

The 5th Annual Meeting of East Asian Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Religion and Science in the Global East in context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

July 11th to 13th, 2023

Technically hosted by Hokkaido University, Japan

Program

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2. Participant Instructions p.2
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I. Time Schedule

* The times stated below are all in Japan/Korea Standard Time (JST/KST). Participants are kindly requested to verify their local time.

Day 0: July 11, 2023

21:00 - 22:30 Executive Council Meeting (closed)

Day 1: July 12, 2023

9:10 - 9:20 Opening Ceremony
9:20 - 9:30 Welcome Speech
9:30 - 11:10 Session 1 to Session 3
11:10 - 12:50 Session 4 to Session 6
19:00 - 20:00 Keynote Speech
20:00 - 21:40 Session 7 to Session 9

Day 2: July 13, 2023

9:30 - 11:10 Session 10
11:10 - 12:50 Session 11 to Session 13
13:00 - 14:00 Closing Ceremony and General Assembly Meeting

II . Participation Guide

For All Participants:

Zoom Link

The Zoom link for the Annual Meeting will be sent via email on July 10th. If you do not receive it, please contact the EASSSR Administration Office at easssr2021@gmail.com.

Display Name

When joining the Zoom session, please change your display name to “Name (Affiliation).”

Breakout Rooms

Each session will be conducted in the format of Zoom “breakout rooms”. Once you enter the Zoom session, please select and move to the desired session (breakout room) of your choice.

Technical Support

In each breakout room, there will be at least one staff member with a host role. If you encounter any technical issues during the session, please inform the corresponding staff member orally or through the chat function.

For Moderators and Presenters:

Presentation Time

The allocated time for each presentation is 15 minutes, followed by a 10-minute Q&A session, totaling 25 minutes. Presenters are kindly requested to strictly adhere to the allotted time, ensuring their presentation fits within the 25-minute timeframe.

Sessions with Fewer Presenters

For sessions with fewer than four presenters, it is permissible to extend the time allocated per presenter. In such cases, please follow the moderators discretion.

Casual Discussions

In addition to the designated reporting rooms, multiple breakout rooms will be available for casual discussions. If you wish to continue discussions or exchange information after the session, please make use of those rooms.

III. Sessions and Papers

Day 1: July 12

Session 1 - Session 3 / 9:30 - 11:10 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 1

Religion, Science and Technologyp.10

Moderator: chao wang (shaanxi normal university)

1. Re-Making Chinese Islam in the Arab Gulf: Bitcoin as a Way of Resistance
 - *Yuting Wang (American University of Sharjah)*
Participants local time: July 12, 4:30 - 6:10 (United Arab Emirates)
2. The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Religion 4.0 : Discussing the Applicability of Research on Digitalization and Spatial Diffusion of Chinese Islam
 - *chao wang (shaanxi normal university)*
Participants local time: July 12, 8:30 - 10:10 (China)
3. In the Bosom of Ibrahim: Health Disparity and Ethnoreligious Space among Older Adults in Xinjiang
 - *Yousef Yang (Sun Yat-sen University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 8:30 - 10:10 (China)
4. When Science Makes Sense: The Use of Science as an Instance of Meaning among Non-Religious Young Quebecers (Canada)
 - *Jean-Philippe Perreault (Université Laval)*
Participants local time: July 11, 20:30 - 22:10 (Canada)

Session 2

The Intersection of Religion, Society, and Policy in East Asia (1)p.13

Moderator: André Laliberté (University of Ottawa)

1. Analyzing religions' impact on social policy development in East Asia: challenges of mid-level generalizations
 - *André Laliberté (University of Ottawa)*
Participants local time: July 11, 20:30 - 22:10 (Canada)
2. Does Religion Justify Economic Inequality? Salvific Merit and Meritocratic Belief
 - *Saehwan Lee (Sogang University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 9:30 - 11:10 (Korea, Republic of)
3. New Developments in the Relationship between Politics and Religion in Japan
 - *Yoshihide Sakurai (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 9:30 - 11:10 (Japan)

4. Formation of a regional base and religious activities in Chiba Prefecture by Sri Lankan used car and used parts traders in Japan
 - *Tomoko Fukuda (Chiba University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 9:30 - 11:10 (Japan)

Session 3

Religion and Health: Public Health Crises and Religious Responsesp.16

Moderator: Satoshi Abe (Kyushu University)

1. Public Health during the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran: Tensions, Ambiguity, and Commensurability in the Field
 - *Satoshi Abe (Kyushu University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 9:30 - 11:10 (Japan)
2. The Christian Response to The National Security Law In Hong Kong
 - *Ka Shing Ng (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 9:30 - 11:10 (Japan)

Day 1: July 12

Session 4 - Session 6 / 11:10 - 12:50 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 4

Theological and Philosophical Studies of East Asian Religionsp.18

Moderator: Jyi-Shii Chiou (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

1. Exegetical and Hermeneutical Diversities of Christian Canonized Scriptures: on Analysis of Bart D. Ehrmans Perspective on Paul's Doctrines in "the New Testament: a Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings"
 - *Jyi-Shii Chiou (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)*
Participants local time: July 12, 10:10 - 11:50 (Taiwan)
2. Love and Discrimination in Religious and Social Life: Thinking about CUMDA in front of Refugees
 - *Jun Pyo Kim (Research Institute for the Tamla Culture, Jeju National University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Korea, Republic of)
3. The overseas mission of Korean Protestantism
 - *SUNG YOUN CHO (Jeju National University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Korea, Republic of)
4. Silent Contention? An Empirical Study of Religious Activism in Taiwan and China (1989-2023)
 - *Ray Wang (National Chengchi University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 10:10 - 11:50 (Taiwan)

Session 5

Case Studies: Regional and Community Focus on Religion in East Asiap.21

Moderator: Megan Rogers (Duke Kunshan University)

1. Rural Areas and Religious Groups in China in the Depopulating Era: A Case Study of the Buddhist Temples in Fansi of Shanxi Province
 - *DUAN YU (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)
2. Discussion of Religious Behavior of Believers Based on Common Sense and Reason: A Case Study of Christian Practice in Rural Chinese Society.
 - *Zefu Zhang (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)
3. Reconciling Religion and Science in Urban China
 - *Megan Rogers (Duke Kunshan University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 10:10 - 11:50 (China)
4. Using Higher Education to Break the Glass Ceiling: Chinese Buddhist Nuns and their Educational Networks in the Post-Mao Era
 - *Amandine Péronnet (French Institute of Asian Research (IrAsia))*
Participants local time: July 12, 4:10 - 5:50 (France)

Session 6

Religion and the Environment in East Asiap.24

Moderator: Seil Oh (Sogang University)

1. Religion and Environmental Movements in Korea: Various Types of Eco-Spirituality and Ecological Justice
 - *Seil Oh (Sogang University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Korea, Republic of)
2. Japanese Views of Nature in Transition: Toward a Dialogue between Judeo-Christian Values and Indigenous Spirituality in Japan
 - *Kanan Kitani (Doshisha University)*
Participants local time: July 12, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)
3. Science and Faith in the Early 20th Century Chinese Pure Land Buddhism
 - *Jakub Zamorski (Jagiellonian University (Kraków))*
Participants local time: July 12, 5:10 - 6:50 (Poland)

Day 1: July 12

Keynote Speech / 19:00 - 20:00 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Moderator: Quang Hung Nguyen (VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi)

