

Conference
Rethinking Religion and Globalization

Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Ruhr University Bochum
October 21-22, 2013.

Convener:
Prof. Tulasi Srinivas
Emerson College, Boston; Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Bochum

Twenty years since the first formulations about the complex links between religion and globalization, what is our understanding today? This conference aims to take a moment to rethink religion and globalization and the forces and concerns that this intersection raises for us today. Historians, religious studies scholars, philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists all participate in this meditation not only to review the ground but in an attempt to move the scholarship forward.

October 21, 2013.

12.00–1.45pm WELCOME LUNCH

1.45–2.00pm **Welcome Remarks**

Prof. Volkhard Krech, Director, KHK

2.00–4.00pm PANEL I: Globalization, Christianity and Process

Chair: Prof. Tulasi Srinivas

Prof. Jeremy CARRETTE, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Kent, UK

“A Moveable Observatory”: Globalization, Consciousness and Religion

Abstract: What would it be to re-think ‘globalization and religion’ in an already saturated field? The inter-disciplinary discourse of globalization confirms the tensions, ambiguity and inconsistency within the idea. There is also a clear dualistic and paradoxical nature to the concept. The challenge to empirical analysis is also evident in the attempt to study religion through this imprecise abstract concept. There is, however, a key dimension of the field that has only been noted in passing in the definitional explorations, but which forms an important self-reflexive ground to the discussion. It is the problem of ‘religion’ and ‘global consciousness’. This paper will argue that consciousness persists as the under-theorised thematic of globalization studies and that it remains vital to the engagement between the global and the religious.

The paper will start by reflecting on the shifting language of ‘cosmos’, ‘universe’ and ‘world’ through Emerson’s reflections on the nature of the ‘globe’ and his idea of “a moveable observatory”. It will show, in turn, the significance of the “apparatus of observation” of the earth as one constituted by forms of imagined positions and established consciousness as lived and material relations. From this basis, four steps of argumentation will be developed to support the claims. First, the paper will map the debate of consciousness as part of globalization theory and, in particular, respond to Robertson’s (1992) phases of the global field. Second, the paper will enforce the position of the empirical ground of globalization as one based on material institutions, by reflecting on models of consciousness and socio-political systems. Third, the paper will link these theoretical positions to religious NGOs at the United Nations by creating a map of ‘implicit’ and ‘explicit’ discourses of global consciousness as they are seen to exist in the mission statements and foundations of ‘religious’ NGOs – from the Bahai to the Lucis Trust. It will explore how religious traditions with discourses of global consciousness are drawn to global activity, but this supposition raises a final epistemic problem. In conclusion, the paper will explore the post-Hegelian dialectic of consciousness as creating or created by historical processes. The paper will suggest that the dilemma reflects the complexity of how religions – and

scholarship on religion – shape and are shaped by notions of a global consciousness. These issues will be resolved by showing how global consciousness within religion is determined by three forces of ontological relation: meaning, territory and conviction. The “moveable observatory” is the shifting historical process that links these three forms of lived relation to create a sense of the global consciousness in distinct religious traditions and subsequent scholarship.

Prof. Linda WOODHEAD, Dept of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University

The Five Narratives of Global Christianity, or why globalisation can fragment rather than globalise a 'world' religion

Abstract: My starting point is the observation that, ironically, as the world has globalised Christianity has become less ecumenical, less focused on 'humanity', and less credible as a 'world' religion and united force. I argue that it has fragmented into at least five main varieties, each of which has a global reach, but only one of which has a truly global horizon. I will briefly describe these varieties, and invoke globalisation processes to explain why fragmentation rather than unification can, as here, be the outcome in the religious field.

Prof Ines ŽUPANOV, Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Ecole Des Haute Etudes de Science Sociale

Plotting “Universal” Church, Hatching Global Christianity: Missionary Linguistic Predicament (16-18th c.)

