transformations were deeply interconnected, and change to any one area could have diverse and often unexpected repercussions for others, including the idea and practice of religion. This theme of “unintended consequences” is frequently raised in the history of technology (often in reference to things like the overuse of antibiotics creating super-strong pathogens, or the ecological damage wrought by the introduction of new plant and animal species, such as kudzu or Africanized bees), but it applies equally well to the type of questions we deal with here.<sup>44</sup> Consider the complex chain of events that led up to an event that many readers will have experienced personally, the creation of Cambodia’s Angkor Wat as a site of religious tourism. The ruins of Angkor were already known to Europeans, specifically to French explorers seeking a riverine trade route into China through the Mekong, the site was popularized by Henri Mouhot (1826–1861), a young philologist who had himself been sent in 1856 by the British Royal Geographical Society to collect zoological specimens. Mouhot’s writings on the site compared Angkor to the wonders of the ancient world, and sold widely in a variety of languages to a European audience, newly infected with the vogue for all things Oriental (Indian and Egyptian, specifically), and increasingly able to purchase inexpensive print publications.<sup>45</sup> After another century of neglect, a project initiated in the 1980s by a variety of political interests, such as the Cambodian government and United Nations, as well as of world heritage NGOs, particularly those hailing from Japan, restored many of the ruins to the state tourists see them in today. Of the million or so foreigners that visit the site each year, no small number are Western fans of Buddhism, an interest that has been fed by popular authors like D. T. Suzuki, and the overseas operations of Buddhist missionary organizations, such as Soka Gakkai. This single story, like many of those in this volume, only makes sense as the confluence of numerous factors—economic, political, social and spiritual. It is this complexity that binds the history of religion within the region together, and to the global changes of two centuries.

## Notes

1. Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi. The classic and most influential work on this topic remains Wilfred Cantwell Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), followed by the work of Talal Asad, in particular, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in Talal Asad, ed., *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993), 27–54; Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-state, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman, eds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178–196.
2. For example, the 1998 Lambeth Conference decided that homosexuality for priests was "incompatible with scripture." Windsor Report, Appendix 3: Resolution 1.10 Human Sexuality. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/appendix/p36.cfm> accessed on May 10, 2006. See also <http://www.womenpriests.org/menu.asp>.
3. This is most closely associated with Martin Heidegger, who distinguished the instrumental definition of technology as a means to an end from its "essence" as a "way of revealing," that is, as a mode of knowledge. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). On the myriad social lives of technology, see Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, tr. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). The idea of *practice* as advanced by Pierre Bourdieu is comparable, the essential point being that how things can be and are done has an internal logic. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, tr. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 1989).
4. Among many others, these would include the extended maritime trade routes between China, Japan and insular Southeast Asia. See Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000) and the work of Geoff Wade, particularly his recent "Ming China and Southeast Asia in the 15th Century: A Reappraisal," available as an electronic resource at <http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps2004/abs028.htm>.
5. These claims aside, and despite its infatuation with all things Western, the avowed goal of the Meiji period was not at all to become European, but rather to become "modern," in particular, in a way that would retain a Japanese spirit. See especially Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
6. Ussama Makdisi, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism and Evangelical Modernity," *American Historical Review* 102, 3 (June 1997), 680–713.
7. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 72–104, quoted from p. 86.
8. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 60, 67; N. J. Girardot, "Max Müller's *Sacred Books* and the Nineteenth-Century Production of the Comparative Science of Religions," *History of Religions* 41, 3 (2002), 213–250; Donald S. Lopez Jr., ed., *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
9. Brian K. Pennington ably summarizes this view and addresses many of its claims in *Was Hinduism Invented?: Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167–189.

10. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, tr. Ephraim Fischhoff (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 809–815.
11. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds, *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 52; in the attempt to replace religious symbolism with national, see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, tr. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). For a convincing refutation of the idea that the state simply replaced religion, see Gauri Viswanathan, “Religious Conversion and the Politics of Dissent,” in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 89–114.
12. This topic was discussed at the Casting Faiths workshop in a paper by Webb Keane, which has since appeared as the third chapter of his *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (*The Anthropology of Christianity*) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), also Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).
13. Anthony C. Yu, *State and Religion in China: Historical and Textual Perspectives* (Chicago and LaSalle: Open Court Press, 2005).
14. Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 23–57.
15. The term derives from the “religious economy” school of sociology. See, for example, Roger Finke and Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Supply-Side Explanations for Religious Change” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 527, Religion in the Nineties (1993), 27–39. For a recent application of religious economy to an Asian context, see Fenggang Yang, “The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 47 (2006), 93–122.
16. Peter van Rooden, “Nineteenth Century Representations of Missionary Conversion and the Transformation of Western Christianity,” in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 65–88, quoted from p. 84.
17. Edward Said, for example, does not address the reaction of Arab readers to the Orientalist discourse he so famously outlines, and is somewhat equivocal on the real significance of the “positional superiority” (p. 22) of the West in the process.
18. Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*.
19. David Forgacs, ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), 190–200.
20. Rebecca E. Karl, “Creating Asia: China in the World at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *American Historical Review* 103, 4 (October 1998).
21. *The First Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference, 26 December 1957 to January 1, 1958*, 2nd edn (Cairo: The Permanent Secretariat of the Organization for Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity, 1958), 12.
22. This essay also refers to the “technicalization” of society, which he defines as an emphasis on the refinement of technique which leads to the “expectation of continuous innovation.” Marshall E. G. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 44–71, quoted from p. 63.
23. On the role of western colonial theory and experience in the formation of the Japanese empire, see Mark R. Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes Towards Colonialism, 1895–1945,” in Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie, eds, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 80–127.