The Claim to Power Behind the Conflict of Science and Religion

Tran Van Doan

Academia Catholica, Fujen University (輔仁大學, Taiwan) &

Institut catholique du Vietnam (Học Viện Công Giáo Việt Nam)

Day 1: July 12

Session 7 - Session 9 / 20:00 - 21:40 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 7 (Closed Session)

Religion and Ecological Thoughts from a Policy Perspective

(Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University)p.27

Moderator: Francis Jae-ryong Song (Kyung Hee University)

1. Minjung Theology of Korea and Ecological Thinking: Focusing on the Theological Imagination of Ahn Byung-Mu
 - *Jongman Kim (Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University),*
 - *Andrew Eungi Kim (College of International Studies, Korea University),*

Participants local time: July 12, 20:00 - 21:40 (Korea, Republic of)
2. Climate Justice and Its Religious and Political Basis
 - *Dong-Uhn Suh (KyungHee University)*
 - *Hyun Kyoung Kim (Kyung Hee University)*

Participants local time: July 12, 20:00 - 21:40 (Korea, Republic of)
3. A Quest for the Possibility of Ecological Spirituality as the Governance and Its Ground for Ecological Civilization Transformation
 - *Myoung-ho Lee (Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University)*
 - *Francis Jae-ryong Song (Kyung Hee University)*

Participants local time: July 12, 20:00 - 21:40 (Korea, Republic of)
4. A Case Study of Faith-based Ecological Citizenship in Terms of Technology Lag: Focusing on Korea Soka Gakkai International (KSGI)
 - *Kwangsuk Yoo (Kyung Hee University)*
 - *Dongmin Kim (Kyung Hee University, Institute for Religion and Civic Culture)*

Participants local time: July 12, 20:00 - 21:40 (Korea, Republic of)

Session 8 (Closed Session)

East Asian New Religious Movements:

Innately Modern and Aspirationally Future-Orientedp.30

Moderator: Gyungwon LEE (Daejin University)

1. Enticing Prospects: The Application of Nonfungible Token Technology in Asian New Religions
 - Edward IRONS (*The Hong Kong Institute for Culture, Commerce and Religion, USA*)
Participants local time: July 12, 4:00 - 6:00 (United States)
2. A New Developmental Direction for Taiwanese Religions in the Post-COVID-19 Era: A Case Study on Online Courses Offered by I-Kuan Tao's Baoguang-Chongzheng Temple
 - Suhyun LEE (*National Chengchi University*)
Participants local time: July 12, 19:00 - 21:00 (Taiwan)
3. Religion in the Public Context: Religious Education at Tenri Schools
 - Midori HORIUCHI (*Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion, Tenri University*)
Participants local time: July 12, 20: 00 - 22:00 (Japan)
4. Traces of Chinese Taoism's Influence on Vietnamese Cao Dai Religion through the Worship of Guanshengdijun
 - Phuoc Tai Nguyen (*FPT University*)
 - Tran Phuong Chi (*Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*)
Participants local time: July 1 2, 18:00 - 20:00 (Vietnam)
5. From Human Imitations of Heavenly Machines to 3D Printing and Metamaterials- Emerging Technologies and the Technological Positivism of Daesoon Thought
 - Jason GREENBERGER (*Daejin University*)
Participants local time: July 1 2, 20:00 - 22:00 (Korea, Republic of)

Session 9 (Closed Session)

Spirituality, Science, and the Arts:

Soka Gakkai's "Life-Sized Paradigm" and Other Cases (1)p.33

Moderator: Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))

1. Pascal, the Six Senses of Buddhism, and Science: Ikeda's "Life-Sized Paradigm" After Twenty Years
 - Rosita Šorytė (*FOB (European Federation for Freedom of Belief)*)
Participants local time: July 12, 14:00 - 15:40 (Lithuania)
2. Religion, Anti-Racism, and Race in the American Soka Gakkai Association
 - Holly Folk (*Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA*)
Participants local time: July 12, 7:00 - 8:40 (United States)

3. Literature as Science of the Human Mind for Daisaku Ikeda and Soka Gakkai
 - *Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (University of Bordeaux Montaigne)*
Participants local time: July 12, 13:00 - 14:40 (France)

Day 2: July 13

Session 10 / 9:30 - 11:10 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 10 (Closed Session)

Spirituality, Science, and the Arts:

Soka Gakkai’s “Life-Sized Paradigm” and Other Cases (2)p.35

Moderator: Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))

1. Dalí’s “The Three Sphinxes of Bikini” and Soka Gakkai’s Criticism of Destructive Science
 - *Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))*
Participants local time: July 13, 2:30 - 4:10 (Italy)
2. The Fourth Industrial Revolution in Taiwan: Science Without Conscience?
 - *Juselia S.F. Lin (Taiwan institute of Economic Research)*
 - *Daniel Y.C. Lee (Portal Intellectual Property Right Group)*
Participants local time: July 13, 8:30 - 10:10 (Taiwan)

Day 2: July 13

Session 11 - Session 13 / 11:10 - 12:50 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 11

Religion, Science and Technology: The New Perspectivesp.37

Moderator: David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)

1. The Scientific Nature of the Study of Religion in the West and Asia
 - *Shunichi Miyajima (Hokkaido University (Faculty of Humanities and Human Sciences))*
Participants local time: July 13, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)
2. Non-Modern Perspectives on Science and Religion
 - *Mike Brownutt (Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge)*
Participants local time: July 13, 3:10 - 4:50 (United Kingdom)
3. Post-naturalist anthropology its implications for science and religion studies in Asia
 - *David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)*
Participants local time: July 13, 10:10 - 11:50 (Hong Kong)
4. God, Transcendence and the Human Being in the Age of Transhumanism and AI
 - *Michal Valčo (Comenius University Bratislava)*
Participants local time: July 13, 4:10 - 5:50 (Slovakia)

Session 12

The Intersection of Religion, Society, and Policy in East Asia (2)p.40

Moderator: Gang-Hua Fan (Soochow University)

1. The Growth of Mega-churches and Urban Development in Gangnam, Seoul
 - *Jang Hyung Chull (Induk University)*
Participants local time: July 13, 11:10 - 12:50 (Korea, Republic of)
2. Is the Relatively High Proportion of Religious Affiliation in Taiwan an Artifact? An Empirical Examination Using Survey Data from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan
 - *Gang-Hua Fan (Soochow University)*
Participants local time: July 13, 10:10 - 11:50 (Taiwan)
3. Enchanted Companionship and Holistic Wellbeing among Korean religious youths
 - *KYUHYUN JUNG (Sogang University)*
Participants local time: July 13, 11:10 - 12:50 (Korea, Republic of)
4. Unveiling the Complexities of Religious Perceptions in Japan: A Survey-Based Study
 - *Koki Shimizu (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 13, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)

Session 13

Case Studies: Regional and Community Focus on Religion in East Asiap.43

Moderator: Wei-hsian Chi (Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica)

1. How Does Vegetarianism Contribute to Well-Being? The Case of a Vegan Temple in Phitsanulok, Thailand
 - *Kangjian WENG (Hokkaido University)*
Participants local time: July 13, 11:10 - 12:50 (Japan)
2. Incense, Pilgrimage and Materiality: New Approach to Ritual Study
 - *Wei-hsian Chi (Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica)*
Participants local time: July 13, 10:10 - 11:50 (Taiwan)
3. The Chinese Way of Religion & Artificial Intelligence
 - *Stefania Travagnin (SOAS, University of London)*
Participants local time: July 13, 3:10 - 4:50 (United Kingdom)

