The 3rd Asia Future Conference Roundtable

Religious Responses to Changing Social Environment in Southeast Asia

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AFC3 Southeast Asia Roundtable

"Religious Responses to Changing Social Environments in Southeast Asia"

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Time: September 30, 2016 (Fri) 9:00 ~ 12:30
Venue: Kitakyushu International Conference Center, Conference Room]
Host: Atsumi International Foundation Sekiguchi Global Research Association (SGRA)
Grant: The Japan Foundation Asia Center

Program Overview:
<u>**Opening 9:00**</u>
      Moderator: Mira Sonntag

<u>**Part 1 9:15 ~ 10:15**</u> **[Case Presentations, 15 min/p]**
      Indonesia/ Achmad Munjid

      Philippines/ Jayeel S. Cornelio

      Thai/ Vichak Panich

      Myanmer/ Carine Jaquet

<u>**Part 2 10:45 ~ 12:30**</u> **[Roundtable Discussion]**
      Moderator: Ranjana Mukhopadhiyaya
      Panelists are all case presenters and:

Philippines	Rosalina Palanca-Tan
	Jane Toribio
Vietnam	Huynh Mui
Indonesia	Jakfar Idrus
	Mya Dwe Rostika
Japan	Shiori Ui

      [Concluding Comments]
      Commentator: Erik Schicketanz

Language: English

The Aims of the Roundtable: Tackling the Invisibility of Constructive Religious Responses to Social Change   Mira Sonntag

Southeast Asia is a mosaic of different ethnicities, religions, and socio-cultural contacts. Following liberation from colonial domination, Southeast Asian countries struggled to integrate their various ethnicities and religious cultures as part of the process of nation-building. Under the increasing influence of globalization since the 1990s, these nation-states are once again confronted with profound social transformations. While Southeast Asian countries as a whole have seen rapid economic development due to the effects of the global spread of market economies, they have simultaneously experienced an increase in social inequality, environmental degradation, violations of human rights, and religious and ethnic conflicts. This situation has raised doubts about the sustainability of the current economic, social, and economic systems and, in turn, spurred the development of civil society organizations (CSO) across Southeast Asia. On the other hand the ASEAN Community, which came into effect in 2015, provides a vision of the possibility to overcome these problems through regional cooperation and thus transcends the limitations of a nation-state approach.

In a study on civil society organizations in the ASEAN Community Stefanie Elies and Natalia Figge state that the association of the Community had set "the goal of strengthening its ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community pillar by increasing the participation of stakeholders and the peoples of ASEAN in building this envisioned community." Confirming that "the first structural steps towards a healthy ASEAN-civil society engagement process" have already been taken they nonetheless call for further improvement which can be facilitated only on the condition that we "understand that ASEAN member states are in different stages of civil society involvement, and that greater effort must be made towards information gathering." The above study tried to provide such information by mapping the activities of civil society organizations in the ten member states in the hope that it might be used by "ASEAN decision makers, CSOs as well as donors and other stakeholders." (Chong and Elies 2011, 7)

In the "Executive Summary" Terence Chong concludes:

Though diverse in experience, civil society in Southeast Asia may be said to have played a variety of roles from doing advocacy work, delivering public services, shouldering custodial responsibility, and monitoring state institutions. CSOs have also been crucial to the representation of marginal communities, the protection of the environment, and the raising of public awareness over issues such as gender, education and health. (19)

When CSOs engage in their respective agendas they have to relate to the state which "continues to be the most crucial player in setting the conditions for civil society" (9) in all ASEAN member states. On the local level of some countries, however, civil society has "either taken over or strongly supplements the state's traditional role in providing public services" (ibid.). The working relationship between the two largely determines the effectiveness of CSOs and indicates the different political conditions, which lead to different notions of civil society in respective states. Interestingly enough, their relationship is often still defined by the colonial past of these countries, since postcolonial governments continued colonial practices, for instance, through the inheritance of colonial law and order regulations which till today determine the conditions for the registration of CSOs in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The report confirms the contribution of CSOs to governance through the provision of expertise, the raising of public awareness and checking on governments (16f) but also suggests "such modes of contribution

may sometimes antagonise the state if public awareness programmes run counter to state interests" (17). As Lee Hock Guan shows for Malaysia, "CSOs that are critical of the official discourse and state legitimacy and interests are viewed suspiciously, if not as subversive entities, by the state and are often arbitrarily hounded on 'national security' grounds" (73). Advocacy-oriented CSOs representing marginal groups usually stand in opposition to state or business interests and therefore face threats from multiple actors: women's rights CSOs from the state and from the Catholic Church (e.g., in the Philippines); environment and sustainable development CSOs from state bureaucracy and from corporations. (Overlapping agendas can be found in a number of cases.)

Unfortunately the above study[1] does not relate to the impact of religion/s and faith based organizations (FBO) on social change in the region, although Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, and other religious leaders and laypeople have been at the forefront of voicing powerful critiques of destructive trends and their underlying causes, based on their respective religious values and ethics. Certainly most religions and FBOs claim to aim for peace, the wellbeing of society, and the happiness of mankind, but nonetheless most observers focus on religion as the main cause of (recent) conflicts and frictions. The roundtable discussion sought to address this one-sided perception of the role of religion/s. Following the presentation of case studies by researchers from the Southeast Asian region, the roundtable further engaged researchers active in Japan to consider how religion/s could indeed contribute to and foster sustainable social, political, and economic development.

It seems justified to proclaim that many of the constructive religious responses to social change have remained invisible. While the widespread reluctance to register as an FBO may be one reason, another may lie in the fact that the activist agendas of FBOs receive more media coverage[2] than their religious motivations. The priorities of FBOs themselves and the attempt to avoid negative associations during the coverage seem to be influential here.

Each of the ten member states of the ASEAN Community presents us with diverse responses to social change, among them religious responses. The relationships between civil society and the state – which may include religious actors on both sides – varies according to the context of political system, historical circumstances and societal complexion. The roundtable discussion pursued common trends and idiosyncrasies in order to measure the impact of religion/s on civil society and social change in Southeast Asia. In doing so it tried to understand the complex and ambiguous relationship of FBO's to social and environmental issues. As with the study of Chong and Elies, "The challenging task lies in synthesizing the outcomes and in generating a meaningful comparison across the region" (9).

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Hill Fletcher, Janine. 2013. "Women in interreligious dialogue." The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

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1 As a matter of fact, a number of articles in the report state the religious affiliation of majority and minority populations in the presented countries and some even list up names of FBOs, but without inquiring into the religious dimension of their civil society engagement.
2 This aspect has received attention by Janine Hill Fletcher in her discussion of "activist model" enterprises of interreligious dialogue. See Fletcher 2013, 168-183.

Presentation 1

Democracy's Dilemma in Indonesia After 1998: Does More Freedom Lead to More Interreligious Conflict or More Dialogue?   Achmad Munjid

Abstract

A series of unprecedented ethnic and interreligious conflicts broke out across Indonesia before and soon after the 1998 reformation. Although the democratization process during the two decades after the collapse of the authoritarian regime brought many achievements, peaceful coexistence among different religious communities still seems to remain unrestored? This situation urges us to ask: How can we understand the promise and the dilemma of democracy, especially in the context of "Indonesian Islam's" increasingly permissive attitude towards religious intolerance in the country and the threat of Islamic radicalism at the global level? This paper seeks to answer this question by critically discussing the nature of the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Indonesia as well as its implications for interreligious relations. My paper will analyze important developments in their context of both conflicting and dialogical interreligious relationships, in particular between Muslim and Christian communities after the 1998 reformation. Key issues in interreligious relations such as proselytization, "blasphemy", the establishment of houses of worship, religious instruction in public schools, religious conversion and interreligious marriage will be discussed not only in relation to the freedom which is provided by post-Reformation democracy but also in relation to an older debate between groups that argue for the principle of religious tolerance in the name of "social harmony" and other groups that argue for freedom of religion in the name of "human rights."

Introduction

This paper shares some of my research findings on Muslim-Christian relations in Indonesia, especially in the context of the post-1998 reformation and is especially interested in the question whether the democratization process of the last two decades provides the Muslim and Christian communities (the largest religious groups in Indonesia) with more space to fight against each other, or more opportunities to have dialogue. First, I would like to introduce some statistical numbers that show the religious affiliation of Indonesia's population. According to the Indonesia Census of 2010 (Figure 1), Muslims comprise 87,18 % of its population of 237,64 million, that is, about 207 million people. 6,96 % or 16,53 million people are Protestants, Catholics hold a far smaller share of 6,91 million people equivalent to 2,91 %. Further minority religions are Hindus with a share of 1,69 % and Buddhists comprising 0,72%. Followers of Judaism, local religious beliefs and atheists are placed in the category of "other" (0,13 %).[3] The regional distribution of believers is given in the Figure 2. The green part shows regions predominantly inhabited by Muslims; here modernists and traditionalists are distinguished. The blue part of the map is inhabited mainly by Protestants and the purple section, that is, the Timor Island and several others, are dominated by Catholic inhabitants. The red "little dot" of Bali is populated mainly by Hindus. The Buddhist minority and "other" minorities (yellow) are not represented on this map.

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3 Sensus Penduduk Indonesia 2010. For a detailed interpretation refer to the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project: http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries

Presentation 1
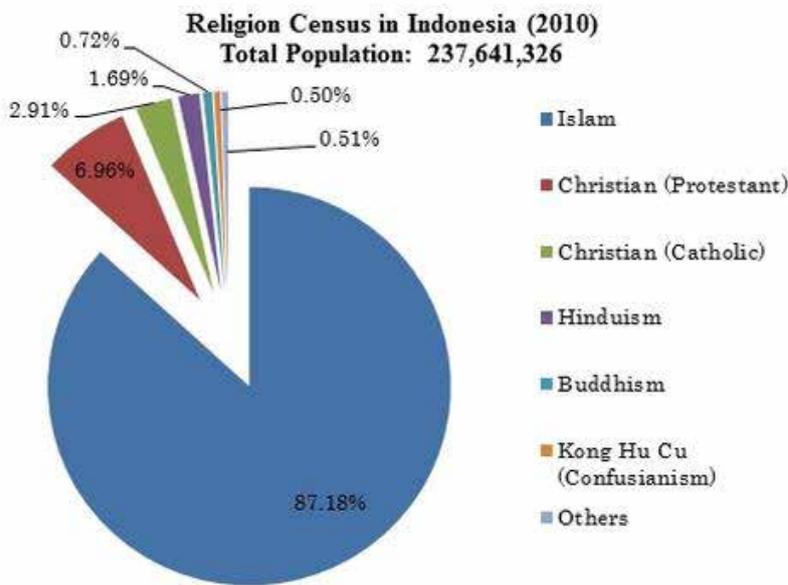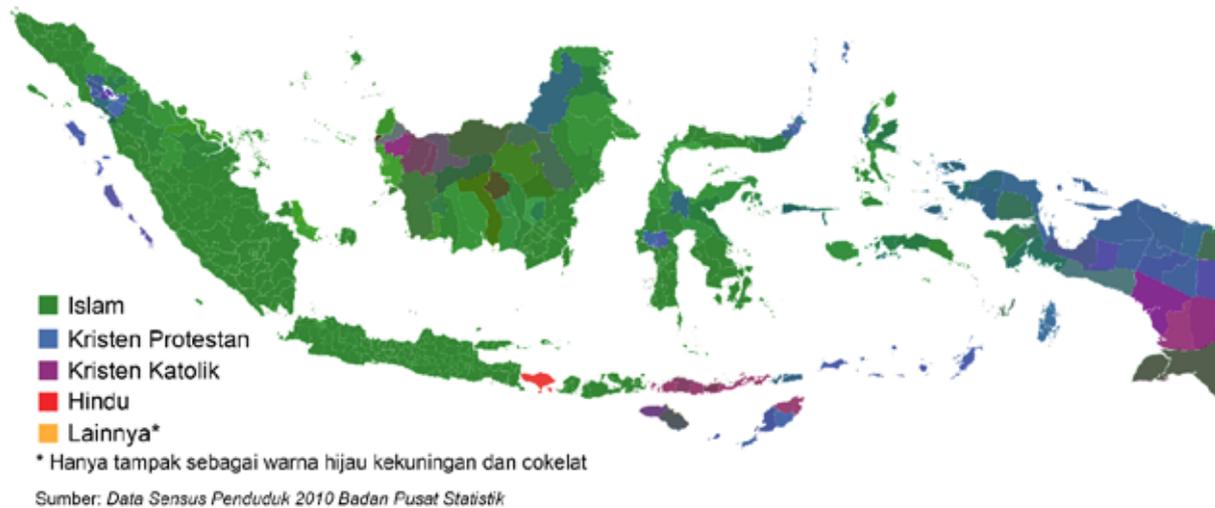

Figure 1

Figure 2

Religious policy during the New Order period (1966-1998)

Although this paper focuses on the post-1998 period, some explanation about the situation of religions during the New Order (Orde Baru) period, that is, the reign of Suharto (1921-2008), is necessary to understand later developments. In short, we could say, religion has been "used" by the regime. In 1965-1966 a large number of people—numbers given vary from 500,000 to three million—was massacred in what came to be known as the "Indonesian Communist Purge" or the "Indonesian Politicide" (Roosa 2006). Under the New Order, communism was declared to be the ultimate enemy and religion became a tool for its effective suppression, since it was understood as identical with atheism. Thus non-religious people were seen as potential communists and pressured to associate themselves with a religion and join the fight against communism. While religions were generally encouraged in this context, "religion" as such was understood in a narrow sense, that

is, as a set of rituals. Therefore ritual Islam was accepted, but political Islam not, since it was, as was communism, perceived as a potential danger to the New Order.

Another way to effectively combat communism was the requirement that every school child had to receive religious instruction in public schools (Zuhdi 2005). Before 1965, religious instruction was optional, but in the late 1960s it became compulsory. As a result, there was a dramatic increase of religious followers after 1966. Although all five major religions increased their membership, the two largest groups among them—Islam and Christianity—attracted most of the new followers and developed an eagerness to compete that led to tensions. In 1967 increasing tension resulted in troublesome protests and riots in Aceh and other parts of Indonesia, which were brought to an end by military intervention. Suharto, who became president during the same year, usually relied on military solutions. However, far from a solution the problem was merely suppressed by force and the imposition of the religious blasphemy law.

The blasphemy law was enacted with president Sukarno's (1901-1970) first presidential decree in 1965, but implemented under Suharto in 1969 (Law No. 5/1969). However, most cases today are prosecuted based on a provision to the Criminal Code that was added in 1966 (Article 156(a)) which allows prosecution without prior warning (Amnesty International 2014). The law distinguishes two blasphemous acts: deviation (penyimpangan) from the six officially recognized religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are approved by the decree) and defamation (penodaan) of these religions. Procedures for prosecution differ depending on the applied category. The law was originally passed because of the tension between Muslims and Christians and meant to prevent insults of believers of the majority religion.[4]

Another issue is proselytization. Proselytization is allowed only towards those who do not follow one of the five "big" religions mentioned earlier. Followers of a local belief may become the target of Muslim, Christian, Hindu or Buddhist proselytization. Yet another problem that was born out of the Muslim-Christian tension is the law on the establishment of religious buildings. Establishing religious building is extremely difficult for the minority groups because the majority groups around them do not want to have buildings of minority groups in their neighborhood. Thus they pushed the implementation of a law that would discourage them.