24. Peter van Rooden, "Nineteenth Century Representations of Missionary Conversion and the Transformation of Western Christianity," in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities*, 65–87.
25. See, for example, S. N. Balagangadhara, quoted in Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 175, and Gu Zhanbo in Yu, *State and Religion in China*, 5.
26. Dan Fenno Henderson, "Japanese Influences on Communist Legal Language," in Jerome Alan Cohen, ed., *Contemporary Chinese Law: Research Problems and Perspectives* (Harvard, 1970), 158–187. Soejima Shōichi, "Manshūkoku' tōchi to chigai hōkan teppai" [Manchukuo governance and the abolition of extraterritoriality], in Yamamoto Yūzo, ed. *Manshūkoku no kenkyū* [Research on Manchukuo] (Tokyo: Ryokuin, 1995), 131–155. Despite its earlier genealogy, the term was resurrected specifically to approximate the German *Religionsübung*. Yu, *State and Religion in China*, 5–25.
27. Donald S. Lopez, ed., *Curators of the Buddha*.
28. In one telling example, Japanese Christian missionaries established 877 Sunday schools in prewar Manchuria, but three sects of Buddhism combined to build 1304. Shimada Michiya, *Manshu kyōkushū* [History of education in Manchuria] (Dairen: Testudo shuppan, 1935), 544–545. As of 2004, South Korea had 12,000 Christian missionaries in the field, second only to the United States. *New York Times*, 2004. Korean Missionaries Carrying Word to Hard-to-Sway Places, November 1.
29. van Rooden, "Nineteenth Century Representations of Missionary Conversion and the Transformation of Western Christianity," in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities*, 84.
30. Peter Hansen discusses this in Vietnam. For an earlier Chinese example, see Charles A. Litzinger, "Temple Community and Village Cultural Integration in North China: Evidence from 'Sectarian Cases' (*Chiao-an*) in Chih-li, 1860–1895." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1983.
31. Chien Hong-Mo, "The Conversion Experience of Taiwan's Indigenous People: The Case of Meihsi Village, Jen' Ai District, Nantou County," in Elise Anne DeVido and Benoît Vermander, eds, *Creeds, Rites and Videotapes: Narrating Religious Experience in East Asia* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2004), 151–186; Paul R. Katz, *When Valleys Turned Blood Red: The Ta-pa-ni Incident in Colonial Taiwan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 138.
32. Jean and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
33. See, for example, Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907–1932* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).
34. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented?*, 93–100; Webb Keane also discusses the desire to strip native religion from its material base, although this is in the context of casting the latter as an acceptable, yet equally expendable form of culture.
35. Changing attitudes among Christian missionaries are best expressed in the formation of the Dutch "Ethical Policy," as discussed by Tjoa-Bonatz and Connolly in this volume. Carolyn Brewer, *Holy Confrontation: Religion, Gender, and Sexuality in the Philippines, 1521–1685* (Manila: C. Brewer and the Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College, 2001), 312–313.
36. See the three articles in the Symposium on Studying Catholicism in Vietnam through Missionary Sources, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 35, 2 (2004).

37. J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Religion, Law and the State in India* (Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) (originally published 1968). Part of the inspiration for this enforcement of difference was the desire of the vocal “unofficial” European population of India to remain outside the jurisdiction of native courts. Elizabeth Kolsky, “Codification and the Rule of Colonial Difference: Criminal Procedure in British India,” *Law and History Review* 3, 23, (2005), 631–684.
38. C. Fasseur, “Colonial Dilemma: Von Vollenhoven and the Struggle Between Adat Law and Western Law in Indonesia” in W. J. Mommsen and J. A. de Moor, eds, *European Expansion and Law: The Encounter of European and Indigenous Law in 19th- and 20th-Century Africa and Asia* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 1992), 237–256.
39. Dagmar Engels, “Wives Widows and Workers: Women and the Law in Colonial India” in Mommsen and de Moor, eds, *European Expansion and Law: The Encounter of European and Indigenous Law in 19th- and 20th-Century Africa and Asia* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 1992), 159–178.
40. Jothie Rajah, “Negotiating Legal Identities: Hindu Law in Singapore” unpublished paper, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore.
41. Gauri Viswanathan, “Religious Conversion and the Politics of Dissent,” in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities*, 89–114, quoted from p. 91. On the merging of ethnic and religious discourses, see Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People’s Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1991).
42. Finke and Iannaccone, “Supply-Side Explanations for Religious Change.”
43. Hikaru Suzuki, *The Price of Death: The Funeral Industry in Contemporary Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 179–202; Elise Anne DeVido, “The ‘New Funeral Culture’ in Taiwan,” in Elise Anne DeVido and Benoît Vermander, eds, *Creeds, Rites and Videotapes: Narrating Religious Experience in East Asia* (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2004), 235–253.
44. Edward Tenner, *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).
45. Henri Mouhot, *Travels in Siam, Cambodia and Laos 1858–1860; with an Introduction by Michael Smithies* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989).

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