Closing Ceremony and General Assembly Meeting / 13:00 - 14:00 (Japanese/Korean Time)

Session 1

Religion, Science and Technology

Moderator: chao wang (shaanxi normal university)

Re-Making Chinese Islam in the Arab Gulf: Bitcoin as a Way of Resistance

Yuting Wang (American University of Sharjah)

Abstract:

In the early writings of European missionaries and recent scholarship by historians and social scientists in the West, PRC, and elsewhere, Chinese Muslims are rightfully portrayed as minorities who survive on the margin of Chinese society. Despite the rapid economic development and urbanization in reform-era China, the ethnic economy and close-knit social networks remain prominent features of Chinese Muslim communities. These characteristics have strongly shaped the experiences of Chinese Muslims in the diaspora as they transplant ethnic businesses and reproduce ethnic networks in their new homes. Yet, this reality has greatly limited the scope of scholarship on Chinese Muslims and blindsided new phenomena that have emerged in a globalized post-modern society. This paper shifts away from the long-standing interest in culture and identity to explore the implications of the emergence of creative entrepreneurship within Chinese Muslim communities in the diaspora. Drawing on the case of transnational Chinese Muslims in Dubai, a secular Muslim-majority society that embraces neoliberal economic policies, this paper attempts to explain how a group of well-educated young Chinese Muslims with significant religious capital operate cryptocurrency enterprises as a way of resistance against the Chinese state and to reassert their Islamic identity in a cosmopolitan space. This paper contributes to the broader discussions on the issue of secularity in Chinese Islam.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Religion 4.0 : Discussing the Applicability of Research on Digitalization and Spatial Diffusion of Chinese Islam

chao wang (shaanxi normal university)

Abstract:

The digital expression of religion is an important trend in contemporary network societies. The unique combination of network technology and geographical science allows many experts to analyze how religions undergo change and spread, and describe the processes and conditions of the diffusion of religious beliefs. This has become a new perspective and new field of contemporary religious research. Comparison based on the history and reality of different religions in China, this paper tries to discuss the applicability of research on digitalization and spatial diffusion of Chinese Islam. The author believes that the perspective and approaches of digital and spatial studies of religions is very applicable to investigate the distribution and change of Islam in China because its available and detailed data. In the context of The Fourth Industrial Revolution and Religion 4.0, the new science

technical trend give religion a new field.

In the Bosom of Ibrahim: Health Disparity and Ethnoreligious Space among Older Adults in Xinjiang

Yousef Yang (Sun Yat-sen University)

Abstract:

A minority person's location in an ethnoreligious space may be associated with health outcomes due to mechanisms at multiple socio-ecological levels. The compositions of people and venues in ethnoreligious space are understudied even within the neighborhood research. This study brought the case of older adults in Xinjiang and compiled several administrative datasets from the 2010s at individual-, neighborhood-, and county-level. Ethnoreligious space, measured by county-level ethnic diversity and neighborhood-level mosques, is associated with better self-reported health among older adults. Ethnic diversity and mosques considerably mitigated the health disparity between Han and Turkic older adults. Reasoning with the directed acyclic graph, I further argue that the established salubrious effect of ethnoreligious space is more likely a mediator that benefits Han and Turks alike, rather than a confounder, collider, or moderator. This study corroborates the contextual perspective on the health effects of ethnoreligious space. It also touches base with the possibility of using pro-diversity measures to improve public health in a multicultural society.

When Science Makes Sense: The Use of Science as an Instance of Meaning among Non-Religious Young Quebecers (Canada)

Jean-Philippe Perreault (Université Laval)

Abstract:

For cultural and historical reasons, language (French) and religion (Catholicism) have been in Quebec (Canada) the central features of a minority national identity in America. Despite a rapid secularization in the 1960s and an extremely low church attendance since the late 1970s, a strong majority of Quebecers (74% in 2011) claimed to belong to Catholicism until recently. However, the dominant religiosity regime that was 'cultural Catholicism' has tended for a little over 10 years to give way to a pluralist regime marked by an increase in the number of young people who claim to have no religious affiliation (Meunier & Wilkins-Laflamme, 2011). Thus, one could say that today's young Quebecers (18-30 years old) stand out as the first true "non-religious generation" in Québec. In the context of a research project named The Religious among Young Quebecers with No Religion, we have been interested in this novelty by attempting to describe the configuration and dynamics of their imaginary (beliefs, values, norms, visions of life and death) and the interactions between these different components.

In this research, we asked young people about their models of success, their worldviews, and their personal ideals of life. From these data, we were able to identify different "referents of meaning" and,

among these, science appeared as central and predominant.

But what is particularly interesting in these results is that the young people are not so much concerned with “scientific practice” or “scientific work” as can be done at university, for example, but rather with a use of the “scientific discourse” (or pseudo-scientific discourse) as a criterion for determining what is valuable, what is plausible and what is useful for orienting ones life.

Thus, these results raise several questions that we wish to address in this paper. Why this usage of science? What does this say about the place of science in the social imaginary? More than that, what are we talking about here: “science” or “scientism”? Do these young people have a “believing attitude” towards science? Is this relationship to science specific to young people or is it shared by different generations? Is it specifically Western or does it circulate more widely in this globalized world? How is the Quebec case both similar and different from what we might find in East Asia?

In presenting these analyses, we wish to submit a few considerations for discussion. We hope that this dialogue between researchers from different geographical and cultural backgrounds will lead to a better understanding of the complex relations between science and religion, both in East Asia and in the West.

Session 2

The Intersection of Religion, Society, and Policy in East Asia (1)

Moderator: André Laliberté (University of Ottawa)

Analyzing religions' impact on social policy development in East Asia: challenges of mid-level generalizations

André Laliberté (University of Ottawa)

Abstract:

Recent theories on the welfare state in Western societies have added the religious factor to their explanations about the differences between countries in their choice of welfare state. How well these theories travel to East Asian societies? I present in this paper the four main hypotheses of this emerging research tradition and lay down the strategies used to test them, based on a historical neo-institutionalist approach that focuses on the path dependency of previous policy decisions and actions, and on the changes that determined new directions. These hypotheses have looked at the effects of religious cleavages, relations between religions and state, theology, and political participation, on the evolution of the welfare state. After presenting evidence from fieldwork in Taiwan that tested the validity of these hypotheses, my paper will discuss the respective merits of two different comparative research design to develop mid-level generalization in our understanding of how religions have shaped the development of social policies in East Asia. I will present the respective advantages of the most similar system research design, with South Korea and Japan, and the most different system research design, with Thailand and Vietnam. I will outline the respective merits of each of these research strategies as we seek to understand how religious traditions have framed the ideologies shaping the evolution of welfare regimes and social policies in East Asia.

Does Religion Justify Economic Inequality? Salvific Merit and Meritocratic Belief

Saehwan Lee (Sogang University)

Abstract:

Meritocracy and economic inequality have become more significant social problems than ever as neo-liberal capitalistic markets have increasingly gained hegemony in the contemporary world. The essential problem of meritocracy, which seems fair ostensibly, lies in that it pushes individuals into infinite competition and distinguishes the successful and the failure in the society, giving arrogance to the former and despairs the latter; but above all, it strengthens economic and social polarization rather than weakening it, arguing its fairness beyond all sorts of inequality with non-meritocratic elements such as family-oriented status and social/cultural capital.