The 1990s brought about a critical juncture for the relationship between Muslims and the New Order regime. Earlier political Islam had been perceived as a potential enemy, but due to the decline of political support from the military to the New Order and the growth of the Muslim middle class, Suharto turned his attention to the Muslims. As a result the former enemy became Suharto's new ally. And at the same time, born-again Muslims in larger cities amounted to a new trend and the commodification of Islam led to the emergence of "Islamic goods" in all sectors, such as, Islamic banking, Islamic television, Islamic parties, Islamic hospitals, Islamic schools and many others. During this period, the New Order bureaucracy turns into the so-called "green" bureaucracy; green here means being Islamized. But even with these measures Suharto could not secure sufficient support for his regime and had to resign his presidency in 1998.

The weakening regime leads to interreligious tension

As described above state policy towards Islam (and Christianity) can be understood as a swinging pendulum. At the beginning of the New Order regime Islam was treated as an enemy, but became an ally when it weakened and finally collapsed. To the opposite, Christians had been friends of the New Order, but were seen as its enemy towards the end of the regime. Therefore it is not surprising that the collapse of the New Order regime created this tension between Muslims and Christians, which erupted in a series of conflicts between them in several parts of Indonesia shortly before and especially after the collapse.

However, not everybody agreed with the New Order policy in relation to the position of Islam or religion

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4 Since the law had a strong impact on minority religions and atheists, a NGO coalition demanded its revision by the Constitutional Court in 2009. The Constitutional Court in turn reconfirmed its validity on the grounds of "public order" and "religious values" as set out in Article 28J (2) of the Constitution.

in politics. One of these dissenters was the late president Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009) who reinterpreted Islam as the founding principle of the Indonesian state and tried to de-confessionalize politics insisting that politics should be kept away from religion or religious confession.

As mentioned earlier in 1998 the swinging pendulum of religious policy resulted in increasing tension and violent conflicts between Muslims and Christians. The fact that the state had lost administrative control almost completely further worsened the situation. Around 1998 the once very powerful state became very powerless and could do nothing about the erupting horizontal conflicts. Major outbursts of conflict happened in 1991 in Timor and in 1995 and 1996 across Java. During these years several civil groups assumed that the state had failed to function and could not play its role anymore. So they attempted to solve the problems on their own. These attempts led to the emergence of the so-called Laskar Jihad (Warriors of Jihad) founded in 2000, the Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender Front, FPI) formed in 1998, and other militia groups. These groups perceive/d themselves to be under siege from various outside forces which the state could not fight off and therefore sought/seek to enforce the law with their own hands. In 2000 religious vigilantism evolved into a Muslim-Christian war with thousands of victims (Robinson 2001). This is the dark side of Muslim-Christian relations in Indonesia during and after the collapse of the New Order.

Efforts at peace building and the "de-confessionalization" of politics after 1998

However, not everybody is just busy cursing the darkness. As mentioned earlier people like Abdurrahman Wahid (serving as president from 1999 to 2001) were aware of the underlying issues from the very beginning and tried to keep politics away from religion. Furthermore when conflicts erupted throughout the country in 2000 a growing number of people and groups actively engaged in bridge-building. Among them are activists, intellectuals, religious leaders and groups who seek to employ religion not for the legitimization of violence but as a way to promote dialogue, such as Interfidei in Yogyakarta (founded in1991), the Wahid Institute (founded in 2004) and the Paramadina Foundation (established in 1986) in Jakarta. These organizations were established to foster dialogue and peacebuilding (Mujiburrahman 2006). Thus by 2000 Indonesia arrived at a point where it had to pursue democracy in order to avoid even more severe conflict and where democracy was understood as a majority rule which nonetheless acknowledges and protects the rights of minorities. Today more and more individuals and groups are promoting the idea of freedom of religion and religious tolerance.

Within the Indonesian context today we can distinguish, however, two groups that understand religious tolerance and freedom of religion quite differently. A rather large group promotes the idea of tolerance in the context of "social harmony". From this perspective minorities are to be protected as long as they do not insult the majority. The blessing goes to the minority that makes the majority happy—that is the simplified position of some groups in relation to the notion of "tolerance". Also some Muslim groups understand freedom of religion as freedom from being bothered. Who leaves them alone will be fine, too. But who dares to confront them or tries to persuade them to become part of their own religious group is regarded as rule-breaker to whom tolerance does not have to be extended anymore. The other group of people argues for freedom of religion in the name of "human rights."

Persisting Issues

Today proselytization issues and the application of the blasphemy law led to an increase in cases and also resulted in a complicated application process for special permits to build houses of worship. To avoid neighborhood conflicts it is now required to provide 90 signatures by followers of the applying religious organization and 60 signatures of approval from neighbors in order to receive a special permit for a house of worship. This rule makes the establishment of religious buildings by minorities almost impossible.

For illustration you may refer to the conflict over a church established by GKI Yasmin Church in Bogor, West Java that was not officially approved by the local Christian umbrella organization (GKI Pengadilan) and closed down in 2010 although it had obtained the special permit in 2006. Media accused Bogo Mayor Bima

Arya Sugiarto to attempt to "curry favor with intolerant local Sunni Muslims" (Jakarta Globe 2014). The case had been brought to the High Court, which ruled in favor of the church, but the local authorities refused to comply. The situation remains unsolved till today.

Other cases include the persecution against Ahmadiyah in 2011 and against the Shi'ite of Madura in 2012-2013; both groups are Muslim minorities. Religious riots in Tolikara, Papua, where Muslims are a minority, on July 17, 2015 led to burning of a mosque. Just recently another incident occurred, the burning of a church in Aceh. While in Papua the Christian majority stood in conflict with a Muslim minority, in Aceh the Muslim majority confronted a Christian minority. Besides, in 2016 an attack against Gafatar, a small sect of Islam practicing organic farming in Kalimantan was launched. Furthermore a Muslim mob plundered hundreds of people and burned down several Buddhist temples or vihara in Tanjung Balai, North Sumatra, on June 29, 2016.

From the above we could draw the conclusion that the conflict between Muslims and Christians further worsened since 1998. However, at the same time the number of groups and initiatives for interreligious dialogue also rose significantly. Therefore we hope that with increasing political stability and economic prosperity the conflict will diminish and eventually disappear. At least, there are no more open conflicts, and violations of the rights of minorities have also decreased significantly.

Conclusion

Now let me draw a conclusion based on the presented details. Changes in the "political opportunity structure" have invited non-state actors to shape the future direction of Indonesia. Some radicals tried to push their agenda especially during the period when the state was lacking control and power, that is, immediately before and after the collapse of the New Order. Today, political stability is returning. Law enforcement is also improving and Indonesia's economy has recovered. With the active participation from various civil groups and organizations, as well as the more effective functioning of the government, the path towards democracy now holds brighter prospects. Although still a lot has to be done in order to achieve truly peaceful coexistence in the country, there is no reason not to be optimistic.

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Climate Change and the Catholic Response in the Philippines

Jayeel S. Cornelio

Abstract

This paper presents preliminary results of my on-going investigation into the role of religion in the response to climate change while also spelling out some of the salient features of the Catholic response in the Philippines. It is in this way that the paper contributes to the 3rd AFC roundtable on religion and its future in Southeast Asia. After all, the future of religion in the region, as in other parts of the world, does not lie exclusively in the successful conversion of new members. If religious organizations want to remain relevant especially in developing countries their contemporary efforts have to lie in addressing socio-political issues as well (Tomalin 2013). Among them the problem of climate change has far-reaching consequences for sustaining people's basic needs.

Introduction

The Catholic response to climate change in the Philippines presents itself as an important case. The prevailing significance of institutional and everyday Catholicism in Philippine society is a potential resource for mobilization against climate change. Catholicism remains the predominant religion in the country embraced by approximately eighty percent of the population (Pangalangan 2010). Catholic religiosity is expressed in a number of ways, especially in terms of piety, devotional practices, and various traditions around the country (Cornelio 2013, 2016, Cornelio 2014). At the same time, Catholic leaders and groups have also contributed significantly to the process of democratization in the Philippines when the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos was overthrown in 1986 (Moreno 2006). Its various groups, led by clergy and laity alike, are important actors in civil society. In the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, Catholic groups are now discovering their potential in tackling the problematic outcomes of climate change in the country. In previous studies I have focused on other religious organizations and their response to disaster (see Lau and Cornelio 2015, Cornelio 2017).

The emphasis on climate change in this paper also recognizes the vulnerability of the Philippines. In order to assess climate change, observations of the variability of temperature, precipitation, humidity, wind, and season occurring at a regional and global scale are made regularly. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2014, 1333) reports that in Asia alone, it is "very likely that mean annual temperature has increased over the past century." The same report shows an increase of the annual total rainfall (number of wet days) and the frequency of extreme events in Southeast Asia. At the same time, there are recent studies that account for the intensity of Typhoon Haiyan – the strongest typhoon ever recorded – that hit the Philippines in 2013, based on increased surface temperature in the Pacific Ocean (Comiso, Perez, and Stock 2015). Some scientists warn that super typhoons like Haiyan should be expected to occur more frequently in the future.

On average the country experiences twenty tropical cyclones every year. But some reports show that the frequency and intensity of these weather disturbances have increased in the past decades. The Global Climate Risk Index, for example, reports that the Philippines rank fifth among countries most affected by extreme weather patterns from 1994 to 2013 (Kreft et al. 2014). In the list, it is preceded by Honduras, Myanmar, Haiti, and Nicaragua. The index, without providing a direct measurement of climate change, factors in the direct impact of weather disturbances in terms of fatality and economic loss. The Climate Change Vulnerability Index also recognizes various threats (Ranada 2015). It includes the exposure of populations to extreme weather patterns; sensitivity of communities given their economic resources, health services, and access to knowledge; and the adaptive capacity of institutions to meet the challenges
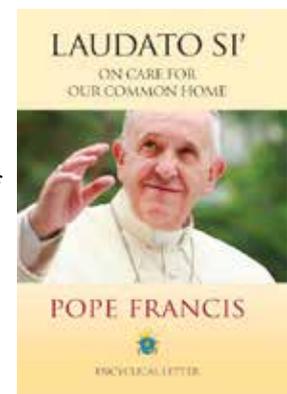
of climate change. The 2016 report ranks the Philippines 13th among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Furthermore, the country's Department of Environment and Natural Resources released a map that specifies the vulnerability of the Philippines in its various regions (The Climate Reality Project 2016). As an archipelago, it is primarily threatened by the rising sea level and ocean temperature. The weak state of urban planning and deforestation around the country further exacerbate the situation. Thus, seventy-two percent of the population are very concerned about climate change (Pew Research Center (2015). But the same survey indicates that they worry most about drought, not flooding, as a result of it. It is a reasonable concern given that much of the economy still relies on agriculture.

Argument

In the following I will proceed in two steps. First, I will trace how the Catholic Church in the Philippines has articulated its understanding of climate change as a religious and social concern. Notwithstanding the fact that Pope Francis' Laudato Si' inaugurated much of the related religious discourse in recent years, the Catholic clergy in the country already identified environmental degradation as a problem in the 1980s. Second, I will introduce some intervention and advocacy programs of Catholic groups in the Philippines. The list is not exhaustive but nevertheless indicative of the character of initiatives led by Catholic clergy and laity alike.

Although religion can contribute to combating climate change, scientists and economists have dominated the discourse so far. Therefore, Urry (2011) is right in proposing that the social aspect must be more effectively considered in imagining and innovating the response of societies to climate change. In order to be effective, innovations have to permeate society. In my view sociological studies should consider the role of religion, especially in societies where it wields significant influence. In the US, for example, some conservative Evangelicals think of climate science as "junk science" (Roberts 2012, 129). But at the same time, religious organizations made efforts to deepen their understanding of sustainability in relation to justice and creation. In other words, religious worldviews affect their adherents' perceptions of and actions toward nature (Gerten and Bergmann 2012). Religion in the developing world offers the language and the institutional mechanism to articulate and respond to climate change. Southeast Asia is a religiously diverse region (Bautista 2012), and its young people, often perceived to be losing their faith, are in fact responsible for a number of religious innovations (Cornelio 2015).

Catholic articulations of climate change as social and religious concern

Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' is, perhaps, the most well-known recent document issued by the Catholic Church on the state of the environment. It is a landmark as it speaks of environmental tragedies around the world and calls for a response based on dialogue and the transformation of lifestyles. It acknowledges climate as a "common good" that belongs to all and is meant for all (Pope Francis 2015, 18). More importantly, it outlines the problems climate change causes for humanity. It specifically gives attention to the plight of developing societies and the poor, many of whom live in communities vulnerable to global warming and other natural disasters. For Pope Francis, the technological paradigm is the root of the problem. Relying on scientific expertise, the paradigm treats nature as a resource that can be possessed and transformed. Under this paradigm natural resources are exploited as if they were unlimited. Unfortunately, the same mentality has engendered an attitude that assigns the care for nature to the "faint-hearted" (Pope Francis 2015, 87). As a result, the exploitation of nature backfires on humanity in the form of environmental disasters. Pope Francis therefore strongly suggests that the scientific response to climate change is powerless "if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well" (Pope Francis 2015, 147).

The encyclical made waves around the world. It inspired, for one, environmental activists in the Philippines. The most prominent figure among them is Yeb Saño, a former commissioner of the country's Climate Change Commission. He echoes the moral position of the Pope but at the same time criticizes that in spite of the country's renewable energy resources, it is still relying on coal (Saño 2015). Saño became famous after he

sobbed during his speech at the 2013 Climate Change Conference in Warsaw about the suffering victims of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. The speech was received with standing ovations.

The encyclical also inspired various religious actors to approach their environmental work more seriously. In fact, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) released a statement that reflected on its local relevance. In Stewards, Not Owners, the CBCP speaks of climate action in terms of social justice and intergenerational responsibility, defining "social justice" as equal benefit for all social classes and groups from the resources of nature and the progress of nations. In fact, it speaks of these matters as a duty: "Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us" (CBCP 2015c). This point resonates with the principle of the common good. In his recent writing, the Jesuit Patrick Riordan (2016) applies this principle on mining and other environmental concerns in the Philippines. The principle upholds the use of resources for all and the respect of human dignity. More importantly, the CBCP's statement has identified issues relevant to the Philippines. It calls on parishes and basic ecclesial communities to organize their faithful around issues such as mining, incineration, and landfills.

In anticipation of the Climate Change Forum in Paris, the CBCP released On Climate Change: Understand, Act, Pray in late 2015. It declares that global warming, "caused by the way we human beings use this planet, is no longer disputable" (CBCP 2015a). Whereas Stewards, Not Owners, for example, called on parishes to organize advocacy groups in their communities, On Climate Change offers concrete steps that individuals can take such as growing a tree, saying goodbye to plastic, bringing one's own tumbler, using energy efficient appliances, and thinking twice before printing.