Abstract: When the session XXIV of the Council of Trent on 11 Nov. 1563 concluded, among other things, that the catechism had to be “faithfully translated into the language of the people”, the Jesuit missionaries in India had been doing just that for almost three decades. Not only doing, they were writing about their experience of learning Indian languages and some of their letters were widely disseminated in the pious European Catholic circles. I want to briefly chronicle, in the first part of my paper, how the decisions of the Council of Trent concerning linguistic question morphed into a major cultural question of accommodation. At stake was (then and now) the preservation of the Roman Catholic church which saw itself (then and now) as “universal”, while in the first part of the 16th century it was nothing more than a provincial, peripheral and mediocre institution, while the missions spanning four continents were in fact in hands of the Iberian monarchies. In trying to preserve its own “universality” (the conclusions of the Council of Trent being one of the key events) the Roman church fell into being a process of “Christian” globalization, and one of the important areas in which it was negotiated was language. In doing so, the Papacy was all through the 16th and 17th century on the collision course with Iberian empires. In the second part of my paper I

want to raise a more general question of translation (transcreation, transcoding) and its ambiguous role as a “worm” in the Noah’s Ark of globalization.

4.00–4.30pm TEA TIME

4.30–6.30pm Panel II: Globalization, Nationalism, and the Political

Chair: Prof. Sven Bretfeld

Prof. Richard KING, Department of Religious Studies, University of Kent

From "Mystic East" to "Eastern Spirituality": Colonial Legacies in an Age of Corporate Globalization

Abstract: Globalisation is a contemporary ‘buzz word’ that captures the imagination at the same time as it remains under-theorised to such an extent that use of the term often closes down avenues of critical reflection on contemporary life rather than open them up. Discussions and analyses of ‘globalisation’ are inevitably implicated in the contemporary geo-political processes about which they claim to speak. As a result, it is especially important to draw out the underlying assumptions, valuations and ethico-political standpoints that are ALWAYS involved in any discussion of globalisation. There is no neutral or ‘purely descriptive’ space from which one can analyse “globalisation”, no skyhook that can pull the scholar out of their context. One cannot theorise globalisation without being caught up in the processes of which one speaks. In this paper I intend to explore one dimension of the contemporary phenomena of ‘globalisation’ and religion, namely the ongoing replication of older colonialist legacies through the rise of the concept of “eastern spirituality”. As Tulasi Srinivas (2010) has argued, the transnational flow of ideas, practices and cultural codes is far from one-way traffic, dominated by a purely western agenda. However, the ways in which certain concepts become popular in the West precisely because of the cultural translation work that they do in re-packaging ‘alien’ ideas and practices for consumption and adaptation within the current geopolitical ordering of the world requires attention to the inequalities of that political context. This paper will examine these issues through a discussion of the decline in popularity of notions of “mysticism” and “the mystic East” and the rise to prominence of a purportedly universalist discourse of “spirituality,” with specific reference to the re-casting of Asian traditions in an age of global capitalism.

Prof. Patrick EISENLOHR, Centre for Modern Indian Studies, University of Göttingen

Global and national dimensions of religious mobilization: The Muharram Awareness Campaign in Mumbai

Abstract: The great urban diversity of Mumbai has given rise to a range of religious mobilizations that are not only shaped by a history of communalism along religious lines, but are also driven by intra-religious rivalry and competition in their urban environment. Against the backdrop of a global megacity, contemporary Shi'ite religious activism in Mumbai provides evidence of the importance of global processes of religious mobilization, while also showing its entanglement with state regulation of religion. An advertizing campaign by a Shi'ite media center illustrates that such religious activism with global ramifications can only be understood if one also takes its intersection with state-sponsored regimes of religious diversity into account. Media practices of Indian Muslims as a vulnerable minority are especially responsive to normative discourses and images of religious diversity, and mobilize alternative strands of Indian secularism in order to counteract the fragility of their citizenship.