Religious value is known to have had a great influence on individual economic ideas and even on the economic growth of a country (Iannaccone, 1998; Wuthnow, 1994). Although the problem of neoliberal meritocracy has been greatly highlighted worldwide, little scholarly attention has been spotlighted on how religion affects meritocratic beliefs. This research focuses on how a religion

approaches such problems as meritocracy and economic inequality and what a religion envisages on economic values, equity of opportunity, or distributional justice. Drawing on the cross-sectional data from the World Value Survey (Wave 7; 2017-2022), the author conducted a series of multilevel regression analyses with various interaction effects to answer the following research questions: (1) How does religion make individuals have an attitude toward meritocracy? and (2) What religious traditions or beliefs tend to oppose or support meritocratic beliefs?

The findings report that, unlike other religions, Protestants (including Orthodox) tend to have meritocratic beliefs. This study is expected to contribute to the field of 'religion and inequality' by showing that certain religious affiliations and religiosity support neoliberal meritocracy or social fairness.

New Developments in the Relationship between Politics and Religion in Japan

Yoshihide Sakurai (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

The cozy relationship between the Unification Church and the Liberal Democratic Party, triggered by the murder of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in July 2022, has shed light on the distorted relationship between politics and religion in Japan and greatly eroded public trust in politics and religion. This paper describes three types of political and religious relations in postwar Japan and concludes that Japan's conservative political parties maintain relationships with religious parties and religious political organizations as an electoral tactic, and are not aligned by religious ideals or political ideology.

Formation of a regional base and religious activities in Chiba Prefecture by Sri Lankan used car and used parts traders in Japan

Tomoko Fukuda (Chiba University)

Abstract:

Chiba Prefecture in Japan is characterized by a large population of South Asian foreigners. Sri Lankans have the largest population in Chiba Prefecture among the 47 prefectures in Japan, and the population has grown rapidly in recent years. This paper will explain the background of the increase in Sri Lankans in terms of economic and political factors, and will also examine its relationship to religious activities.

The reason for the large number of South Asian foreigners in Chiba Prefecture can be explained from an economic aspect. Chiba Prefecture is home to many used car and used parts traders, and many South Asians are engaged in these businesses.

The recent surge in the number of Sri Lankans living in Japan is due in part to economic and political factors on the home side. After the ceasefire in the Sri Lankan civil war, Sri Lanka was doing well politically and economically. Subsequently, it became politically unstable. The lockdown of Covid-19

also destabilized the economy and halted educational activities. Furthermore, used car imports were suspended at the request of the IMF. People who were involved in the used car import business on the Sri Lankan side lost their jobs and decided to move with their families to Japan, a used car stocking base.

Sri Lankans are dispersed throughout Chiba Prefecture, but their presence is particularly large in Sammu City. There are multiple reasons for the increase in Sri Lankans in Sammu City. First, Sammu City was Sri Lankas host town for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. For this project, in 2016, a Sri Lankan employee was hired as a “community development support worker”. The number of Sri Lankan residents increased, partly due to the steady activities of this Sri Lankan staff.

Secondly, there has been an Islamic mosque in Sammu City for a relatively long time. Sri Lankans living in Sammu City are 50% Sinhalese, 50% Muslim. Compared to the ethnic composition of the home country, the percentage of Muslims is high. According to Muslim interviewee, he chose Sammu City as their place of residence because there was a mosque nearby. On the other hand, according to the Sinhalese interviewee, he did not consider the distance to Sri Lankan Buddhist temples when choosing a place to live because he only visit them once a year for an event. Thus, differences in religious practice between Muslims and Buddhists influenced their choice of residence.

Session 3

Religion and Health: Public Health Crises and Religious Responses

Moderator: Satoshi Abe (Kyushu University)

Public Health during the Coronavirus Pandemic in Iran: Tensions, Ambiguity, and Commensurability in the Field

Satoshi Abe (Kyushu University)

Abstract:

Iran is one of the hardest-hit countries in Asia by the COVID-19 pandemic, with its cumulative death toll surpassing 144,000 individuals as of January 2023. The pandemic has disrupted Iranians' ways of life in many significant ways, especially in their awareness toward public health due to the perceived risk of virus transmission. In short, their awareness toward public health has sharply heightened and has garnered significance since early 2020 when the coronavirus was becoming recognized as a critical health issue in the country. As a result, an increasing number of experts in the field of public health appeared in various media outlets and reminded the audience of the ways in which the virus could spread out and become fatal; for example, they repeatedly gave warning messages about disease transmission that could occur through physical contact between individuals with no masks in an indoor setting. In such statements, science typically served as an analytical framework in addressing virus spread and thus defined the nature and parameter of problems.

In Iran, a country grounded in Islamic principles, these scientific experts are not the only ones informing of public health warning, however; religious leaders also speak about the same issue from the viewpoint of Islam, while drawing on relevant texts and exercising their rationales. Religious duties and related events often entail coordinated preparation required of close contacts between those involved and, moreover, the mass movement of event participants. For these reasons, public health has increasingly become a subject matter for which both scientists and religious leaders share common interest and over which they express concerns differently from their respective viewpoints. This presentation overviews some distinctive rationales concerning public health exhibited by scientific experts and religious leaders in Iran during the pandemic and examines their tensions, ambiguity, and commensurability that have surfaced over its course. In doing so, it also explores how the status of science in recent years has gained prominence in the country's Islamic tradition.

The Christian Response to The National Security Law In Hong Kong

Ka Shing Ng (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

The national security law passed in 2020 is a watershed moment in Hong Kong history. Under the law, which is criticized as “dangerously vague and broad” (Amnesty International, 2020), any form of pro-democracy movements may be accused of attempting to subvert the rule of the Chinese government, and therefore, some argue the law has de facto announced the end of democracy in Hong

Kong (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Based on a few case studies, this preliminary study attempts to find out how Christianity (including churches, leaders, rank-and-file members), which has been actively engaged in democratic movement in Hong Kong, view and respond to the security law, whether and how they continue or stop their activities in the new political context.

Session 4

Theological and Philosophical Studies of East Asian Religions

Moderator: Jyi-Shii Chiou (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

Exegetical and Hermeneutical Diversities of Christian Canonized Scriptures: on Analysis of Bart D. Ehrmans Perspective on Paul's Doctrines in "the New Testament: a Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings"

Jyi-Shii Chiou (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

Abstract:

Exegesis and hermeneutical studies pervade waves of changes; that is, how social communities understand religious Scriptures shapes diversities, which might be destined to be addressed in the course and groove of manifold social cultural modernity. In such urges of rolling on, the Bible, of which progress in understanding was to be expected beneficial to common welfare and happiness, might be regarded as of re-comprehension in relation to each period of eras. So will it be carried out in respect of how we utilize exegesis and hermeneutics of the Bible Scriptures, making great influences on sociological and historical understanding of Christianity in the modern era.

As seen in Dr. Ehrmans latest release in 2020, the impact of epistemology unto history of textual criticism can be clearly seen, in which the connoisseur of Biblical Scriptures chisels a glamorous facet to inspect the methods for authenticity of fact recordings during the times of Disciples of Jesus Christ.

In this paper, I attempt to carefully analyze one of five Ehrman's approaches to assess historical Biblical canonical writings during early centuries, e.g. on ideology of Paul's Epistles, trying to draw a line of expectable exegetical and hermeneutical perspectives between evaluations of Paul's early Christian writings:

1. Approaches of 'Timeline': supposedly identical historical facts changing with time.
2. Approaches of "Place": supposedly identical historical facts changing within field of behaviors.
3. Approaches of "Observant": supposedly identical historical facts changing from subjective perspectives.
4. Approaches of "Reasoning": rationality of unreasonable incidents as historical facts.
5. Approaches of "Communication": identification and verification of Paul's arguments with those of Jesus Christ and other Gospels.