These statements on the environment, however, are not the first from Philippine bishops. In 1988, two years after the country returned to democracy following Ferdinand Marcos' regime, they released the pastoral letter What is happening to our beautiful land? It proclaimed that "our country is in peril" (CBCP 1988). Understandably, the document does not specifically mention climate change. Nevertheless, it already articulated many familiar ecological concerns in the Philippines. It identified already tangible problems in the country: dried up riverbeds, poisoned marine life, and eroded hills. It further offered specific illustrations of environmental degradation brought about by mining and exploitative fishing methods, for example. The root problem, according to the bishops, was the utter disregard for the environment in the name of progress in the country. It was, however, the poor, including indigenous peoples, who paid the price. Offering hope, the document pointed back to what the bishops believed to be some of the optimistic facets of Philippine culture such as respect for nature, the sacrificial acts for the family, and attention to beauty. By invoking the intricate relationship between God, humanity, and nature, the document spelled out specific action plans for Catholics and the Church as a whole. It aimed to set up a Care for the Earth Ministry at every level of the church hierarchy. And in 1991, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines affirmed that Christians are to be stewards of God's creation and in this role are not allowed to exploit the environment. Thus it affirmed the protection of the environment as a moral duty.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize that the clergy in general does not monopolize theological reflections. Practical theology values the way people reflect about God and the moral issues that concern them (Osmer 2008). This point is important especially in the context of climate change and natural disasters, which provoke people to think and question the presence of God in their current predicaments. In his writings on disaster response after Typhoon Haiyan, Karl Gaspar, a Redemptorist Brother, recounts how his team prepared for its relief operations. They wanted to know whether survivors questioned God's goodness, for example. At the end of their relief work, they were surprised that they did not sense a general anger towards God. The overall sentiment they gathered was that "God was with them as they struggled to survive and through their ordeal to remain alive when conditions were so severely dehumanized" (Gaspar 2014, 110). Although some felt that they were being disciplined for their sins, many other survivors felt that God gave them a second life. Of course this theological reflection among them relates only indirectly to climate change as a phenomenon. But the fact that

a catastrophe such as Typhoon Haiyan reinforced instead of diminished their religious belief as well as the fact that they did not necessarily understand it is a consequence of climate change and did not see themselves at the receiving end of climate injustice indicate a theological gap between the Church's official documents about climate change and lay believer's lived experience of natural disasters.

Before proceeding to the next section, it should be mentioned that large parts of the theological reflection on climate change emanating from the Philippines are shared within the general discourse of the Catholic Church in Asia. Various documents issued by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) have highlighted oneness with nature, respect for creation, and a stance against the on-going destruction of the environment at the expense of the poor (Tirimanna 2012). But FABC also highlights another theme important for many Asian churches, namely, the openness to interreligious dialogue and partnerships on ecological matters.

Climate Change and Catholic Action in the Philippines

The second half of this paper delves into specific activities of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Many of them are clearly inspired by theological reflection and statements about climate change. They demonstrate solidarity with excluded groups, which is an important criterion in ensuring that the environment is upheld as a common good (Riordan 2016). However, communities are often more familiar with these grassroots initiatives than they are with the writings of the CBCP and other Catholic institutions.

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church involves itself in diverse ways across the country. Without being exhaustive the list presented here still indicates this diversity. The activities of the Catholic Church are led by its clergy and laity alike, which is important because partnerships are necessary for them to gain traction. There are three types of activities I wish to highlight here: mobilization, advocacy, and capacity building.

As an influential social institution in the Philippines, the Catholic Church has actively mobilized its adherents to raise awareness and funds to counter climate change. In late 2015, shortly before the Paris Climate Summit, the Archbishop of Manila Cardinal Tagle called on Catholics to participate in the Climate Solidarity Prayer March (CBCP 2015b). The event coincided with the Global Climate March, which took place in around two thousand cities around the world. Apart from Manila, solidarity events were also organized in twelve other cities around the Philippines. The global initiative aimed to submit twenty million signatures to world leaders in Paris. Catholic groups joined forces with thousands of young people and other activists (Rappler 2015). In preparation for the event, the CBCP issued On Climate Change: Understand, Act, Pray which, as discussed above, offered concrete ways for individuals to help combat global warming (CBCP 2015a). It also called on believers to examine their lifestyles, such as their dependence on vehicles and air-conditioning units.

Advocacy is tied to mobilization. In the above documents, the Catholic Church in the Philippines encouraged believers to organize themselves especially to contest issues relevant to them. Mining, for example, has been identified as one such issue because it displaces indigenous communities and pollutes their environment (see also Riordan 2016). In June 2015, the CBCP National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA) launched the "One Million against Coal Campaign." The petition was part of a worldwide campaign organized by the Global Catholic Climate Movement and, in fact, one of the first institutional responses to Pope Francis' Laudato Si' (Roewe 2015). By gathering one million signatures, it protested the planned construction of coal-fired power plants and coal mines around the Philippines. NASSA's executive secretary, Fr. Edwin Gariguez, argued that these construction projects would turn the Philippines into a "major contributor to climate change" (NASSA/Caritas Philippines 2015). NASSA and the Diocese of Lucena in Quezon Province made their resistance to a planned coal-fired power plant in a nearby town particularly clear. Apart from carbon dioxide emissions that contribute heavily to global warming, these Catholic groups resisted coal-fired power plants for their contribution to air pollution and its harmful effect on fetuses. In Batangas province, Catholics also mobilized in May 2016 to resist a proposed 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant in the area. The Archbishop of Lipa Ramon Arguelles joined forces with Yeb Saño (mentioned above and now working for Greenpeace) for a march that gathered 10,000 protesters. The event was part of a global protest project organized by Greenpeace under the

name "Break Free." The archdiocese drew inspiration from Laudato Si' which "called upon all Catholics to act on climate change and protect the Earth, urging solidarity for the poor and the most vulnerable, for it is they who suffer most severely the effects of global warming" (Venner 2016). In result, the archdiocese started to support plans for clean and renewable energy.

Furthermore, Catholic groups and individuals in the Philippines have been involved in capacity building. At one level, capacity building seeks to secure adequate institutional support for various intervention initiatives of the Catholic Church. In April 2016, the Archdiocese of Manila established a Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Program (DRRM) in its Ecology Ministry (Garcia 2016). During its launch, Fr. Ric Valencia, the new Minister of DRRM, appealed to the church that it should respond to the "new normal," that is, the extreme weather patterns brought about by climate change. The new program strengthens the already existing Ecology Ministry. At another level, capacity building is also about enhancing the competencies of individuals. NASSA recently launched the Partnership for Building Capacities in Humanitarian Action (PEACH) (Veritas 2016) with the support of the European Union to make the Catholic Church more responsive to disaster situations. Based on it, workers and volunteers in eleven dioceses will undergo training until 2018. At the same time, the Church is setting up protocols for disaster response in line with the EU's humanitarian aid principles.

Conclusion

Concluding this paper, I would like to note three remaining issues based on the above discussion. First, the Catholic Church's investment in DRRM requires a follow up in terms of monitoring and research. A similar institutional unit has already been set up, for example, in the Archdiocese of Manila. Setting an important precedent, it recognizes the importance of the Catholic Church as an influential institution that can mobilize its believers and resources. Mobilization is the key element especially in places with weak government support. How other archdioceses follow suit is, of course, crucial. Second, climate change is no longer just a Catholic concern. Religious diversification, brought about by migration, missionary work, and the rise of indigenous churches contributed new facets to Philippine society (Cornelio 2013). Dialogue and collaboration with non-Catholic religious organizations are also called for. The call to dialogue is a key component of Pope Francis' Laudato Si'. The third issue relates to the narrative of the Catholic Church in the Philippines. Not surprisingly, given the urgency of addressing climate change, pundits and policymakers often color their picture of the future of societies with trepidation. But fear alone does not yet lead to social change. As Urry (2011) explains in his work on climate change and society, viable alternatives must be given and their adoption must be presented as a reasonable choice. Alternatives for a future that is less reliant on carbon must also foster synchronization among different agents.

In other words, the future could be brighter and thus follow the original telos of innovations. In my opinion, the Catholic Church has not yet fulfilled its potential in its approach to climate change in the Philippines. Its statements about social justice, noble as they are, reflect the familiar urgency based on conflict and fear. At the same time, the responses it has offered thus far, while noble as well, are limited to mobilization and advocacy. The redemptive narrative of Christianity and its eschatology of hope are missing in these interventions. To transform that hope into concrete action is, of course, not an easy feat. But it is an opportunity given to the Catholic Church in the Philippines and one that needs careful deliberation among its believers and leaders. Is there a chance for a sociology of hope in the Philippine Catholic Church?

For exactly this reason Pope Francis' call for dialogue in Laudato Si' is particularly welcome. He calls for dialogue with scientists, policy makers, and non-Catholic religious actors (Pope Francis 2015). The Catholic Church's social teaching can inspire, for example, greater sensitivity to issues of social justice. The discourse of social justice, at its core, rests on hope for the oppressed. But at the same time, its critique of structures of oppression calls for new imaginations of the future among powerful agents. Thus the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines believes that moral discussions are necessary to uphold environmental integrity. Whereas Urry already calls for a post-carbon society, Catholics in the Philippines still need to articulate what future so-

ciety shall look like in order to become not just reactive, but transformative leaders in the response to climate change. This vision needs to speak to scientists and policy elites. But it must also speak to its believers across the country. I have mentioned the theological gap between the Church's official statements and lay believers' reflections about climate change, disaster, and survival. This gap must be closed.

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Presentation 3

Buddhism against Humanity: When Loving Kindness Does not Apply

Vichak Panich

Abstract

During the last several decades, there have been many political incidents in Thailand that proved that time and again Thai Buddhists are ready to kill for political reasons. The massacre of student activists during the 6th October 1976, the killing of protesters calling for a democratic election during May 2010, the killing of Muslims in the South or the support for death penalty for rapists are a few examples. Therefore, we must ask, "Why do "peaceful, temple-going" Buddhists who go to temples regularly support the killing of so-called enemies without any sense of wrong-doing? What contributes to their sense of righteousness and how it receives sanctions from the power-that-be?

The three pillars of the country are nation, religion, and monarchy as represented in the red, white, and blue colors of the national flag. In this way, Thai Theravada Buddhism has been centralized and institutionalized to glorify the power of the ruler class. As a result, Buddhism tends to lose its essence as the path of personal liberation and ceases to empower compassion or inquisitiveness in individual beings. Often, it is used to emphasize social order and obedience, in the name of "being good". Instead of following the spirit of the Buddha to serve all sentient beings, whenever the three pillars are challenged, it becomes acceptable to use any means including violence, killing, or human sacrifice, to "serve the higher good", which eventually will destroy Buddhism and the hope for democracy.

Introduction

When visiting and traveling a Buddhist country like Thailand, one gains the impression that everything is fine and peaceful. The people are kind and helpful to tourists. Also, there is the "Siamese Smile" that Thai people are so proud of. But under the rug, there are serious problems within Thai Buddhist society that have not been solved throughout the country's modern history. In spite of the "Siamese smile," people are ready to kill violently when it comes to certain issues that we are not allowed to talk about, let alone criticize. To have "different" political views becomes a serious risk, and most of the time people have to hide what they really think in the public sphere. In the last ten years, the rise of the Yellow Shirt, Red Shirt, and Nationalist Whistle Blowers movements as well as several military coups have brought the country to the brink of civil war on a number of occasions. In this paper, I will look at this tendency toward political violence and explain its relationship to Thai Buddhism.

Legally Thailand is a democratic country. But since the country transformed from an absolute monarchy to a democracy in 1932, it has undergone almost twenty military coups. Now, in 2017, Thailand is once more under military dictatorship and we still do not know how long this situation will go on. There seem to be several factors that make military coups possible. However, every time when people were fighting for democracy, some of them died. Sadly, the names of these people have never been included in any Thai history lesson. We do not even know who killed them. And since we are not allowed to ask certain questions, history keeps repeating itself.

In 2010, I witnessed the pro-democracy Red Shirt movement. Tens of thousands gathered in the center of Bangkok calling for democratic election. After several months of protest, many of them were shot dead like animals in the middle of our "City of Angels." Some of them even got killed in a temple. I witnessed how several of my friends and family members cheered on the military to "shoot them all" because they were so bored and tired of the traffic jam and inconvenience caused by the Red Shirts. The Red Shirt demonstrators were also accused of being "terrorists" or even "anti-monarchists." In the 2010 coup, almost one hundred Red Shirts were killed and several thousand injured. Ironically, most inhabitants of Bangkok only cried because

their favorite shopping mall was burnt down, but there was no remorse for those who were killed violently by the heavily armed military. Until today no Buddhist organization or Buddhist teacher has dared to say anything about what happened. There is no recollection, no memorial, nothing. There is absolute silence when it comes to showing solidarity with the Red Shirts.

What is wrong with Thai Buddhist values when it comes to the issue of universal human rights? Why is there no loving-kindness or solidarity in political situations such as the Red Shirt movement? The events of 2010 inspired me to start looking at the role of Buddhism in Thai politics, to search for the missing heart of loving-kindness and compassion.

In the following I will revisit Thailand's history of political violence and point out the problematic use of the notion of "higher good" as well as the burden created by the Lèse-majesté Law and initiatives to extend its scope to religious authorities. Then I will question contemporary images about Theravada Buddhism and show how it has changed during the process of modern nation state building from a forest tradition to a state religion. During this process, however, it shifted its emphasis away from human relationships and spiritual interactions towards religious hierarchy, thus allowing for the violence we witness in Thailand today. I wish to argue that we must reconsider earlier organizational structures and values in order to give Buddhism itself and democracy a chance to survive.

A History of Political Violence in Thailand

Forty years ago, an incidence very similar to the one of 2010 occurred, the Thammasat University massacre. In 1973, a student-led uprising ousted Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and his cadres who ruled the country for much of the 1960s. Three years later, in 1976, Thanom decided to return to Thailand as a monk in a controversial act widely protested by the students. The protests escalated when a group of supporters of Thanom accused student activists of being communist. Not very far from the Royal Ground, the Grand Palace, and the Emerald Buddha Temple, at least forty-six student protesters were killed and hundreds more were wounded by the police and army. Some of them were hung from tamarind trees and hit again and again with chairs (Figure 1). Others were burnt to death. Until today, Thai students are still not allowed to study this part of Thai history in school.

A month before the massacre at Thammasat University, the high-ranking Buddhist monk Phra Kittiwutto gave an interview to Jaturas Magazine (Figure. 2). In the interview he made the following statement:

Jaturas Magazine: "Is killing leftists or Communists sinful?"

Kittiwutto: "For me, I think it is something that should be done. Although we Thai are Buddhist, we should do this. This is not a matter of killing human beings, since the destroyers of nation, religion, and king are not fully human. You have to understand. This is not about killing human beings, but killing Mara (evil)."

Jaturas Magazine: "Is it wrong to kill?"

Kittiwutto: "Well, it is wrong for sure, but less wrong, more right. By killing someone who destroys our three pillars, we help protecting the whole country. It is an act of good intention. The action might be sinful, but it also generates a lot of merit. It's like killing fish to make fish curry for monks to eat. It is wrong to kill, but you gain a lot more merit by giving alms to monks [than is accrued by the act of killing a sentient being]. (Sittisaman 1976, 29)

The interview with Kittiwutto provoked strong reactions from royalist groups who saw the Thammasat students as brainwashed by communist ideology. In light of what had happened in neighboring countries such as Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, they were afraid that the student movement sought to abolish the monarchy and to turn the country into a republic. Kittiwutto's message was thus regarded by the royalist group Nawapol (Power of the Ninth) as license to kill.

Although the Thammasat massacre directly involved the Thai Buddhist establishment, Kittiwutto was not charged with any kind of sentence in its aftermath. To the contrary, he was even promoted and given the title Phra Thep Kittipanyakhun by the Sangha Supreme Council.

Serving the "Higher Good"

An iconic picture of the Thammasat massacre was taken by Neal Ulevich on October 6, 1976 for Associated Press (AP). In it an angry supporter of the military regime keeps striking the lifeless body of a hanged student outside Thammasat University. At least fifteen people were killed when the police stormed the campus where students had barricaded themselves in. Ulevich's series of photos including the above won the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Photography (1977) and World Press Photo Award (1976). Bangkok newspapers mentioned the award on the first page, but the photo was never printed in Thailand.

The picture shows the violence inherent in Thai culture. The angry man struck the hanged student only because he had been told that the student was not loyal to the monarchy. In the decades since, similar incidents have happened again and again. Whoever gets identified as against the monarchy, critical of Thai-ness, or as anti-nationalist, is in grave danger. "Witch hunts" are conducted on social media, where self-appointed "do-gooders" publicize profile pictures and personal information of "suspects" to the public.