Dr. Ingrid THERWATH, Center des Sciences Humaine, New Delhi

Cyber-hindutva: Hindu nationalism, the diaspora and the web

Abstract: Hindu nationalists defend the advent of a Hindu state in India, while projecting the universal appeal of their ideology. Their very territorialised yet universal claims have been finding particular resonance among migrant populations, particularly in North America. This study strives to go beyond content analyses that foreground voices to focus on the network structure in order to highlight the new transnational practices of nationalism. Two main points emerge from this in-depth scrutiny. On the one hand, Hindu nationalism outfits have transferred their online activities mainly to the USA, where the Indian diaspora has a 3,2 million strong presence, and constitute therefore a prime example of long-distance transnationalist nationalism. On the other hand the morphological discrepancies between the online and the offline networks point to new strategies of discretion developed to evade the gaze of authorities in countries of residence. The recourse to such cartographies becomes thus crucial not only in understanding what sectarian or illegal movements do but also what they seek to hide.

7.30pm

DINNER

22 October 2013

9.45–10.00am COFFEE TIME

10.00–12.00am PANEL III: Globalization, Ritual and Meaning

Chair: Professor Marion Eggert

Dr. Richard FOX, Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter, Institut für Ethnologie,
Ruprecht-Karls Universität Heidelberg

Capitalizing on the Family: Domestic Rites and New Forms of Solidarity in Contemporary Bali

Abstract: Small-scale domestic rites are an important aspect of social life on the Indonesian island of Bali. Each morning a variety of offerings—consisting of rice, flowers, water etc.—are dedicated to intangible beings and forces, both beneficent and otherwise. As a collective endeavour this consumes considerable time and resources. But it also sustains an on-going series of material obligations that underpin the island’s traditional forms of social organization. These obligations contrast sharply with the transactional modes of exchange that have come to characterize an increasingly large proportion of Balinese daily life. This paper will draw on both ethnographic and archival research to argue that state-sponsored development programs aimed at modernization have helped to transform the performance of domestic rites; and that, with these changes, local ideals of community are increasingly conforming to a model of family and social solidarity that is amenable to the free movement of capital.

Prof. Florence GALMICHE, Training and Research Unit for East Asian
Languages and Civilizations, Université Paris Diderot

Korean Buddhism in English... for Koreans... in Korea

Abstract: In the shadow of flourishing Protestant churches during the 20th century, Buddhism is now having a new popularity in Korea. Buddhist temples and “zen centers” are multiplying in Seoul. Some are appealing to tradition and others are claiming innovative approaches but all of them are urging laity to distance themselves from popular religiosity and to diligently study the doctrinal basis of Buddhism. Classes and other means of religious education are a characteristic feature of the Buddhist renewal. Among these educational projects, courses in English meet a striking success. However, whether or not their initial target are foreigners, they are mostly attended by Koreans settled in Korea. This presentation will address the very particular status of the English language in Korea and explore the diverse reasons and motivations that lead children, teenagers, young men, devoted housewives or intellectuals to study Buddhism through a foreign language.

Prof. Tulasi SRINIVAS, Emerson College and Ruhr-Universität Bochum.

Moral Economies, Fiduciary Aesthetics and Philosophies of Future Debt

Abstract: In this paper I will explore the micro changes in ritual that accompany economic globalization in temple publics in the city of Bangalore in South India. I will argue that fiduciary change in India, is not a straightforwardly secularizing power, nor is it self-revealing. Instead, capital itself will be seen to entail and generate a certain religiosity, and even to require a ritual practice. I will argue that these shifting rituals are grounded by an embedded Hindu philosophy of debt (*runa*), and the emotions of abandonment that surround it, which allows for a remediation towards a alternate moral economy. This formulation seeks to shed light on the convergence of global new capitalism and a resurgence of urban religiosity.

12.00–12.30pm WRAP-UP SESSION

12.30–2.00pm CLOSING LUNCH