In conclusion, by optimizing Ehrman's arguments over Paul's Letters to the laity, which can be counted as innovative and diverse modern theological perspectives, there still might be of "unchangeable classical elements of the Bible" existing, no matter which diverse mechanism of Biblical exegesis and hermeneutics.

Love and Discrimination in Religious and Social Life:

Thinking about CUMDA in front of Refugees

Jun Pyo Kim (Research Institute for the Tamla Culture, Jeju National University)

Abstract:

Love your neighbor as your body(Matthew 22:39). Love is the key word of Jesus in the New Testament. Jacob explained love as follows. Don't discriminate against people(Jacob 2:1). Yes, It is. Love means not to discriminate. But religion has taught people love and ironically discrimination also. The purpose of this paper is to examine those conflicts between the love and the discrimination, the anti-discrimination law and the opposition to the anti-discrimination law. I would check the discrimination of the Christian Church, especially against refugees.

The overseas mission of Korean Protestantism

SUNG YOUN CHO (Jeju National University)

Abstract:

Protestantism in Korea grew rapidly in a short period of time. Protestantism, which accounted for only about 2% of the total population in 1945, increased to 25% according to 2000 statistics. Thanks to this explosive increase, Protestantism now has the strongest social influence among Korean religions.

Immediately after liberation, Protestant forces established a material basis and conducted missions with the help of the U.S. military government and the Rhee Sungman regime. After the 1960s, the evangelical camp represented by Pastor Cho Yong-ki emerged in the industrialization process, coloring evangelical doctrines in line with the development of capitalism, attracting people eager for success and raising the church in large scale. On the other hand, the Korean progressive Protestant group actively participated in the democratization movement and shouted for social salvation, and decided that 'minjung theology' was the way to take root in Korean society and developed into a 'minjung church'.

However, evangelicalism succeeded in Korean society and popular theology failed. The evangelical camp reigned as the mainstream of the Korean church. Since the 1990s, the number of Korean Protestants has been stagnant, but has been decreasing since 2000. I think the reason is that Korean Protestants used a strategy to avoid social changes rather than confront them. That's what overseas missions are about.

Protestant overseas missions began in the early 1980s. Entering the 2020s, Korea has achieved tremendous growth to the point of becoming the world's second-largest missionary power. Korean church send secondly largest number of missionaries overseas today

Today, believers in medium and large churches in Korea donate money to support overseas missionaries and support non-independent churches in rural province. Domestic missions have been suspended, but even if they do not go directly or even if no more believers enter from Korean society, they can continue to feel satisfied that they are doing missions through overseas missions.

Silent Contention? An Empirical Study of Religious Activism in Taiwan and China (1989-2023)

Ray Wang (National Chengchi University)

Abstract:

After 911, religious activism has become one of the hottest topics in international relations and comparative politics, but empirical studies on East Asian societies were scarce. What make East Asian believers walk on a contentious path of activism, especially under ruthless authoritarian regimes? Is it really about religion? Or it is caused by deeper socioeconomic or political factors? Are they acting in a different or similar fashion from their Western counterparts? The project collects cases of religious activism in Taiwan and interviews of exiles from China, and summarizes few feasible hypotheses from their stories. The hypotheses are empirically tested by Chinese Political Prisoners Database, which was initially collected by human rights NGOs, published by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) since 1989 till today, and cleaned-up and modified by the researcher. By using this unique data, which includes jailed activists of Tibet Buddhism, Falun Gong, and Christian underground churches, the researcher hopes to unfold the alternative stories of this "silent" yet contentious market of religious activism.

Session 5

Case Studies: Regional and Community Focus on Religion in East Asia

Moderator: Megan Rogers (Duke Kunshan University)

Rural Areas and Religious Groups in China in the Depopulating Era: A Case Study of the Buddhist Temples in Fanshi of Shanxi Province

DUAN YU (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

In 2021, the Chinese government announced that the population of Chinese Mainland had only increased by 480,000 people in the whole year. The natural population growth rate of Chinese Mainland, namely the birth rate minus the death rate, has reached the lowest point since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Particularly, the social security system and economic conditions in dealing with the aging problem in China's rural areas are far less developed than those in urban areas. In countries that do not have enough financial capacity to fully implement social security, social organizations, including religious ones, are actively engaged in self-help efforts (Sakurai and Michinobu 2010).

Religious organizations in contemporary society have attracted much attention since they have such potential to develop social projects, increase public trust in others and society, and build social capital (Sakurai 2012:6-7). The formation and activation of social capital is considered to be greatly critical to social welfare, public health, social problems, the increase of the willingness to participate in economic activities, and the performance efficiency of local communities (Putnam 2000; Lin 2001).

However, with the reduction of population in rural areas of China, the maintenance and development of religious organizations are also confronting a major crisis (Duan, 2014; Tang and Duan, 2018). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how religious organizations respond to the crisis of population decline, and perform their functions of promoting the generation of social capital in rural areas.

The author investigated all 37 Buddhist temples identified by the Buddhist Association of Fanshi of Shanxi Province from May to August 2022. The main survey methods are participatory observation and interview. There are 64 monks in these temples, including 40 Bhikshus and 24 Bhikkhunis, with an average age of 63.04. 54.7% of the monks are over 65 years old. Through the interview with the abbot of each temple, it is found that these temples are facing four problems: lack of successors, insufficient income, reduction of the number of permanent monks, and reduction of traditional activities related to the local community. In order to solve these problems, the temples adopt strategies of "live broadcast" establishing monk mutual aid groups" and "establishing closer ties with local communities".

As China's rural areas have entered the era of population reduction, it is an important theme that what kind of social development path they will take in the future. This paper discusses this topic according to a survey on the cultivation of religious social capital in rural areas. For Buddhist temples, the reduction of the rural population causes a serious consequence that they will face the reduction in the number of believers. More severely, they have to cope with the issues of the dilution of traditional religious culture, the reduction of traditional activities, and the difficulty in maintaining temples due

to the loss of religious and social functions. In this condition, Buddhist temples, together with believers and villagers, have found some appropriate ways to revitalize rural areas and cope with the problem of population decline, which are the using of Internet, the establishment of Buddhist monk mutual aid groups and the cooperation with local communities. In this process, the social capital has formed.

Key Words: Chinese Rural Areas, Religious Groups, Social Capital

Discussion of Religious Behavior of Believers Based on Common Sense and Reason: A Case Study of Christian Practice in Rural Chinese Society.

Zefu Zhang (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

Usually, religious phenomena are interpreted as the result of the influence of doctrinal content and religious rules, but this structural-functionalist perspective still lacks interpretative power. In particular, if we are to examine the “whole process” of a religious phenomenon from beginning to end, and if we are to investigate the details of how believers practice religious acts, it is essential to focus on the believers subjectivity.

In examining the subjectivity of believers, traditional perspectives have primarily revolved around the significance of religious behaviors and the interaction between believers and the background. For example, Robbins (1980) typifies the acts of disaffiliation and apostasy of believers and others as “(1) believers are thrown out for reasons of non-fidelity, (2) believers become dissatisfied and leave voluntarily, and (3) believers leave due to anti-cult movements. In addition, Lee (2010), Tsukada (2006), and Inose (2004) examined how believers deepened their faith based on the social network theory of “others within the church” and “others outside the church,” and concluded that they did so through daily interactions with “others.