Toward the end of the reign of King Rama IX, violence among Thai citizens increased. In a public speech, the famous actor and film director Pongpat Wachirabanjong stated, "If you don't love our beloved father, get out of our country." This speech received both extremely positive and negative feedback. A middle-aged woman was slapped in the face on a public bus because she had said something about the king who was very sick and about to pass away. After the death of King Rama IX, the violence increased even more. The picture (Figure 3) shows a factory worker who dared to ask on Facebook whether people felt equally sad when their own father had passed away. He was beaten by people close to him. On October 29, 2015, a high-ranking Buddhist monk from a pagoda in Bangkok wrote on his Facebook page that a mosque should be "burned down" for every Buddhist monk killed, adding that this eye-for-an-eye retribution should start "from the northern part of Thailand [heading] southwards".

When it comes to the three pillars – nation, religion, and monarchy – represented by the three colors of the Thai national flag, no criticism is allowed. Since the nation is represented by the military (including their coups), religion is embodied in organized Buddhism, monarchy is manifested by the king, the prohibition of criticism extends to them. The three pillars represent the "sacred", faith, refuge, god, and absolute power that is never speculated about, investigated, or even questioned.

People who blindly believe in the absolute goodness of the three pillars call themselves "good Buddhists" and understand the duty of "good Buddhists" in protecting the three pillars. With this intention, they feel free to use any means, including violence, for the sake of the "higher good." Instead of following main tenets of the Buddhist teaching, such as to not believe anything blindly, or to be kind to other human beings, they act contrary to these tenets and claim to defend the "absolute Good" of nationalism, Buddhist fundamentalism, and royalism without "distraction" by concerns for humanity, justice, or human rights. Thus, Buddhism is twisted to serve some "higher good" and legitimizes human sacrifice.

The Lèse-majesté Law

The Thai justice system also aims to serve this "higher good".

Article 112 of Thailand's criminal code says that anyone who "defames, insults or threatens the king, the queen, the heir-apparent or the regent" will be punished with up to fifteen years in prison. This law has remained virtually unchanged since the creation of the country's first criminal code in 1908 except for an increase of the applicable penalty in 1976, the year of the Thammasat massacre. Lèse-majesté complaints can be filed by anyone, against anyone, and they must always be formally investigated by the police. Meanwhile,

details of the charges are rarely made public to prevent a repetition of the alleged offence. Furthermore, there is too much room left for interpretation and penalties are too severe.

Below I list some examples of recent Lèse-majesté cases:

In 2007, the Swiss national Oliver Jufer was sentenced to ten years in prison after drunkenly spray-painting posters of King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

In 2011, a sixty-one-year-old grandfather was sentenced to twenty years in prison after being found guilty of sending text messages deemed to be offensive to the queen. He died in prison.

In 2013, a man was handed down fifteen years in jail for posting images of King Bhumibol's favorite dog on Facebook, which supposedly mocked the king, according to the prosecutor.

Even hitting the "like"-button on Facebook on a post that is deemed offensive to the king has led to charges under Article 112.

After the revered King Rama IX passed away, charges were made against a student activist for sharing the controversial biography of his successor, King Rama X that had been posted on Facebook by BBC Thailand. More than two thousand people had shared the post, but only Pai Jatupat, the most well-known student activist, was charged by the police.

Ironically, it was under the military dictatorship, that certain groups of Thai Buddhists took efforts to inscribe Buddhism as the national religion into the constitution, in the hope that the new status of Buddhism in the constitution would help to protect their faith. The secretary of the Committee to Promote Buddhism as the State Religion (CPBSR), Meedee Korn, clearly expressed the opinion of some Buddhists, that Islam poses a threat to the country:

There is a religion that wants to take advantage of this country. If other religions want to destroy Buddhism in Thailand, it is the duty of the faithful to prevent it from happening. (Hutt 2016)

Several Buddhist organizations like Mr. Korn's already supported the previous draft of the constitution that included a statute concerning the defamation of the Buddha, the Supreme Patriarch, or high-ranking monks in the national Buddhist Sangha. In my opinion, the idea for this religious clause derived directly from the Lèse-majesté law.

What actually is Theravada Buddhism?

A number of countries with a majority of Buddhists in the population have recently witnessed Buddhist extremist movements, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. Buddhists in these countries share the same religious identity of Theravada Buddhism. I would, therefore, like to explore the nature of Theravada Buddhism from a socio-historical perspective. How did Theravada Buddhism become part of Thai culture? What is the difference between the form of Theravada Buddhism that was once widespread throughout Southeast Asia and the Theravada Buddhism that has now become a national identity demanding support as one of the three pillars of the country?

Historians of religion/s categorize two types of Theravada Buddhism: the pre-modern, pre-institutionalized forest tradition that was very independent and diverse, and the institutionalized, centralized monasticism that positions itself very close to the power of the ruler and elite class.

Theravada Buddhism as Forest Tradition

Before the reign of King Rama IV, Buddhism in the Southeast Asia region was very diverse in its beliefs and practices. Historical evidence proves that there existed more than one hundred lineages of Buddhism, in-

cluding Mahayana and Vajrayana, in Siam. Buddhist traditions at that time represented a strong down-to-earth approach based on storytelling, human interaction, dialogue, and teacher-student relationship.

When I started to study and practice Buddhism, I realized that the term "Theravada" was hardly used in Thailand. But especially Westerners coming to Thailand to practice Buddhism were intrigued by what is called the "forest tradition." This tradition has been described by Kamala Tiyavanich in her book, Forest Recollection:

Outside the influence of the modern state, people lived in a world that presumed plurality. They moved around enough — or knew kinsmen or traders who did — to understand that the land held many people whose languages and customs differed from their own. They expected that the religious practices of monks would also differ. Indeed before this century there was no standard doctrine or monastic practice. Each temple had its own customs, and each ajan (abbot or teacher) followed the disciplinary rules and monastic practices of his nikai (sect or lineage), which has its own history. (1997, 3)

I also remember people revered those monks most who went to meditate in the "charnel ground" (where ghosts and spirits are thought to dwell). There is a sense of bravery and integrity in the path of renunciation through which those monks could practice their mind to face their own fears and the unknown.

In Buddhist Saints in India, Reginald A. Ray, describes the inherent meaning of the forest in the life of the Buddha:

The forest (aranya or vana) is a central and recurring motif, appearing at moments of transition, when the human actors come to acknowledge the insufficiency of their immediate stratagems and projects and abandon themselves to something larger. The forest is the region where things appear as they are, without the cosmetic alterations of "civilization." (1994, 48)

Therefore, to pursue the Buddhist path in the fullest sense, the Buddha had to leave his world behind and enter the forest. It is the place where he could find, not the highest religious value, but the freedom that he most longed for. Even after his enlightenment, he continued to dwell in the forest for the most of his life.

The forest holds a value that goes beyond the control of the state or culture. Therefore it is a place in which anything can happen and anything is possible. The spirit of the forest tradition lies in the practitioners' devotion to the unknown. It is the place where wakefulness and openness are cultivated and nurtured.

Historically, cultural accommodation has been a precondition for the flourishing of Buddhism. When it spread to Southeast Asia, this strong ability of adaptation has been a characteristic of the forest tradition.

Theravada Buddhism as Institutionalized State Buddhism

So, how did the Buddhism of the royal court in Bangkok come to be Thailand's official Buddhism? Tiyavanich points out that the people living in the regions beyond Bangkok did not share the Siamese elite's view in which the Buddhism of the royal court was superior to their own. Even long after the modern Thai state began to pressure them to accept it as official Buddhism, villagers and local monks continued to follow their own centuries-old Buddhist traditions. Geographical and linguistic isolation shielded them from Bangkok's influence. Tiyavanich adds,

In creating a modern Thai state, the Bangkok authorities needed not only a common language but a common religion. The Siamese rulers' preoccupation with order, harmony, national unity, and modernization led them to believe that monks as well as lay people—regardless of their ethnic identities—should have a common religious outlook. They assumed that a rationalized form of Buddhism would provide the most unity and harmony. (8)

The most significant turn was brought about in 1902 by King Rama V who passed the Sangha Act of 1902.

It created a bureaucracy with a Siamese supreme patriarch (appointed by the authorities in Bangkok) at the top and integrated monks of all traditions into a national sangha hierarchy. Under this law, a standard Buddhist practice, based on customs of the royal court, was enforced throughout Siam. Tiyavanich argues, "Until then no ruling center had attempted to control the diverse tradition found within Siam's borders" (40). She further describes the influence of the act in the following way:

With the act's passage, a modern nation-state with a centralized urban-based bureaucracy began to control local communities distinguished by diverse ethnic traditions. Formerly autonomous Buddhist monks belonging to diverse lineages became part of the Siamese religious hierarchy with its standard texts and practices where-as previously no single tradition had predominated. The modern ecclesiastical system brought the hitherto unorganized sangha into line with the civilian government hierarchy. Sangha and state now had parallel hierarchies. (8f)

Furthermore the centralized monastic education system, emanating from Bangkok, replaced the practice of meditation and the direct relationship between teacher and student. Monks in the various regions gradually accepted the system by taking the naktham (monastic study) and Pali exams. They finally turned their backs on traditional knowledge to pursue Bangkok's path.

From the Three "Life Ways" to the "Two-Tiered Model"

The forest tradition in Southeast Asia highlights the interrelation between the three "life ways": laity, settled monastics, and forest renunciants. Here, the forest plays the very important role of preserving the ultimate goal of Buddhism – the search for spiritual freedom.

The laity is in constant interaction with both settled monastics and forest renunciants. The laity makes donations to settled monastics and receives their counsel, guidance, and instruction for living. As the center of the community the monastery preserves traditional texts and contributes to doctrinal integrity and public articulation of Buddhism. The laity also makes donations to the forest renunciants, but these are usually small-er in scope. However, the extent of veneration they impart to these renunciants is extraordinary. Laity donors receive merit in return for giving to a renunciant on the path toward spiritual liberation. Some lay believers might also adopt a different life way, called "householder yogin." They would still live their life as a layper-son, but simultaneously follow the ascetic path or practice meditation in during retreats under the guidance of a revered forest teacher. In the same way, the settled monastic can also leave the monastery and search for a teacher in the forest. Through this close interrelation of the three "life ways," Buddhism permeates the vast arena of life without relying on a formal hierarchy.

After the era of King Rama IV, which corresponded to the period of Western colonialism, the project of forming a nation state and the parallel process of centralizing Buddhist authority began. The forest renunciants disappeared from the picture and a different model of (state) Buddhism emerged, the "two tiered model."

As Ray argued in his book, the "two-tiered model" consists of monastics on the upper tier and the laity on the lower tier. Monastics are respected as custodians of Buddhist teachings, while it is the role of the laity to make donations and receive those teachings in return. This model assumes that a monastic who follows the vinaya and engages in the textual pursuits of settled monasticism pursues the highest ideal of Buddhist life, set forth by the Buddha himself. As such, he is worthy of respect and reverence by the laity. The laity, for their part, follow a lesser but still worthy way of life, paying reverence to monks in a symbolic and material way. Through the merit earned by these actions, they hope to ensure good fortune in the present life and a happy rebirth (Ray 1994, 20).

Nation State Buddhism and the "Two-Tiered Model": Serving the "Higher Good"

The "two-tiered model" provides a fitting organizational structure for of Buddhism in an absolute mon-archy. There the upper tier represents the Siamese Supreme Patriarch and his bureaucracy. The relationship

between state Buddhism and the king also plays a very important role in creating a sense of sacredness and absolute power above the people. In contrast, the lower tier represents the non-monastics, the laity, the common people, who are expected to suffice themselves with believing and listening to what they are told. When applied to the political arena, the "two-tiered model" can be used as a structure of oppression forcing obedience.

Since the Sangha Act of 1902 Thai Buddhism has served what is claimed to be the "higher good" manifested in the three pillars – nation, religion, and king. But it is because of the adoption of the "two-tiered model" that Buddhism distanced itself from the suffering of the people. In the ideology of absolute monarchy, the Thai king is seen as a bodhisattva or the Buddha himself and it is thought that he was born to become king because of the merit he accumulated during his past lives. The absolute monarchy, thus, needs Buddhism to guarantee the morality and legitimize the power of the ruler. According to this way of thinking people ought to revere the ruler in the same way as they revere the monastics. Although the legal framework of the country changed from an absolute monarchy to a democracy in 1932, this "two-tiered model" is still very influential today. Legitimizing "a politics above politics," that is, decision-making by non-democratic powers such as the military (in coup d'états), high-ranking monastics and the monarchy, has become a big obstacle to the development of democracy.

Buddhism against Humanity

I study Buddhism in the West and most Western Buddhists whom I know are liberal and humanist, quite contrary to "Buddhists" in Thailand. The extremely conservative attitude and the "blind faith" of the royalist Thai Buddhists derive from their education about the three pillars in school. It teaches that being Thai means to be a Buddhist. Since the king is a Buddhist and the main patron of Buddhism, being a good Buddhist also means to be loyal to the king. In this way Thailand will remain a peaceful Buddhist country, they say.

But, what does it mean to be "good" in Thailand? And, what does it mean to be "good" as a Buddhist? In the eyes of the state and organized Buddhism, developing mindfulness and awareness does not make you "good." Developing compassion in your heart and helping suffering people does not make you "good" either. In Thailand, you are considered "good" if you are loyal to the "higher good," if you serve and protect the "absolute Good" in any possible way. Under such conditions even injustice, killing, or oppression can be interpreted as "good" because of the "higher intention" of the person committing these acts.

In Thailand, many awards are granted to "good people" such as "Good Mother/Father/Artist of the Year," but let me introduce three women who would never be granted such an award.

The first one is Mrs. Kamolkate Akkahard, a volunteer nurse who died during the 2010 crackdown. Kamolkate was shot dead inside Pathumwanaram Temple on May 19, 2010, while she was tending to wounded protesters from the Ratchaprasong site who had taken refuge at the temple. Mrs. Kamolkate would be a great example of someone who is willing to risk her life to help other human beings in a dangerous situation. I believe that if this had happened in another country, there would be a monument in her memory, and her name would be in history textbooks for children. But so far, investigations into this case in Thailand have not made any progress.

The second one is Mrs. Payao Akkahard, the mother of Kamolkate Akkahard. After the death of Kamolkate, she has been tirelessly seeking justice for her daughter. She wants an investigation in order to prove who exactly killed her daughter and has received a lot of threats because of her activities.

The third one is Mrs. Natthika Meewangpla, a friend of Mrs. Kamolkate, who was also a volunteer nurse at Pathumwanaram Temple during the 2010 crackdown. Mrs. Natthika is the prime witness for the death of her friend. She gave a strong testimony concerning who killed Mrs. Kamolkate in that incident, but her testimony displeased the military. After the coup led by General Prayuth Chan-Osha in 2014, Mrs. Natthika was arrested

and charged under Article 112. She has been in prison ever since. (Panich 2015, 10-11)

These three women embody the virtue of upright citizenship that is not widely appreciated in Thailand. But because of their affiliation to the pro-democracy Red Shirt movement, they are not considered "good" people judged by the standards of Thai state Buddhism. But I am sure, Thai Buddhism can learn a lot from them.

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Presentation 4

Religions and Relief: Faith-Based Organizations and the role of social donations in Myanmar

Carine Jaquet

Abstract

While Myanmar has been experiencing a significant political transition since 2010, episodes of inter-communal violence have triggered older religious and communal tensions to (re)surface. Nonetheless, religious organizations continue to play a pivotal role in service delivery to unprivileged populations, especially in peripheral areas. This paper briefly explains the role of faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Myanmar society, before introducing two case studies on the role of FBOs in relief operations in religiously divergent localities and politically distinct contexts. More specifically, this paper focuses on the sociopolitical aspects of donations and followers' support to FBOs. It explores the role of FBOs in humanitarian relief activities, but also explains how they adapt their practices and messages as a result of their humanitarian relief work.