There is one point to note. Whether interpreting the significance of religious acts or analyzing how religious phenomena become reality, conventional research argues that believers must grasp the “fundamental source” of their religious consciousness to decipher the subjectivity of their followers. The “fundamental source” that drives the religious acts of believers is the natural attitude that each individual has in his or her daily life, the so-called “common sense reason.

The perspective of observing the practice of religious behaviors from the perspective of daily life is something that the author has been increasingly aware of when conducting fieldwork in Chinese rural communities. During the fieldwork in these Christian churches of the local villages, especially when interviewing believers, the most significant discovery was the phenomenon of “the conflict and fusion between Chinese folk beliefs and their own Christian beliefs,” which was discovered during interviews with believers.

Therefore, from the view of phenomenological sociology, this study aims to decipher how individuals integrate their religious beliefs with their daily lives and deepen their religiosity by making full use of common sense reason, based on socialized and acquired “common sense” in their life world.

Reconciling Religion and Science in Urban China

Megan Rogers (Duke Kunshan University)

Abstract:

Scholars have argued that science has taken on a sacred dimension in contemporary China, where it is valued above other forms of understanding. Science thus poses a dilemma for Chinese individuals interested in converting to religion, especially since religion is often seen as irrational and unscientific: can religion and science be reconciled? Drawing on ethnography at Buddhist and Protestant organizations and in-depth interviews with Buddhist, Protestant, and non-religious educated professionals in a wealthy coastal city in China, this paper shows that Buddhist and Protestant educated professionals reconcile religion and science in a very similar manner: they draw on science to legitimize their chosen religion and its teachings. Some of the ways they do so are pointing to religious scientists, arguing that science has validated religious teachings, and claiming that religion and science use different language to describe the same phenomena. In other words, they do not challenge the primacy of science and scientific ways of knowing but rather reconcile religion to science. In doing so, they make religion legible for a skeptical public and work to retain their status as modern, cultured, high-quality members of society.

Using Higher Education to Break the Glass Ceiling: Chinese Buddhist Nuns and their Educational Networks in the Post-Mao Era

Amandine Péronnet (French Institute of Asian Research (IrAsia))

Abstract:

In the course of the 20th century, Chinese Buddhist academies (foxueyuan 佛学院) have become an elite-manufacturing system that bestows symbolic capital onto their graduates. In the post-Mao era, this system produces politically-approved religious leaders, thus correlating the allocation of resources and power with modern institutional education. Just as their male counterparts, Chinese Buddhist nuns have been graduating from renowned Buddhist academies and reaping the benefits. In their case however, the stakes might be higher: not only do they need to assert their place as legitimate decision-making Buddhist leaders in a patriarchal society, they also need to emancipate from the traditional hierarchy that subordinates them to Buddhist monks – without openly challenging it. Promoting Buddhist higher education, received within Buddhist academies and secular universities, in mainland China and abroad, seems to be the preferred method to break the glass ceiling and reach influential positions.

Based on on-site and online fieldwork conducted since 2017, this paper thus hypothesizes that educational networks forged by Buddhist nuns play a direct role in winning these stakes for the community at large, acting as a vehicle for change and as a support system. Working from abstract social network visualizations as well as from qualitative fieldwork data, I will question the motivations of Chinese Buddhist nuns in developing these national and transnational educational networks and call attention to what they produce in terms of resources, symbolic or material.

Session 6

Religion and the Environment in East Asia

Moderator: Seil Oh (Sogang University)

Religion and Environmental Movements in Korea: Various Types of Eco-Spirituality and Ecological Justice

Seil Oh (Sogang University)

Abstract:

This research analyzes the relationship between religion and environmental movements in the context of ecological crisis and eco-spirituality in South Korea, as theoretically questioning the legitimacy of ecological justice in the three major Korean religions (Buddhism, Protestantism, and Catholicism).

In order for a religion to be actively engaged in environmental movements, two layers of legitimacy for environmental and social (e.g., politico-economic-cultural) issues should be considered. The primary legitimacy of religion with regard to environmental issues comes directly from Buddhist Scriptures and doctrines while the secondary one stems from the religious reflexivity of Christians overcoming the shortcomings of anthropomorphism. From the Weberian perspective, however, Buddhism represents the exemplary role of prophecy for political activism whereas Christianity does perform the ethical (emissary) role challenging unjust structures and political authority.

Contents analyses of public statements officially released by religious groups indicate that there are no significant differences among the three Korean religions with regard to ecological concerns; however, significant differences appear with regard to levels of structural reform and political activism. Christians were highly engaged in environmental movements while Buddhists showed a marginal engagement. Thus, the public role of ethical (emissary) prophecy can theoretically explain the paradoxical aspects of religious environmental movements in Korea.

Japanese Views of Nature in Transition: Toward a Dialogue between Judeo-Christian Values and Indigenous Spirituality in Japan

Kanan Kitani (Doshisha University)

Abstract:

The relationship between religion and the natural environment has been studied over the past fifty years largely in response to the criticism made by a historian Lynn White Jr. in his essay published in 1967 titled "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," which argues that the current ecological crisis is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. White argues that the Bible, particularly the book of Genesis, portrays humans as having "dominion" over the earth and all its creatures. This has led to a belief in human superiority and the exploitation of the environment for human gain. White also points to the growth of technology and the decline of feudalism as contributing factors to the current ecological crisis. He argues that a shift in religious and cultural attitudes towards the environment is necessary in order to solve the crisis.

Looking at the case of Japan, since the end of Japan's isolation policy after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the influence of Christian countries has increased, bringing modernization through science and technology. At the same time, however, the connection between people and nature in the Japanese way of life has become overwhelmingly tenuous. The polytheistic Old Shinto faith, which found spirituality in all things, was replaced by State Shinto, which reinterpreted the emperor as a manifest god in order to become a monotheistic religion modeled after Christianity. Since then, Japan has been leading the way as a capitalist nation, and its people have become accustomed to a lifestyle of mass production and mass consumption. Today, Japan ranks fifth in the world in terms of CO₂ emissions.

With this question in mind, this paper examines the following two points. First, do Judeo-Christian values have a negative impact on environmental protection? Second, how can we reconcile Christian value-based capitalism with a polytheistic spirituality of reverence for the natural environment in a country like Japan, which is a major emitter of CO₂?

Science and Faith in the Early 20th Century Chinese Pure Land Buddhism

Jakub Zamorski (Jagiellonian University (Kraków))

Abstract:

Contemporary discussions of the relations between “religion” and science often focus on the historical experience of one particular religion: Christianity, whose traditional beliefs have been variously challenged and transformed by the modern ideal of scientific rationality. On the other hand, there has been no universal agreement as to how the encounter with modern science impacted non-Christian (or, more broadly, non-Abrahamic) religious traditions. Whereas Buddhism has sometimes been regarded as essentially immune to challenges posed by science, a growing number of studies have shown how modern Buddhists reconsidered their traditional beliefs in the light of the Western-derived conceptual opposition between scientific rationality and religious faith. Particularly noteworthy cases of this transformation involve the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, whose canonical scriptures describe a paradise-like land where a believer is reborn after death in the presence of personalized Buddha Amitābha. Some 20th century Japanese Buddhist thinkers who scrutinized the “mythical” character of such beliefs directly appealed to Protestant theologians’ idea of demythologization (Entmythologisierung) – understood as a method of interpreting religious texts that aims to disassociate their “true” message from the supposedly unscientific pre-modern worldview.

In my paper I would like to present a yet another facet of this understudied problem by examining how the issue of scientific rationality of the Pure Land belief was resolved in the Chinese Buddhist literature of the Republican (1912-1949) period. Generally speaking, in Chinese books and journal articles of this period the issue of the Pure Land is rarely discussed with the use of modern Western categories, such as the oppositions between faith and reason, mythology and science etc. However, as I will try to argue, some of their authors were already aware of the new standards of rationality that were associated with science. Remarkably, they tried to incorporate these standards within a largely traditional conceptual framework which had been employed by pre-modern Chinese Buddhists to reconcile their various understandings of the Pure Land. While this traditional framework allowed for

a literal belief in a paradise-like Pure Land, it also encouraged interpreting this notion in the light of principles of Buddhist philosophy and practice, positing a “Mind-only Pure Land” which is experienced by transcending conceptual thought. In my paper I will discuss three different ways in which Republican-period Chinese authors readjusted this old model in order to accommodate the modern ideal of scientific reason: (1) by establishing scientific basis for the literal understanding of the Pure Land (2) by emphasizing the scientific (or supra-scientific) credentials of the “Mind-only Pure Land” (3) by proposing an altogether new pattern of interpreting the Pure Land as a this-worldly realm that is constructed through ethical (and rational) action.

As I will argue, those ideas deserve scholarly attention as actual historical statements on the problem of religion and science that were formulated on the basis of non-Western ideas and concepts. Such examples may help to reconsider the problem in question from a wider comparative perspective and to differentiate its universal aspects from those that are culturally and historically specific to the Christian case.

Session 7 (Closed Session)

Religion and Ecological Thoughts from a Policy Perspective

(Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University)

Moderator: Francis Jae-ryong Song (Kyung Hee University)

Minjung Theology of Korea and Ecological Thinking: Focusing on the Theological Imagination of Ahn Byung-Mu

Andrew Eungi Kim (College of International Studies, Korea University)

Jongman Kim (Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University)

Abstract:

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria, albeit a set of standards used by socially conscious investors to evaluate a company's operations before investing, are becoming an important global trend today. In particular, environmental and ecological crises are increasingly being accepted as issues that will determine the sustainability of human civilization. Scholars of religion have been paying more attention to the issue as well. In fact, religion and environmentalism has emerged as a sub-discipline in, among others, religious ethics, religious studies, the sociology of religion, and theology. In view of this development, this paper aims to reexamine Minjung theology, literally meaning "the people's theology," which arose as a form of liberation theology in the Korean context in the 1970s, from the ecological perspective, i.e., examining the relationship between the individual and the environment and how the two mutually influence and shape each other. In particular, the paper reexamines the work of Ahn Byung-Mu, a leading scholar of Minjung theology, shedding light on the connection between the publicness of Minjung theology and ecology, the characteristics of his ecological thoughts and their relevance to his view of god or religion, and his views on bapsanggongdongche, literally meaning "organic food community."

Climate Justice and Its Religious and Political Basis

Hyun Kyoung Kim (Kyung Hee University)

Dong-Uhn Suh (KyungHee University)

Abstract:

There is a growing consensus that climate change is among the most complex and hardest challenge for humanity. Faced with the accumulating knowledge that climate change is man-made, international organizations, national governments, and non-governmental organizations have been calling for immediate action. But it is uncertain whether we can mobilize the coalition to achieve decarbonization because climate change exemplifies the dilemma of global collective action. Most of debates over climate action and inaction end in stalemate when they center around who gets what, when, and how (Laswell 1936). To get around this dilemma, we examine the religious root of climate justice. Many recent studies have found that citizens of faith have a growing concern about environmental issues. We explore the possibility of religiosity forming social forces behind climate justice and climate action.

A Quest for the Possibility of Ecological Spirituality as the Governance and Its Ground for Ecological Civilization Transformation

Myoung-ho Lee (Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University)

Francis Jae-ryong Song (Kyung Hee University, Seoul)

Abstract:

Climate change has triggered various discussions related to governance issues at the international community level in that it is connected to the end of human civilization by causing an ecological crisis on a global scale. Nevertheless, it is pointed out that most of the discussions have remained at the declarative level. In recent years, there have been changes such as the 2015 Paris Climate Convention and the Conference of the Parties discussing practical countermeasures in a more advanced level than before.

In fact, this change is due to the frequent abnormal weather phenomena caused by “climate change,” and the level and scope of damage caused by it have spread globally. However, these changes are not voluntary changes due to rational thinking of mankind, but changes forced by the existential conditions of the ecological crisis facing them. Perhaps because of this, the implementation plans and goals agreed upon with difficulties are not properly carried out at the practical stage of implementation. In addition to this, another fundamental reason why it is difficult to practice overcoming the climate crisis is that the foundation for governance aimed at overcoming the ecological crisis and transforming ecological civilization as a practice and goal is poor. For example, as Edelman’s 2022 special report, *Trust and Climate Change* points out, despite people perceive climate change as a serious crisis, many people neither have the effort for civilizational transformation nor give up their current lifestyle, because of the worry of whether only I or We are overburdened. Suppose ‘ecological spirituality’ has a role as the ground of Governance for the transformation of ecological civilization. In that case, more practical discussions will be held and practice will be more active.

From this perspective and vision, this study quests for Governance as the ground for overcoming climate crisis. First of all, researchers presuppose the transformation of ecological civilization as the ground for governance, and explore the necessity of engaged spirituality and ecological spirituality as its grounds. We, researchers, understand spirituality not as religious character or nature, but as an act or state in which a specific value or belief is expressed and embodied in real life. For this, we explore the possibility of engaged spirituality and ecological spirituality focusing on Sheldrake’s discussion of spirituality. In addition, we will discuss ecological spirituality as a civic virtue required in a society based on ecological civilization. In summary, we suggest that the current civic virtue obsessed with binary thinking and infinite desire, and the resulting limitations of Governance can be overcome through discussions of the possibility of ecological spirituality.

A Case Study of Faith-based Ecological Citizenship in Terms of Technology Lag: Focusing on Korea Soka Gakkai International (KSGI)

Kwangsuk Yoo (Kyung Hee University)

Dongmin Kim (Kyung Hee University, Institute for Religion and Civic Culture)

Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the theoretical and policy validity and limitations of religious-based ecological citizenship based on the relational characteristics of religion and science that stand out in the era of environmental ecological crisis. Environmental and ecological problems in modern society are difficult to solve at the national state level, and simultaneously require transnational principles to comprehend historical and cultural diversity. In order to meet these ambivalent requests, the concept of ecological citizenship as part of global citizenship has recently been paid more serious attention in academia and policy. Ecological citizenship is a newly required citizenship in the era of ecological transformation, recognizing the social structural factors that caused the environmental ecological crisis on the basis of the critical ability of citizens to ecologically reconstruct human-natural relationships and society-natural relationships from a holistic perspective (Dobson, 2013). In particular, from the perspective of technical lag, this paper explains an empirical basis for how religious peoples high ecological consciousness precedes the current environmental ecological technology. Contrary to William Fielding Ogburns claim, which first introduced the cultural lag phenomenon based on technology determinism (Brinkman & Brinkman 2005; Kovács 1995; Ogburn 1922), the ecological transformation of modern civil society shows a precedence of ecological consciousness over technology. Ecological citizenship based on religious beliefs strengthens citizens moral and ethical awareness and practice for ecological life and happiness, and hence governments and businesses are forced to develop eco-friendly technologies and systems more urgently than ever. Considering that the religious area is where such a mismatch between technology and mental culture was most clearly revealed, the results of the 2022 IRCC Survey of Ecological Perception of Religious Population support this mismatch empirically.