This analysis is based on the author's research in—and on—Myanmar covering a period of over a decade. The two case studies provided here have been informed by written sources, observations, and interviews with religious leaders, NGO workers, researchers and individuals directly involved with relief activities (mainly in Yangon, the Irrawaddy Delta, Kachin and Northern Shan State). More particularly, the first part of this paper builds on a published study about the Buddhist practice of dāna (donations) in humanitarian relief (Jaquet and Walton 2015). This case study proposes to look into Buddhist-based relief work in the Irrawaddy Delta region of Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in 2008. It examines the conceptualizations, justifications and practices of Buddhist relief organizations. It attempts to describe how Buddhist involvement with relief work is contributing to the larger evolution of a socially engaged Buddhism by influencing social donation practices, and leading to a more sustained focus on social donations that goes beyond the immediate situation of relief aid.

The second part is informed by several research works, including a chapter on the perceptions and narratives related to the Kachin conflict (Jaquet 2015a), and an examination of the root causes and expressions of the conflict (Jaquet 2015b). This second case study discusses Christian faith-based relief work conducted since 2011 to those displaced by armed conflict in the Kachin State, the region neighboring India and China. It describes how Christian FBOs use their sociopolitical capital to provide assistance and protection to displaced populations. It also relates the rationale of donations to the Catholic aid doctrine, and suggests the political dimension of FBOs in a significantly politicized context. It looks at how the involvement of FBOs in relief activities influences religious practices, and how the religious leaders' messages are adapted to the sociopolitical situation, encouraging their followers to take a political stance.

Reflections on FBO-led relief work in Myanmar

Religion is pivotal in the definition of identity in Myanmar. After gaining independence in 1948, successive governments strived to forge a feeling of common belonging among the myriad of ethnic groups (Berlie 2008, 19-34). In order to achieve this highly intricate task, political leaders instrumentalized Theravada Buddhism as part of their nation-building strategy. Buddhism is the predominant religion in Myanmar today as 89.8 percent of the population is identifying with it according to the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census (UN-FPA 2014). The Burman (or Bamar), who constitute the main ethnic group of Myanmar, are of Buddhist faith. Officially, 6.3 percent of the population of Myanmar follows a Christian faith, mainly Catholic and Baptist.

As a result of the troubled history of the modern state of Myanmar, public service delivery has always been sparse, especially in rural and peripheral areas. A number of civil society organizations have been providing basic services such as education, health care and other social services to their communities. They have also provided humanitarian relief during conflict and after natural disasters. FBOs are largely funded by individual

donations but also, to a certain extent, by international donors. They take pride in their ability to reach communities, in geographically remote locations as well as in areas that are beyond the control of state institutions. Academic sources point out that FBO activities take place primarily in areas populated by ethnic minorities, where they substitute the nonexistent or inadequate public social services. (Desaine 2011, 22-27).

In 2009, a study about the religious dimensions of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in Myanmar demonstrated that more than one third of the officially registered NGOs had an explicitly religious mandate (Desaine 2011, 22-27). Besides, as FBOs operated at the time of this study in a difficult context – characterized by numerous constraints imposed by the military junta – it is reasonable to assume that many of them maintained a low profile, and that this figure may have been significantly underestimated. Religious activities were central in the interventions of FBOs, which also provided education and health care, and, in some cases, support to economic development. Only ten percent of the local NGOs stated emergency relief among their activities. This can be explained by the fact that Myanmar FBOs have generally not considered emergency relief as a core part of their mandate.

Nonetheless, in the case studies presented below, FBOs have played an essential role in emergency relief in a number of occurrences. It is important to notice that the implementation of their relief operations did not occur in a void. Relief modalities were significantly influenced by their religious background, providing the FBOs with legitimacy and space to operate in politically tense contexts. Local authorities, be they related to the state or to ethnic armed organizations, tend to trust them and to grant them access to areas usually considered 'off limits.' FBO leaders—aware of the social advantages conferred to them by the status of religious personhood—have made use of this to deliver humanitarian relief.

While these observations are still fairly preliminary, it appears that relief operations have influenced the genesis of new sociopolitical and religious practices. As described below, FBO involvement in humanitarian operations has contributed to the evolution of distinct donation practices and the emergence of new discourses among religious leaders.

The social dimension of donations in relief work: the case of Buddhist-FBOs in post-Cyclone Nargis Myanmar

The most striking example of Buddhist relief work[5] in Myanmar emerged after Cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy Delta region of Myanmar on the night of the 2nd of May 2008, an unprecedented natural disaster that left an estimated 140,000 individuals dead or missing, and up to 2.4 million people directly affected. This paper briefly examines some practices and beliefs that have been strengthened by the Buddhist relief efforts after Nargis in the context of a tenuous transition from authoritarianism to a more democratic political system.

Buddhism and relief work

While Theravada Buddhism provides a common framework, people may interpret the Buddha's teachings differently with regard to contemporary practices of relief. Some interpretations suggest that a monk's place is not in humanitarian operations, but rather in withdrawing from the material world since secular issues should be the concern of laypeople. This interpretation might be especially influential in Myanmar where the sangha (community of monks) faced severe repression from the government in the aftermath of the so-called Saffron Revolution of 2007. However, monks and laypeople more frequently draw on Buddhist beliefs and practices to justify and frame relief aid. The idea of dāna (donation/generosity, giving) has exerted an important influence on their practices and understandings of relief.

The area affected by Nargis is mainly populated by Buddhists, but there are also Christian minorities. During the first few weeks, the government denied international aid access to the affected populations, which left immediate relief work exclusively in the hands of local communities. In some cases, Buddhist monasteries

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5 For an in-depth analysis of Buddhist-based relief after Cyclone Nargis, see Jaquet and Walton 2015.

organized rescue operations and shared their limited resources, such as food, water and shelter. During this crucial relief period, they thus were able to provide for a large population as they could draw on an extensive network. There is no evidence of monasteries being involved in relief work to this extent in the past in Myanmar. As humanitarian access was given and international NGOs could increasingly operate in the affected areas, monasteries became strategic places to organize large-scale food and goods distributions and to collect and deliver information. Monasteries sometimes continued to be temporary shelters during the period of reconstruction of people's homes and public infrastructure. The relief work of most Buddhist organizations was limited in time. After about six months, most monks had handed over relief duties to professional aid organizations and went back to their traditional duties and activities, focusing on non-relief-related social work and particularly on monastic education (Tripartite Core Group 2009, 42).

The dynamics of dāna and relief donations

The interdependent relationship between Buddhist monks and the laity provides a central component for the foundation of Theravada Buddhist society. Monks allow members of the lay community to make merit through a ritualized donation practice called dāna. Understood as a virtue perfected through practice, dāna can also be translated as "generosity". Belief states that donating, as an ideal selfless act of generosity, leads to positive effects in the future. In general, dāna is recognized as a practice that affects social and political life as much as religious life.[6] In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis, informants described relief work itself as a form of dāna.

However, there appear to be a number of differences between the perceptions of dāna in a relief context and dāna in a ritual context of offering donations. Although informants saw post-Nargis relief donations as dāna, no one mentioned that they took the moral standing of recipients into account when planning their donations. This suggests that in a relief context, the dynamics of dāna were different from situations of everyday giving. Yet, the dynamics of dāna appeared to influence the ways in which some people chose to donate after Nargis. In interviews, lay Buddhists who donated goods to monasteries or through monastic organizations often said that they considered themselves to be donating directly to the people affected.

Interactions between laypeople and monks are structured in part by traditional practices of dāna, in which laypeople provide food and other material requisites to members of the monastic community. In addition to acting as facilitators in the making of merit for laypeople, monks have traditionally been the main educators in Myanmar society. Buddhist organizations in Myanmar that are engaged in social work have been involved in long-term development rather than in short-term relief activities. They have mainly focused on providing services in the field of education and, more recently, in health. Monks and nuns work as teachers, counselors and healers for their community. Those who have no other social protection seek refuge in the monastery.

Over the past few decades, monks seem to have increased their attention to social welfare needs that have not been addressed by the state. Monks' educational and social functions allow them to be the keepers and carriers of normative values and in certain cases, the vanguard of change in societal values and practices. Monks are expected to be models for moral life and ideally to transcend the material preoccupations of laypeople. Due to these images about them they can influence societal norms and legitimize certain practices by giving to or volunteering for causes.

In her analysis of contemporary dāna practices and relationships in Myanmar, Kumada emphasizes the fact that dāna can encompass any kind of giving, not just to monks or pagodas (Kumada 2004). Nevertheless, traditional interpretations of dāna and merit still strongly influence the ways in which people donate. For many Myanmar Buddhists, the moral standing of the recipient amplifies the merit received from a donation, and as a consequence, donations to the sangha or for the construction of religious buildings have been the prevailing form of giving.

6 "In a traditional polity, social status was seen as a ritual economy of merit based on spiritual rewards for material donation in support of Buddhist practices and institutions," according to Julianne Schober 2010, 3.

However, even though religious donations have tended to dominate the scene, social giving has always been part of Myanmar Buddhist practices. Even before Nargis, socially oriented Buddhist organizations, led by both monks and laypeople, already tackled social issues, providing free funeral services for the destitute, medicine for HIV/AIDS patients, and homes and education for orphaned children. A critical factor in gathering public support for such undertakings can be the patronage of prominent monks. Following the lead of monks who organize donation ceremonies at hospitals, orphanages, and even prisons, many lay people started to change their practice of giving only to monastic recipients.

Central to this change in attitude among the people of Myanmar have been the examples set by prominent monks in making and encouraging these donations. In addition, these monks increasingly promote this kind of practice in public sermons,[7] which describe their own projects and the resultant merit lay donors have made through contributions in detail. While these processes in some cases had started before Nargis, the concentrated relief response from the Buddhist community, with the involvement of both monastic and lay networks, has definitely sped up the process of change further encouraging monks and laypeople to focus their efforts more on social donations. The influence of FBO humanitarian activities on religious discourses and donation practices can also be observed in the context of Christian-based relief efforts in the northernmost parts of the country.

Relief and politics: Christian FBOs in the conflict-affected areas of Kachin State

Since 2011, the conflict between the Myanmar Army and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO)'s armed wing, the Kachin Independence army (KIA) in Kachin State in northern Myanmar has displaced more than 91,500 individuals in more than 150 locations throughout Kachin State and the neighboring Northern Shan State.[8] Many of them self-identify as being of Kachin ethnicity and rely on the relief provided by Christian churches and affiliated organizations.

Understandably, the different local context makes a comparison with the case discussed above difficult. In contrast to the post-Nargis situation, relief operations in the Kachin region occurred during a longer period of time (as the ongoing armed conflict created a protracted humanitarian crisis). In addition, while the former case takes place in a post-natural disaster situation, the latter is the result of an armed conflict. However, both of these relief operations have one crucial similarity. They both are large-scale relief operations mainly managed by FBOs. And, in both cases, these FBOs represent the faith of the majority of the local population. Thus, their involvement builds on – but also bestows upon them – a significant sociopolitical capital.

Christianity and relief work

Christianity approaches and justifies humanitarian relief with a different theoretical framework than Buddhism. For example, the body of thought by which the Catholic Church applies its beliefs to social and political issues is known as the "Catholic Social Teachings." These teachings define the theory behind the core approach of Catholic relief assistance. A pivotal notion of the doctrine is the intrinsic dignity of human beings, which entitles every individual human being to be respected in any possible way. Drawing a connection to the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council's declaration Dignitatis Humanae the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace declared, "The movement towards the identification and proclamation of human rights is one of the most significant attempts to respond effectively to the inescapable demands of human dignity"(2004, 152). Some aid practitioners from Christian FBOs, hence, assume that the Catholic concept of dignity resonates well with the international concepts and narratives of Human Rights (Holdcroft 2014), and with what professional aid providers label as a "right-based approach." This vision has direct consequences for the mental representation of relief operations since aid is justified by the imperative to recover the most basic rights' entitlements for those who have been deprived of them. The former case study explained the importance of donations for

7 In a DVD the head of a Buddhist missionary organization, Sitagu Sayadaw, begins preaching with a 40-minute long "update" on a hospital he was helping to construct, before he proceeds to the main topic of his sermon.
8 According to the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations in Myanmar, as of May 2014.

those who make them, and emphasized the role of Buddhist-based organizations to channel them – with added religious value. In the case of Christian faith-based relief, the recipient of aid is, in theory, at the center of the action with the objective to bring back the beneficiary of the action to a "normal" status, in which he/she can enjoy rights. This belief induces another type of interaction in the context of a donation-based relationship between laity and clergy.

In Kachin areas of Myanmar, Christianity progressively emerged as the main religion.[9] According to unofficial sources, more than ninety percent of the members of the Kachin ethnic group may be Christian. About two thirds of them are Baptists, according to local church leaders. The influence of Christian churches extends far beyond merely religious activities. They developed a wide scope of social services, such as education or health, but also early childcare. In addition, many Kachin look to churches for spiritual guidance. Much like their Buddhist counterparts, in most remote areas, Christian FBOs turned into an essential service provider, shaping an intricate church-society relationship that is best described as a "patron-client" relationship according to the typology proposed by Médard (1976).

The sociopolitical role of Christian churches became particularly visible in the conflict torn areas of Kachin State after the breach of a seventeen yearlong cease-fire between the KIA and the Myanmar armed forces in June 2011 (Jaquet 2015 b). Churches of various denominations (Baptist, Catholic, 7th Day Adventists, and others) have provided relief support, such as shelter, food, physical protection, and basic health care. Almost all internally displaced persons' camps are managed by FBOs.[10] The main reason for their massive involvement lies in the fact that the vast majority of those who fled their villages found safe havens in the compounds of their own denomination and became solely dependent on FBO assistance for their daily survival.

In this very tense security context, FBOs have been using their social capital to access and protect populations (Benson and Jaquet 2014). The same way as the Buddhist-based relief work, the Christian-based relief work has become possible because of the religious leaders' special status within society, and the "soft" authority they exercise on local power structures. While secular organizations encountered the greatest difficulties to reach out to displaced people, church volunteers were able to move freely throughout the region, as they could count on the trust of both warring parties (Jaquet and O'Loughlin 2012). Practically, this meant that they were able to cross the military checkpoints, and in some cases battle lines. This capacity to carve out humanitarian access amidst serious security threats has undoubtedly strengthened the role and legitimacy of local churches, as well as their ability to extend patronage to the believers.

The role of donations and their evolving narratives

Christian FBOs, too, traditionally rely on donations from their followers. With the socioeconomic disruptions induced by the conflict, donations declined since a significant proportion of the community lost assets and means of income. Nonetheless, they can still rely on the wider religiously bound community and exiled members to provide financial support. Besides, several international aid agencies provide funding for relief activities. Christian FBOs hence find themselves as pivotal actors to coordinate, administer, and deliver relief aid in both government and KIO controlled-areas. In return, their involvement in relief work has influenced Christian narratives of the conflict as well as the meaning of donations.

To understand the dynamic role of these FBOs, it is important to look at perceptions of the "church" and to ask how its leaders came to find their duty in encouraging combatants and promoting political opposition. During military rule, church leaders provided ideological support to pro-independence movements. Today, a number of them consider the Christian churches themselves to be under attack, as parts of the Myanmar Army

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9 This is not necessarily the case with the Kachin populations found in Yunnan Province of China, many of whom are Buddhists.
10 Only two sites within Kachin State have been provided by the Myanmar government, while the KIO provided several compounds in areas under its control. A few Buddhist monasteries also provide assistance to displaced populations, mainly in neighboring Northern Shan State.

attempt to destroy Kachin identity, annex their land, and cut them off from their resources. During the conflict, church property, places of worship and religious symbols were attacked, creating – or confirming in certain cases – a feeling of ethnic and religious oppression that encouraged some leaders and believers to incrementally adopt a hardline position. Christian FBO leaders subsequently developed narratives that do not only justify the violence enacted as part of the conflict, but also foster support from individual followers.

Among their most common narratives, there is the justification of the armed struggle. A number of church leaders see it as their duty to support the war as a "just war" fought for their people. Several informants revealed the commonly shared opinion that fighting a war was the right choice. One interviewee explained that he ideologically supported the fight, quoting from St Augustine. This founding father of the Roman Catholic Church, elaborated the theory of a "just war" in the fifth century. According to his doctrine, a "just war" is based on legitimate authority, fought for a just cause and with the right intention (Jaquet 2015 b).

Influential religious leaders state their support for the fight and for KIA in private, but also in public sermons and during religious ceremonies. In KIA-controlled areas, they encourage the combatants during commemoration masses and praying sessions (Roughneen 2012). Among the religious activities providing spiritual support to the combatants, special prayer services are organized. Many church leaders support the political stance of the KIA, and KIA leaders, in turn, ostensibly demonstrate their Christian faith, and promote Christianity as a crucial unifying factor among the various Kachin tribes. The KIA Chief of Staff reportedly prays three times a day, frequently invokes the Bible in his public speeches and casts the war in religious terms.

Religious practices have hence been influenced by the context of the conflict and by the involvement of FBOs in humanitarian relief. Donation practices also evolved, as lay donations often tend to be reinterpreted as religious ones. For example, for a private donation of blankets, a ceremony is organized on Church premises to pray for the donor. While, in such cases, donations from laypeople do not have an explicit religious intention, they are staged under religious patronage with visible participation of the clergy itself. Several interviews showed that—even if most of the delivered goods are stamped with immediately visible logos of professional aid agencies—overall, internally displaced persons tend to believe that the relief goods as a whole come from the Church. They perceive assistance as a demonstration of power and an expression of support from the Church to its followers. In the longer term, it can be assumed, this perception will contribute to strengthening existing patron-client relationships, and reinforce the more or less formalized narratives of the churches about war and peace.

Concluding remarks

Although similarities of FBO-led relief work can be observed in different contexts, the variation and evolution of motivations and perceptions of donors and recipients are important factors in understanding how religion/s and relief work are actually articulated. In the case of Myanmar, religious beliefs have helped to

shape the ways in which many people and FBOs conceive of and carry out relief work and other types of socio political engagement. Relief operations following disasters, such as Cyclone Nargis or the armed conflict in Kachin State, have also contributed to a gradual shift in people's attitudes toward giving in general, resulting in a more sustained focus on social donations which goes beyond the immediate situation of relief aid. Relief work also continues to engage, build and strengthen the social—and political—capital of religious organizations throughout the country.

Both case studies demonstrate the influence of relief operations on FBOs' narratives and emerging socio-religious practices. The case of Buddhist relief work in the Irrawaddy Delta can be regarded as an illustration of an increasingly influential interpret- tation of the Buddha's teachings, often called "Engaged Buddhism," that emphasizes social justice, sustainable development, and peace as the basis for spiritual development. In the

case of Christian relief work in the Kachin region, FBOs have also adjusted their approach to relief and donations in the context of a larger evolution of their sociopolitical engagement, justified within religious doctrines, such as the Catholic Social Teachings, but also with political arguments, such as their ideological stance on the conflict.

These current developments in Myanmar illustrate an emerging tendency: In the process of progressively extracting itself from half a century of military dictatorship the country becomes the theatre of increasingly visible attempts of religious movements and organizations to find a new position within the reformed political arena. Recently recovered political rights and freedom of expression have also provided more space for radical voices, including those of some FBO leaders and supporters. Some Buddhist organizations, whose self-appointed mandate is to protect Buddhism and the purity of the "Burman race", are very articulate and seem keen to acquire a formalized political role. Christian churches, especially in areas mainly populated by ethnic minorities where they have a substantial support base, continue to be coaxed to play a political role. In this context, politically and socially engaged religious practices – including the role of FBOs in humanitarian relief and development work – are likely to continue to show further development and expansion in the coming years.

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Roundtable Discussion

Moderator: Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya (Delhi University)

Panelists are all case presenters and:
Philippines   Rosalina Palanca-Tan (Ateneo de Manila University)
                  Jane Toribio (Department of Agrarian Reform, Philippines)
Vietnam   Huynh Mui (Thang Long University)
Indonesia   Jakfar Idrus (Kokushikan University)
                  Mya Dwe Rostika (Kokushikan University)
Japan   Shiori Ui (Rikkyo University)

Discussion:

Ranjana: Before the break we heard four very stimulating presentations. Opening the session Ahmad Munjid spoke about how Islam started to open up in Indonesia after 1998. The reformation process led to a higher degree of interreligious freedom and an increase in projects of interreligious dialogue, but it also made problems involving religions more visible. We have heard how a strong state could suppress individual citizens; but if the state is weak or relatively powerless other actors, including religious actors, become very active.

The Philippine case presented by Jayeel Cornelio was extremely educating, too. It focused on the role of the Catholic Church and its response towards climate change. After the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris last year and the declaration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) even more emphasis has been placed on the role and responsibility of the state to address the effects of climate change. But in the Philippine example we, actually, have a religion coming forward and addressing these issues.

As the third speaker Vichak Panich shared his analysis of Buddhism in Thailand with us; and I am sure he changed the image of many of us who go to Thailand, visit temples and see nothing but a wonderful country with extremely friendly people. Vichak's paper has indeed challenged the general image of Buddhism as being a pacifist and non-violent religion. But even a religion like Buddhism can become violent and ruthless, if it comes in contact with state power, or if it submerges itself in state politics. This is in fact a phenomenon we can observe not only in Southeast Asia, but across East Asia and South Asia, too. I will return to this issue of the relation between the state and religions later.

In the fourth presentation Carine Jaquet finally compared activities of two religions in one and the same country, namely Myanmar. While her paper was the only one with a comparative approach, the comparison bears additional meaning, since it also speaks about the different frameworks in which a dominant religion (Buddhism) as compared to a less dominant religion (in this case Christianity) can proceed with their activities. Carine explained how Buddhist FBOs use their social capital, particularly the concept of dāna to channelize social donations towards a particular cause, in the presented case, disaster relief.

Thus, we heard four papers addressing a variety of social issues in four different historical and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, I would say that there are some underlying issues that are very

common to all of these cases. The first and foremost would be the issue of state-religion-relations. Each of the case studies is actually a study on how religions are negotiated in their interaction with the state, while they are engaging in their respective projects of social activism. This negotiation is inevitable, because whenever religions show themselves in the public sphere or take up work for the common good the first actor they have to negotiate with is the state. Actually, the state contests its presence over their presence. Therefore the ability of religions or FBOs to successfully negotiate with the state determines the scope and the kind of activities they will be able to conduct.

The second issue common to all four cases—although it shows most clearly in the case studies on Islam and Buddhism—is the instrumentalization of religion by the state. Here we could hear how religion was used in Indonesia (and partly in Thailand) to crack down on communism. In Thailand monks receive state patronage and in turn provide legitimacy to the violent means by which the state suppresses criticism. Vichak showed very convincingly how the interrelation works in which supporting the king and the state enable citizens to earn "merit" and this merit earning becomes a tool for the justification of state actions, including violent action. This is definitely a rather disturbing, but nonetheless hard fact of reality in Thailand. However, the danger of being used by the state or of contributing to the legitimization of its actions from a religious standpoint is not a phenomenon limited to Buddhism alone. It can affect any religion that is dominant in a country.

Our consideration of the state-religion-relations naturally leads us to the general issue of secularism. Apparently most modern or modernizing states have idolized secularism in some way. Even in countries with a dominant or state religion certain spheres of activities have been reserved for the state and kept out of the "realm of religion," creating some kind of "religious sphere" and "political sphere," or "state sphere." There is a difference that has been maintained. This phenomenon can be found during the processes of nation building or modernization of Asian countries, too.

Now, sociologists consider two aspects as characteristic for this process of secularization: First, while we usually think of secularization as the "separation of state and church" (or of the state organs from religious organs), secularization, in fact, also means the declining level of religiosity among the people, which leads to a decline in their religious participation. Although all of today's papers have been presented from the viewpoint that a separation of state and religion is indeed preferable, the presenters also expressed their wish to give free space to individual religiosity, or individual spirituality. But we also witnessed that the interference of a state into the religious sphere by taking measures to control religious actors inevitably leads to a drop in the level of individual spirituality. Vichak's talk about forest monasticism, or forest esotericism, showed it very clearly. Whenever there is a dominant religion, minorities and folk religion suffer suppression.

This brings us to another very important issue, namely that of the relations between majority and minority religions. Here we have to ask, how does the existence of a dominant and politically very active religious group in a country impact this groups relations to minority groups? Furthermore, what are the consequences of a certain relationship between the minority religious group/s and a majority religion? As for Indonesia, we have heard a lot about interreligious dialogue, but I would like to know who leads these dialogues. Who is setting the conditions for discourse in these encounters? In the case of the Philippines, Jayeel actually did not explain how the Catholic Church tries to account for alternative discourses by other minority groups in its action against climate change. Many smaller ethnic groups usually live their lives in a far more environmentally sustain-

able way than the majority religious groups with their often capitalist-driven lifestyle. Therefore it would be helpful if you could explain how the Catholic Church in the Philippines actually relates to minority groups and addresses their very different social issues.

Then again, the papers did raise the very important issue of textual interpretation and theology. Carine made a very interesting remark on her second or third slide, when she said that relief operations have an influence on the genesis of new socio-political and religious practices. This shows that getting involved in social activities or disaster relief activities, the belief of the religious actors is also changed. Religion itself changes by the virtue of getting engaged in social issues. Therefore we have to ask, what are the new discourse religious groups trying to bring in? The Vatican under Pope Francis has released Laudato Si'. Pope Francis was criticized for its release, because he could not speak as a scientist. Critics said climate change is best left to the scientists; let them give a scientific solution. So why is the Pope or the Catholic Church getting involved in it? But it is very interesting to look what the differences are in their discourses, what Pope Francis is trying to say complementary to the discourse of the scientists. Here we have a religious group getting involved in the public sphere, trying to introduce a discourse, new kinds of narrative, and also new institutions that may not be situated within the realm of the state, and the state might not be able to control them.

I think when we talk of religious involvement, it may not be always positive. Sometimes the state might abuse its power, but in many places, particularly places with democratically elected governments, it is the state that has the mandate to take measures. The state has the mandate to channelize disaster relief, to make sure that help is available equally to everybody. Buddhist-based relief projects may be able to raise donations (dāna), but are the offerings redistributed only to Buddhist victims, or are they also used to support victims from other religious groups. This question has to be addressed. Although we should not assume that the state's actions are always right, we still need to admit that the state has the "mandate" and responsibility to address social and humanitarian issues. Religions might have the trust of the majority of the people, but do they have the same kind of "mandate"?

If we return to the issue of the reinterpretation of religious texts we see that it connects, for instance, to the question of how the concept of dāna is used, or how the social teachings or the response to climate change of the Catholic Church were developed which Carine and Jayeel spoke about. On the other hand, newly developed intrareligious interpretations are influenced by the increasing instances of interreligious dialogue. How are interreligious dialogues addressing theological issues alongside historical issues in a given community, especially memories of conflicts which most communities have? This is an important question, too.

And finally, we have to include one more pressing issue into our discussion, namely the impact of globalization. Ahmad spoke about interreligious dialogue, but I do like to know how Muslims in Indonesia today respond to the threat of global terrorism. All religions discussed today are what we call "world religions," this means they have global outreach and transcend the boundaries of single nation in the activities. How would you interpret the influence of globalization if you look again from this ankle at your respective case studies?

I will end here. I have pointed out a few of issues and raised questions we could now discuss, but perhaps our presenters, panelists and the participants from the floor have a different perspec-

tive on these issues. Therefore I would like to give the microphone to our six panelists. Briefly introduce yourself and give us your comments and questions!

Lina: Good morning everyone, I am Lina Tan from the Philippines. I teach economics at Ateneo de Manila University. I have learnt a lot from today's presentations and I am really impressed by the different perspective of sociology. Since I was asked to share my opinion, I would like to add an economical point of view to the discussion. I specialize in environmental economics, particularly research on water and watershed , which brings me close to, the papers on climate change in the Philippines and on Myanmar. I have conducted a study on the preservation of the water shed in Cagayan de Oro, a large city in the southern Philippines on the northern part of the island Mindanao. The research looked into policy advocacy, while trying to introduce payment for environmental services that would benefit the preservation of the watershed.

Payment for environment services would support people on the upstream who take comparatively more measure to preserve the water shed than people on the downstream including the industries in Cagayan de Oro, and thus balance the responsibilities between both sides. During the research project I found that churches play a very important role. I have been working in Cagayan de Oro since the late 1990s, but at first without any involvement with the Catholic Church. When our group first presented its results in order to help local parties to work on the issue, we had only about 25 people listening to it.

Years later a media person from Cagayan de Oro introduced me to the social development ministry of the diocese and of the arch diocese and he organized another seminar. Although there were only three days for the preparation, they organized a big hall, packed by people, different stakeholders, participants from the local and national government, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the local chamber of commerce, a number of NGOs, and academics. Later the bishop of Cagayan de Oro would support us extensively and take on this project to establish the Cagayan de Oro river basin management council. This shows what a difference the involvement of churches can make, and also that many undocumented projects of active involvement are being pursued.

Ranjana: Thank you very much! We will proceed to the next panelist, but I would like to ask you to restrict yourself to five minutes and make your point clear.

Huyhn Mui: Hello everybody, I am Huyhn Mui from Vietnam. I spent fifteen years in Japan until 1977 and work in Hanoi since then. I am very glad to be here with you and join this very interesting discussion. While economic factors just mentioned by Lina also influence the development of democracy, I would say, in Indonesia the dialogue between religions is also a way to democracy. In the Philippines you consider the problems stemming from climate change social injustice, and I think this is important and urges people to think together with a national perspective in mind.

The report from Thailand about the lack of loving kindness in

Buddhism, however, surprised me. I think that in Thailand there are still two kinds of Buddhism, the nationalized and another in the countryside. Today we heard mostly about the nationalized form. Looking at it from a different perspective, this is exactly why religion is so important in the advancement of democracy in Thailand. In the case of Myanmar Carine was speaking about donation and how to help victims of natural disasters and war. But could you also tell us about the influence of Buddhism and Christianity on Myanmar's latest steps towards democracy? Of course, both will have to play an important role in the improvement of dialogue.

In a socialist country like Vietnam religion is not considered as important, but Buddhism in Vietnam has very different characteristics, too. I am a Buddhist but I never go to the temple, because I know there is no real merit for me, since the temples are nationalized and not really committed to the teaching. Still Buddhism in Vietnam is very strong and a part of the daily life of the people. Buddhism has a long tradition, like Catholicism, which now joined the ecological movement. Now they do consider environmental problems as problems of social injustice and fight them on a national level. I think the presentations today showed that we all care about the religious responses to social issues, but we are also thinking about religious contributions to democracy, love and dialogue.

Ranjana: Thank you so much!

Jane: So it is my turn? I am Jane Toribio from the Philippines, like Lina. Good morning to everybody! Of course, sharing in this room especially on the matters discussed is such a special opportunity, and I am nervous. But thank you for giving me this opportunity! I would like to share an idea that came to me from the presentations of our friends here from Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, and Indonesia. As I observed in the papers, in Myanmar and the Philippines we find similarities when it comes to the responses of the religious sector to social change. While it is usually said that church and state are separated in most of the Asian countries, we can see the high extent to which faith-based organizations have an impact on issues relating to social change. Usually their major role is to foster the socio-economic welfare of the population, and they indeed have an effect on social change as well as on mitigating the effects of climate change. For the Buddhists, as reported in the research of two of our friends here, I would suggest that they very much share the same emphasis Christians in the Philippines and Myanmar were putting on issues of globalization, environmental degradation and the fight against corruption in their countries. Although, it seems, there will always be differences between the Buddhists and the Christians, they are not so much different when it comes to political attitudes. I learned a lot about the culture and the activities of the religious sectors in the four countries that we have heard about today. Those were my thoughts, and I hand over the mike to the kin next to me.

Jakfar: Thank you, Jane. Let me introduce myself, I am Jakfar. I am studying political science in Japan for about 10 years. I found the presentation on the Philippines especially interesting, since we in Indonesia also struggle with many environmental problems, especially problems caused by human misconduct such as illegal logging, the burning down of the jungle and intensive mining. Since natural disasters such as typhoons or floods are often seen as the will of god or destiny, many people seem take them as unavoidable. So I am wondering what urged the Philippine Catho-

lic Church to respond to such natural disasters and address them in an additional movement to their religious movement. This would be my first question. My second question is about the concrete effects of this movement? Do people actually consider the impact of natural disaster and how to respond to them more often as a result of the movement? And then I would like to know from Jayeel whether he thinks that this faith-based movement could be transformed into a more formal or systematic approach, perhaps in the form of a regulation or formal education program. As we know Japan experiences many earthquakes and tsunami and therefore has established a system for disaster response. Thank you!

Mya: Hello! My name is Mya. I am an Indonesian living in Tokyo. I would like to ask Vichak about the relation between majority and minority groups in Thailand and also about Buddhism's relation to the state. I think that the countries of Southeast Asia share diversity as a characteristic and have to face the problems arising from this diversity including the realm of religion. In Indonesia we have developed Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the state. It consists of five principles and the first of them is to believe in the one and only god. The word god here refers to all the gods in the religions that are recognized in Indonesia. Achmad mentioned that there are five recognized religions in Indonesia. In Thailand, you said, there are three pillars of the country, namely nation, religion, and monarchy. My question is, what does "religion" refer to? If it refers to Buddhism alone, how are minority religions in Thailand dealt with, and how often do conflicts between majority and minority religions arise in Thailand? Also how do Thai Buddhists think about the ten percent share of Muslims in the population? Thank you!

Ui Shiori: I am teaching at Rikkyo University in Tokyo, but my long-term background is with a Japanese health-sector NGO, the Asian Health Institute. The countries I have been most involved with are Cambodia and Mindanao in the Philippines. The presentations today were very interesting, since they were portraying religion as a motivation or driving force for helping others to sustain life and peace, whereas the same religion may also be used (or manipulated) to cover up a hidden agenda of claims to more power and more resources. This is a common situation in many countries. Actually, it is not religion that matters, but the power relations in the struggle for land and resources. The leaders of the establishment call for an interfaith dialogue among Christians and Muslims. But the common people have actually been living there together for a long time in peace. It is a matter of the development of social justice and equity, and unless that issue is solved in parallel, conflicts will persist in the name of religion.

Therefore, collaboration with development NGOs and people's organizations is very important. My first question to all presenters is this: How do you and your organization collaborate with POs and development NGOs? Furthermore, how do you create space for working together to solve concrete urgent issues? Could climate change and disaster relief, or any other issue be entry points

for bringing different sectors together? Lastly, one question I would like to ask Carine. You high-lighted different types of social donation trends referring to the differences between Christian and Buddhist doctrines. But how would the position of a group in society, such as, extreme margin-alization and oppression, or the deprivation of their land or freedom, influence donation behavior at large? Did you find any similarities in the social donation behavior and trends, for example in response to natural disasters?

Ranjana: Thanks to all panelists for their comments and questions! Now, I would like to get a re-sponse from the presenters. Since the last question was directed at Carine, I would like her to respond to the question, and other comments and questions she received. Carine, please!

Carine: I think there is social pressure to keep on donations if you are not affected by the disaster whether you are wealthy or not. For a wealthy person, however, it does not really matter, because he/she keeps making donations at his/her own level. It is important to be seen and recognized as a donor. And when donations become politicized like in situations of armed conflict, I think, donat-ing becomes taking part in the political struggle. Then the political aspect of the donation may take over the religious aspect. However, in the case of natural disasters the situation is different. By the way, I could have given examples of Christian NGOs that responded and also managed to get ac-cess to the area, but regarding the collection of donations, I assumed them less relevant, since they did not have similar networks and state-based support as Buddhist-based groups.

One example would have been CARITAS who was working very quietly. Still a few of their volunteers were jailed because the church would not protect them. On the contrary, I did not hear about any Buddhist relief worker getting arrested; the Buddhist groups were still more visible even when they were formally blocked by the State, too, which denied the scale of the disaster. This would be my understanding of how the position of a certain religion influences its access and se-curity. The Buddhist-based relief projects have represented the area, but they are usually less con-nected to international organizations and relief operations than Christian-based groups. Meanwhile churches are familiar with the NGO model and tend to be more professionalized in their relief operations, whereas the Buddhist networks are totally disconnected from professionalized NGOs. Nonetheless they are more efficient because of their social capital and because of the respect they inspire in local authorities and the fear that keeps individuals from going against a monk. No po-liceman in Myanmar would want to arrest a monk. I guess, the same can be said about Thailand. It would be extremely bad for his karma. Therefore the status of Buddhist monks is very strong.

An individual interfering with Buddhist-based relief work would be considered to have commit-ted a religious crime. Whoever is trying to order the punishment of a monk would have to be very clever. Supporters of the state and local authorities do not want to find themselves in this situation. They rather force the media not to report on Buddhist monks' misconduct or crack down on some non-Buddhist relief worker.

Vichak: I think I already addressed the issue of majority vs. minority. I think that is actually a very big problem in Thailand, because we tend to think that 95% of the population is Buddhist. And we are proud of that. We use these numbers as a reason for the promotion of the Buddhist belief in school education or even for the performance of rituals and ceremonies in a state context. Our national holidays are exclusively based on the Buddhist calendar, also with reference to the exist-ence of Buddhist majority.

Seen from this perspective, our education comes close to brainwashing, and we use it also as a means to assimilate other religions. To give one example, in the south we have a Muslim population, but it is given the same education as in other regions for the purpose of assimilation. Even though we have tribal people in the north, we use the same education to assimilate them, too. They are required to have a Buddhist statue in the classroom and say Buddhist prayers. I think this shows that we Thai Buddhists are not in the least sensitive to the diversity of cultures in our country.

Our prime minister gives really bad statements about minorities. You may have heard the news about the bombing in Bangkok last year. One of the junta leaders related it to the deportation of a group of Uighurs by the Chinese government. There is no sensitivity to diversity in our culture. I think what we have to do in Thailand, and I am part of this movement of Buddhist education and activism, is to try to reinterpret what we know about the Buddhist teachings. Only then will we be able to see a possibility that Buddhism may become part of the democratic movement as well as the human rights movement.

Another example is the issue of ordination for bhikkhuni. In Thailand the mainstream of Theravada Buddhism uses an interpretation of the sutras that denies the ordination of women. We need to reinterpret the texts! We have to say that a variety of ways of interpretation exists to enable us to argue with them and have dialogue. And finally we would make clear, that the refuge to one interpretation is no good reason against women's ordination. Another good example are the teachings about marriage and about karma, which have become a big obstacle to democracy and human right. We really need to consider a lot of situations in our movement to liberate Buddhism from the status quo and also from the idea of serving the "higher good" which I mentioned in my presentation.

I think that is very important. For example, if you meditate you are supposed to meditate for yourself, to work on yourself. But there is a phrase translating into "meditate for the king." How so? So you meditate for your parents, for example? You give merit to someone else, to someone other than yourself, "higher" than yourself? We do need to reinterpret these notions as well. We would basically say that you meditate for an actual situation of your life, and not of other people's life. It is not for something else. But it is for that particular case, particular karma, and particular situation so that you can learn something from it.

Ranjana: Thank you, Vichak! Yes, Jayeel!

Jayeel: So many questions to all of us! I will try to connect my response to Jakfar's questions and to the things that have been said just now. I think it all boils down to the condition of secularism, as Ranjana correctly pointed out. I suppose in peninsular Southeast Asia most countries have official religions. Only Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia do not have state religions, at least legally.

The Philippines is officially a secular state, a secular society. It only happens to be the case that Catholicism is the predominant religion. But in spite of the country's secularism, the Catholic Church has a long history of being a political organization, dating back to the authoritarian regime of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. It was the church that drew people to the democratic cause in the 1980s. It was, however, not as easy as Jakfar suggested. In fact, when martial law was declared in 1972, the Catholic Church supported the dictatorship, perhaps, pretty much in the same man-

ner Buddhism in Thailand was and is supportive of the existing regimes. At that time the Church thought the country needed discipline in order to progress. That was actually the slogan. In order for progress to be achieved, the nation had to be disciplined. And this thinking seems to have a comeback these days.

But I only will lose time if I talk about the current regime and our very famous president. I think that the actions of the Church in relation to climate change are very consistent with the political role that the Church has played since the 1970s or 1980s: They talk about issues. Theologians call it the "prophetic tradition" of Catholic Church. It also exists in Protestantism, but is more acute, at least in my view, in Catholicism. The "prophetic tradition" approaches climate change not as a scientific problem, but as a problem of social justice. And if you frame it as a problem of social justice which is most pressing on the marginalized and poor then the church is supposed to raise its voice. Mainly it is a moral issue, since the social is inherently moral for the Catholic Church.

Jakfar raised a very important question; does it have a real effect on people? Lina earlier said, it might have, since fragmented efforts of various communities have their own impact. But if climate change is a national concern then the impact must also be assessed at the national level, and I am not sure to what extent the discourse already reached that level. But why didn't it? I failed to mention the following in my presentation: Even though seventy-two percent of the population think that climate change is a very urgent "concern for the Philippine people," the top three concerns of them, according to a very recent survey, are income, the war on illegal drugs and employment. The environment is not among them. I find this quite paradoxical for a country that is supposed to be the sixth most vulnerable to climate change in the world. Therefore the impact is not felt yet at the national level.

Therefore any effort to address it at the national level, one has to come not just from the Catholic Church but also from political leaders themselves. Climate change as a political issue is beholden to the personality of the current leaders. If it is not important to the leaders, it will not be put on the political agenda. And why should it be an issue? Because sooner or later another catastrophe is going to happen! Cagayan de Oro may be prepared through its efforts at the local level, but other cities are not. Therefore I would like to appeal to religious organizations to voice their claims with regard to climate change even louder so that yet more people get the chance to reconsider their views. Even to me as a sociologist, not just because I am a Christian, climate change is an issue of social justice.

Achmad: Thank you very much! I have enjoyed all of the comments and the presentations by my colleagues. Since I have only five minutes I would like to respond generally. I mentioned earlier that in Indonesia both groups, the one promoting dialogue and the one promoting violence, have obtained room for their arguments because of changing political conditions, that is, because of a new "political opportunity structure." But the structure changed because of the absence of a powerful state, right? People who are promoting dialogue try to use this opportunity for dialogue and religion to promote peace. But the others proclaim danger and try to get rid of their "enemies."

Responding to all of your comments and questions I would propose that in public life religion has basically has two main functions. The function is that of the social or ethical critic; this includes cases on how to respond to climate change and social justice issues. The other function of religion, and in most cases this is what is happening, would be its being an instrument for the construction

of legitimacy. When religion is used as instrument of legitimacy, it is used to support the state, the regime, or the rich and businesses. In this context religion will be less able to function as social or ethical critic. And that is the starting point of corruption.

But who are the supporters of interreligious dialogue and democracy in Indonesia today? They are religious leaders, groups and individuals who promote religion in public life basically as a form of social and ethical criticism. Their criticism might imply a theological reinterpretation of teachings towards religious pluralism in society. People who use religion in public life for social and ethical criticism define the other, the Kafir, the non-believer very differently from the proponents of Jihad who view all non-Muslims as Kafir (unbelievers). The latter see them as potential enemies of whom they should get rid of. But the leaders define Kafir in Arabic as having the same root as the word "to hide (a seed in the ground)" or "to cover" in English. Therefore anybody – and this is the reinterpretation of a person without theological training – whose heart and mind are "covered from the truth" is meant by the word Kafir. It is not necessarily restricted to the meaning "non-Muslim." To the contrary, even Muslims can show a degree of "kafir-ness" when their heart and mind are covered from truth. Based on this interpretation, non-believers cannot be judged as Kafir if their heart and mind are open to truth.

Therefore I would say, if we actually use religion in public life as way of social criticism, it can also function in terms of theology and lead to the reinterpretation of religious doctrines. By the way we treat our neighbors, colleagues and friends regardless of their religious background we can prove that religion makes a positive contribution to plural society and that this is the real function of religion in public life. When used for social criticism religions, no matter if Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity, will promote peace. But if religion is used as instrument for construction of legitimacy any religion and even atheism will lead to violent conflict. That is my general response to you all.

But I would like to add – borrowing a term of a friend at the Union Theological Centre in New York – that interreligious dialogue will be only effective if practiced not as theological discussion among religious leaders but as a discussion focusing on the "soteriological project." That is the project of salvation from natural disasters, poverty, health and other issues that are the common problems of society. Interreligious dialogue should focus on what religions and religious actors can contribute to the solution of the common problems of society. Theological reinterpretation is important, but not sufficient. Thank you very much for your time!

Ranjana: Thanks to all presenters for their response! I will now open the discussion to questions from the floor. I see we already got reactions. Yes, please!

Stephanie: Thank you for the opportunity to ask a question and respond to the session! First, I want to congratulate SGRA and AFC 3 for this round-table discussion that is very interesting as can be seen from the many raised hands of people who want to ask questions. I would like to react to the question of Jakfar. I am Stephanie Guilles from the Philippines, member of the organizing committee of SGRA Philippines, but I am also the chairwoman of the emergency architects of the United Architects of the Philippines (UAP Emergency Architects). This group was established three years ago when super typhoon Yolanda had struck and devastated the southern part of the country. Since I am an urban planner (with the license number 911) it was an emergency response that confirmed my advocacy in disaster management.

I think that faith, not "religious affiliation," plays a major role in getting people involved in emergency response. For example, the humanitarian NGO Taiwan Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation supported our relief work immediately after typhoon Haiyan had struck and helped to rebuild Christian churches, schools and evacuation shelters. In the private sector, there was a lot of emergency response and foreign aid pouring in. In the public sector, however, the local government units (LGU) sometimes get in conflict with the national government.

Our group is active in the private sector and went to affected areas to distribute construction tool kits to help the families rebuild their homes. We started to give seminars on disaster resilient design and even now students of architecture and engineering are very interested in this advocacy. We also formed the Disaster Risk Reduction network, which consists of more than fifty NGOs in the Philippines and is tying up with foreign organizations like Oxfam, UN Habitat and others.

In response to the discussion today I think that beyond the analysis of religion being used as legitimizing tool or for getting people involved in social issues, the personal convictions of each individual like values of charity, justice and generosity are more influential than one's religious affiliation or the official social doctrine of one's religion when it comes to considering concrete help to poor and vulnerable communities.

Ranjana: Thank you very much for the wonderful comment! Please keep it brief and if you have some specific questions you can also address speakers directly.

Participant: I am teaching in a college in West Borneo, Indonesia and I specialize in multicultural education. My question is addressed to Achmad Munjid. His talk about interreligious conflicts is really interesting because in Indonesia the war is real, involving a lot of physical violence and destruction of worship place. Psychologically, we live in a digital world, too. Facebook comments become extremely ugly on a daily basis, accusations of others as "blasphemous non-believers" are made too easily, especially among the young generation. It was in response to these conflicts that the government started to promote multicultural education at schools, which also relates to institutionalized interreligious discussions. How do you think schools in Indonesia can actually take on part in interreligious dialogue? Or, do you think that people especially in the formal education system are not yet ready to have interreligious dialogue because it is too tabooed to talk about in schools, especially in primary education?

Ranjana: Is there anybody else who has a question for Achmad?

Participant: I understand that most of the presenters would not want to involve religions in the political sphere, or in some way politicized. But if we look at countries like the United Arab Emirates,

Malaysia or Brunei Darussalam, we see that their legislation is based on Islamic law. Therefore I would like to know under which circumstances and with regard to what aspects religions should get involved in government? Of course, there are reasons for and against it…

Ranjana: Any more questions related to Indonesia? OK. Both of you be brief.

Participant: Thank you. I am from Indonesia and would like to ask Ahmad's opinion on an issue of minority-majority relations. These days Indonesia faces the election for the Jakarta governor. Although I am Muslim I feel that it is unfair that most Indonesian leaders are Muslim and therefore the president or the government and, of course, governor would have no other religion than Islam. What do you think about it? And how can we apply secularism here? We try to separate the religious from the political point of view, but as Mya has said before, we actually do have the principle of Pancasila. Does this mean that we have not applied secularism in our country? We have assembled five different religions but are still predominately concerned with Islam.

Numata Sadaaki: My name is Numata. I am a retired ambassador. I served in Jakarta from 1976 to 1978, then in Pakistan through the events of 9/11. On the basis of that, I have a comment and a question. My comment: The people who need most to listen to this dialogue are the Japanese public in general because we are not very religious. Over forty years of diplomatic experience taught me that we need a much better understanding of the roles religions play in various countries. My question: Listening to Achmad I could not help but compare it to what I experienced in Pakistan. In Pakistan there is no interreligious dialogue because Islam is the one unifying factor of the country. Still they are struggling to unify that country on that basis. But I have a very specific question: Many Japanese have this image of Islam as a very radical religion, giving rise to jihad, Islamic fundamentalism (Quran-centric Islam) and so forth. In the context of Pakistan and Afghanistan, Quran-centrism has been playing quite a role in this regard. But I also hear that in Indonesia these days, the Quran-centrism is playing a somewhat constructive role as well. Why the difference? Could you comment on that?

Ranjana: Now, Achmad, please.

Achmad: Okay, thank you very much for all the wonderful questions to me! About multicultural education in Indonesia: Religious instruction in Indonesian public schools was, actually, optional until 1965. Only after 1965, the year when the regime started to combat communism religious instruction in public schools became compulsory. Let alone, it was taught in what we call a "mono-religious model." Islam is taught by Muslim teachers, Christianity by Christian teachers, Hinduism by Hindu teachers, etc. In this way students do not learn about other religions. Although this religious instruction has been conducted in public school for years, it still results in many misunderstandings when interreligious problems have to be tackled.

When politics and the economy work normal, everybody is fine. But with approaching elections an unstable economic situation lets us search for somebody we can blame, such as "the Chinese

who have more money." Or, because many leaders in strategic positions during the early years of the "new order" were Christian, "it must be the Christians who created the problem." Such opinions arise because we do not know each other. Now, I have been promoting the idea of an interreligious model instead of the mono-religious model for religious education. But so far, only a few people heard me.

I also wrote about the question, Mira mentioned it, whether Indonesian Muslim scholars are allowed to say "Merry Christmas!" to their Christian friends and neighbors. That really bothered me and I looked for the texts and their interpretation. There is no such thing like a prohibition to do so. It is just an interpretation of an interpretation of a wrong interpretation. For sure, there is no single text or fact prohibiting it, but people reinterpreted text in that way, and the public just accepted it. This is one result of the mono-religious model instruction in public school that does not recognize multiculturalism. Therefore I think, although it is already late, that we should start to teach our children with the interreligious model. Our own religion is important but at the same time we need to have basic information about other religions because we live with people having different religious backgrounds. Only then we can solve our problems as neighbors, as friends, and as colleague. Not as believers vs. non-believers. Because when we start to demonize everybody else, it seems to give us the legitimacy to get rid of them. The question is not whether or not we are ready; there are already too many problems. Se we should start, whether we are ready or not.

The second and the third questions were related to secularization. I would add to Ranjana's elaboration on it, that secularization is understood by different and in different contexts scholars differently. In Europe, it is basically considered to mean the separation between the Church and state. But in the US it is more related to the privatization of religion. Religion is still there; even on the banknotes it says, "in God we trust." But how could the notion of God appear on money if the state and the Church are separated? But when people talk about religion in America, they talk about how religion should function in public, not how to preach others by using the bible or another religious text. So in the US, secularization is more privatization of religion.

But in Indonesia politics are based on the notion of Pancasila, Mya mentioned earlier, which basically means "belief in god." Therefore, technically speaking, it is impossible to separate religion from politics, or to push it into the private sphere. Yet the Indonesia also experiences a secularization process in the sense that the religious authority has to face other authorities in public life. This led to a diversification of authority in public life. Religion is still there but at the same time TV is there, too. Facebook is there, as a source of authority. Based on the notion of Pancasila we have developed our own situation from which secularization should be understood and applied as a term differently. European countries have their history. American society has its own history. We Asians have our own history. There is no one single concept fitting everybody. We need to develop our own interpretations and practice them.

As for the question of Mr. Numata: You noted that Quran-centric Islam has played a constructive role Indonesia in promoting Islam in public life, very differently from Pakistan. The point here is that Islam is understood first of all not as a political system, but rather as cultural system. In Quran-centrism, we learn religion, we practice religion but the idea of creating an Islamic state is abandoned. We do not talk about that anymore. But the Quran-centric Islam imported from the Middle East, Pakistan and India is very political. It holds that if you want to be a good Muslim, you first of all need to have an Islamic state. But this interpretation is very marginal in Indonesia.

In general we are over that. History demonstrates, even the history as inscribed in the Quran, that there was no such thing as an Islamic state. Mainstream scholars in Indonesia, I think, agree with this position. They would say it creates more problems than it provides solutions in our modern society. But thanks for your question!

Ranjana: Thank you very much! That was a lot of questions. We will continue with the questions about Myanmar.

Htay Lwin: I am Doctor Lwin from Myanmar. I think I am the only one from Myanmar here. I lived in Thailand for eight years and was working in Malaysia for three years. Then I obtained my Ph.D. in in Japan and was working here for twenty years. Now, two years ago I returned to my country and I opened a medical center. I was also elected as general secretary of the Myanmar-Japan association. Therefore I thank Carine very much for her presentation about Myanmar.

I do not have questions, but would like to comment on your research. Many Southeast Asian countries use religions for political purposes, to increase their power and also to foster their economy. As you mentioned for the case of Kachin state, land possession is a central issue when religions are used to obtain natural resources and political power. As an NGO person and general secretary of a large management by objectives (MBO) organization I strive not to take on the position of either side in a conflict, but to remain neutral and search for correct interpretations. During the internal war in the region both sides used religion and related arguments for their purposes and also in order to charge for resources. They charged other people, but never their Christian brothers.

Myanmar people are free to choose any religion. Therefore we have too many holidays, because we keep the Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and Hindu festivals. I think, in Southeast Asia many people use the political power of religion, but donations may also bestow independence from religions on the donors. I, for instance, donate to Christian churches, Muslim mosques and also to Buddhist temples. Thank you very much!

Ranjana: Thank you! Carine, would you just give us a brief answer?

Carine: OK. I do agree that the military did not necessarily target churches deliberately, therefore I was also thinking about the narrative created by the churches and about their perception or feeling of being under attack. But, yes, both sides have been using their own strategic arguments. The military responded when they were accused of activities that were part of the military operations. Of course, the state has never made an official statement against minority religions; in Myanmar freedom of religion generally does exist even though the Constitution of 2008 recognizes Buddhism as the religion of the majority. But it is obviously not seen as state religion anymore. Thank you very much!

Participant: I am a university student and I would like to ask Vichak a question. My research focused on Muslim Thai students studying in Indonesia, and for me it was a surprise that the feel as "insiders" and "part of the majority" in the Indonesian community, especially because of their social interaction in a society with a majority of Muslims. They say it is not good for them to stay in their country. What would you say about the Muslim minority in Thailand when they show such

reactions? What are Thai Buddhists as the majority doing to keep Thai Muslims as Thai citizens? Because when I asked them, "Are you Thai?" many would answer "Not Thai, but Malay," even though they were living in Thailand before coming to Indonesia for study.

Ranjana: Vichak, you have to be very brief in your response, since we have to close the session. Please!

Vichak: I think that is a very important issue in Thailand because the conflict between Muslims and Buddhists has intensified in the south lately, although the conflict, actually, was not a religious conflict at the beginning. It is a conflict about history, and religion was brought into the picture later. This issue is very closely related to the things I said earlier about "Thai-ness." The nation state has developed this notion of "Thai-ness" that is related to Buddhism and also related to the king. If you are a Thai you are supposed to be good Buddhist and, of course, good royalist. In a global perspective this is very interesting. I studied Buddhism in Thailand and in the West. Western Buddhists seem to be very liberal and democratic; they would choose Obama over Trump. But in Thailand, it's totally different. That is why Thai Buddhists do not really care about issues of cultural diversity, human gratitude, and social justice. They are not sensitive to them, because they already are "good Buddhists."

And then I think it relates to the issue of dialogue. I try to encourage dialogue in the classroom, but it is very difficult because you have to overcome the issue of freedom of speech first. Because Buddhism in Thailand is very institutionalized being critical of Buddhism means to be critical about everything, including monarchy and education, including the whole brainwashing that you receive through the system. And that is very dangerous because questioning things leads you very fast to jail. Even within Buddhism itself we need a dialogue because all teachings need to be reinterpreted. We need to reconsider the aspect of compassion instead of being attached to the dogmatic status quo of Buddhism.

I think these comments also lead to the issue of secularization. Right now we are in a very critical time since the end of the present king's era is very close. At the same time we still are under a dictatorship with the will to control the power in this transition, and we do not really know what to do. Therefore we need to discuss the future and how to separate Buddhism from the state, as well as, how to bring diverse voices into our politics and foster democracy. That would be my comments. Thank you!

Ranjana: I am sure there are a lot of questions left unanswered, but we have to finish the session at 12:30. Therefore I would like to invite our "official" commentator, Erik, now to give us his summary and closing words.

Concluding Comment

Erik Schicketanz

The four papers and subsequent panel discussion have addressed many different aspects of the relationship between religion and various problems the societies of contemporary Southeast Asia are facing. While the panel intended to focus on ways in which religion can contribute to solving these problems, much time was spent, ironically, talking about how religion actually causes or at least exacerbates issues. This might be unavoidable, since in order to discuss possible ways forward one has to first take account of the problems and their contributing factors in the present. While religion can and has to be part of the solution, we still have to recognize the ways in which it is also part of the problem. This ambiguous nature of religion was reflected in the four panel presentations. Carine Jaquet's paper exemplified this perspective by providing a case study of how religion solves some problems (the response to cyclone Nargis or the distribution of aid to displaced populations) while simultaneously exacerbating others (distributing aid based on ethnic or religious affiliation and thus deepening political rifts).

One particular issue, which I see as central to all papers today, is the relationship between religion and the nation state. Nation states are in fact a relatively new phenomenon in history, having emerged and then come to dominate the globe only in the last two hundred years. Historians have drawn attention to the profound changes brought about by their emergence and the way they created new forms of identification with the state among the people living within its borders. The multi-ethnic empires that dominated the world before the advent of the nation state rarely showed strong interest in actively shaping the identities of their inhabitants as long as they remained loyal to the political center. In contrast, nation states seek to create a unified national identity shared by the entire citizenry. Often, religion plays a core role in the formative process of nation states and national identities. Vichak Panich's paper provided a critical analysis of a particularly clear contemporary case of this conflation of religion and nation in Thailand, where the triad of king, religion and nation forms a hermetically closed space.

In regard to the collusion between a particular religious denomination and the nation state, scholars have used the term "confessionalization" of national identities, that is, the exclusive identification of national identity with a particular religious identity – for instance, Catholic in the case of modern France or Spain or Protestant in the case of modern Germany and England.[11] In the contemporary world, this phenomenon currently manifests itself, for instance, in the Hindu nationalist movement of India or the debates about the place of Islam in European societies. While many societies today are consciously defined in more pluralistic ways, the tendency to conflate the nation with a particular religious denomination persists, as Achmad Munjid has also shown in his paper about efforts of religious groups to Islamize Indonesian society before and after the fall of Suharto.

In all likelihood, nation states will not disappear any time soon and before we have a better alternative; their disappearance might also not be desirable as they command organizational capabilities crucial for addressing the most pressing problems. When the nation state works well, it takes its obligations towards the citizenry seriously and can foster a strong sense of solidarity among those who belong to it. Problems arise in particular when states work for the interests of only a select few or promote exclusive forms of identity politics. For this reason, religions should not (nor would they in any case) reject the nation state out of hand, but rather call for a reconfiguration of the relationship between state and religion. The elites of institutionalized religions have tended to provide legitimacy and justification for established political and economic interests. While local bonds tie them to particular groups and states, religions such as Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity

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11 On the issue of religion and the formation of nation-states in Europe, see for instance Marx 2003.

Concluding Comment

also possess strong universalist elements which transcend the narrow confines of ethnic, political and national borders.

The historian Prasenjit Duara recently pointed to the potential of what he calls "dialogical transcendence" in addressing the pressing issues of our times. "Dialogical transcendence," he suggests, emphasizes the open and plural nature of religions, which calls into question the exclusionary logic inherent in the nation state (Duara 2015). While religions should stay engaged with the nation state, it is time to reactivate their universal dimension, which has the advantage of being able to mobilize forces that are locally rooted and also connected to wider transnational networks at the same time. The universal aspirations of religions provide a broader perspective than that which is permitted by the nation state and frequently bounded by its borders. As Jayeel Cornelio's discussion of the response of the Catholic Church in the Philippines to the issue of climate change has shown, religions have the potential to transcend narrow national identities and interests and address problems that can only be solved through cooperation across borders.

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Rountable Presenters (P), Moderators (M), and Discussants (D):

From left to right: Jafar Idrus Mohammad (D), Mya Dwi Rostika (D), Carine Jacquet (P), Achmad Munjid (P), Erik Schicketanz (M), Jayeel Cornelio (P), Vichak Panich (P), Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya (M), Mira Sonntag (M), Huynh Mui (D), Jane Toribio (D), Lina Palanca (D), Shiori Ui (D)

Profiles of moderators and presenters (in order of appearance):

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Carine Jaquet graduated in political science from Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and in Burmese Language from the Yangon University of Foreign Languages, she is an Associate Researcher at the Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC) in Bangkok (Thailand) where she focuses her researches on diversity, situations of armed conflict, forced migrations and the question of how religious dynamics may impact the development of civil society in Myanmar. Her recent publications include: (with Matthew J. Walton,) "Buddhism and Relief in Myanmar: Reflections on Relief as a Practice of Dana." In Buddhism and International Relief Work in Asia. Ed. by Hiroko Kawanami and Geoffret Samuel, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013;

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