Session 8 (Closed Session)

East Asian New Religious Movements:

Innately Modern and Aspirationally Future-Oriented

Moderator: Gyungwon LEE (Daejin University)

Enticing Prospects:

The Application of Nonfungible Token Technology in Asian New Religions

Edward IRONS (The Hong Kong Institute for Culture, Commerce and Religion, USA)

Abstract:

The application of blockchain technology goes well beyond the development of digital currencies. One use of blockchain is in NFTs, non-fungible tokens. An NFT is a digital asset that implies uniqueness. As such, its first major application has been to identify items of unique value, such as art. Each NFT implies scarcity as well as authenticity. Like collectables, NFTs can be exchanged. Unlike crypto, an NFT is unique and not identical to any other NFT. Conceptually, an NFT is the opposite of a counterfeit. In this sense, it also intersects with some conceptions of truth.

The NFT concept is being applied to several social circumstances beyond art. This paper looks at the potential for NFTs in religious situations, with a focus on the potential for development in Asian religions. Interest in NFTs is growing in tech-savvy societies as Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. After surveying the NFT landscape in these Asian societies, this paper searches for examples of religious uses of fungible tokens. The final section spells out a framework for studying the future development of NFTs in a religious context.

Keywords: Religious conceptions of humankind, A.I., transhumanism, human beings, and God

A New Developmental Direction for Taiwanese Religions in the Post-COVID-19 Era: A Case Study on Online Courses Offered by I-Kuan Tao's Baoguang-Chongzheng Temple

Suhyun LEE (National Chengchi University)

Abstract:

In this paper, I would like to discuss the new developmental direction of Taiwanese religions in the Post-COVID-19 Era by taking the online courses offered by Baoguang-Chongzheng (寶光崇正) Temple, an I-Kuan Tao temple, as an example. I-Kuan Tao is a representative new religion in Taiwan with many believers. In the case of Baoguang-Chongzheng Temple, after the outbreak of COVID-19, the problem of facilitating remote religious activities was overcome by quickly converting from on-site participation to online participation via courses in accordance with the governments quarantine policy. The online courses, which were created to adhere to the government's guidelines on COVID-19, were gradually and systematically developed, allowing numerous I-Kuan Tao members around the world to freely participate in religious and spiritual courses while transcending age demographics,

time, and geographical location. This development enabled Baoguang-Chongzheng's online courses to overcome the limitations of time and space which would be factors for on-site religious faith activities. They achieved this by appropriately using new technologies to freely engage with religious believers and even non-believers in a variety of ways. They encouraged people from all walks of life to take part in those activities. In addition, this style of activity planning helped busy modern people lessen the usual burdens incurred while participating in religious activities in their daily lives. Through the example of I-Kuan Tao's online courses, a novel way to solve the problem of decreasing membership at religious organizations may have been found.

Religion in the Public Context: Religious Education at Tenri Schools

Midori HORIUCHI (Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion, Tenri University)

Abstract:

How is religion evaluated in public settings?

In 2002, Tenri University and Gregorian University co-sponsored an event titled, "Dialogue between Tenrikyo and Christianity II," and the theme was "Education, Family, and Religion." At that time, I made remarks on the theme of "On Creed Education: School Education in Tenri."

In this presentation, based on the themes raised at that time, I will ponder religious education in modern society especially as it pertains to religious education in educational facilities operated by religious bodies. Belief in religion is an extremely personal activity, but at the same time, religious activities are activities that occur within society. For example, when reconsidering the position of religion in the 'public space' mentioned at the beginning, it becomes impossible to think of religion only in terms of the personal dimension. Furthermore, when considering faith in the home, parents who wish to pass on their faith may be required to be a 'teacher' to the person (children) to whom they wish to pass on their faith. With that in mind, I will explore the task of 'transmitting' faith from the perspective of education.

Traces of Chinese Taoism's Influence on Vietnamese Cao Dai Religion through the Worship of Guanshengdijun

Phuoc Tai Nguyen (FPT University)

Tran Phuong Chi (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics)

Abstract:

Taoism, a significant aspect of Chinese culture, has exerted a profound influence on various regions of China, such as those situated close to the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and beyond. This impact has also extended to other Asian countries, including Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, where it has played a crucial role in shaping the spiritual and cultural lives of local communities. In Vietnam, Taoism has contributed to the development of indigenous religions like Buu Son Ky Huong, Tu An Hieu Nghia, and Hoa Hao Buddhism, as well as influenced the practice of ancestor worship during

religious ceremonies. Notably, the veneration of GuanShengDijun, a historical figure from China, has become a well-known symbol of the Cao Dai faith, which originated in Southern Vietnam. By examining the Taoist scripture Táoyuán Míng Shèngjīng associated with GuanShengDijun, one can comprehend the reasons why Vietnamese Cao Dai followers regard this figure as a significant part of their religious belief.

Keywords: Cao Dai religion, Guan Gong, Guan Di, religious belief, indigenous religion, Táoyuán Míng Shèngjīng.

From Human Imitations of Heavenly Machines to 3D Printing and Metamaterials- Emerging Technologies and the Technological Positivism of Daesoon Thought

Jason GREENBERGER (Daejin University)

Abstract:

In his theory of forms, Plato famously proposed that the intelligible realm contains imperfect physical imitations of perfect non-physical essences from the world of forms. In the early 1900s, the religious figure, KANG Jeungsan (姜甌山 secular name: KANG Il-Sun 姜一淳 1871–1909), once spoke with a disciple about “the facilities of civilization invented by the Westerners” which were appearing in Korea, and at the end of this discussion, the master revealed: “Their machines have been modeled after those in Heaven.” Over a hundred years have passed since the era of KANG Jeungsan, yet his teachings remain profoundly relevant. Although still in their infancy, technologies such as 3D printing and metamaterials allow for previously impossible levels of precision in terms of rendering physical structures out of conceptual models. From the perspective of the Jeungsan-inspired system of philosophy known as Daesoon Thought, the distance between human made machines and the ‘machines of heaven’ is rapidly shrinking. What are the spiritual and theological implications of these types of emerging technologies? This presentation explores Daesoon Thought’s novel perspectives on technology, modernity, and the future.

Session 9 (Closed Session)

Spirituality, Science, and the Arts:

Soka Gakkai's "Life-Sized Paradigm" and Other Cases (1)

Moderator: Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))

Pascal, the Six Senses of Buddhism, and Science:

Ikeda's "Life-Sized Paradigm" After Twenty Years

Rosita Šorytė (FOB (European Federation for Freedom of Belief))

Abstract:

In 2003, Soka Gakkai's President Daisaku Ikeda launched the "Life-Sized Paradigm" as a way of thinking that looks at the role of humans within the broader ecosystem of the universe and at the same time at all details of everyday human existence. Ikeda discussed French philosopher Blaise Pascal's comment that "man is but a reed, the feeblest thing in the world," yet at the same time he is capable as "a thinking reed" of "comprehending" the whole universe. Ikeda compared Pascal's notion of "comprehending" to the six senses (five plus the intellect) in Mahayana Buddhism, and mentioned Nichiren's comment that "the five majors [human] organs correspond to the five planets in the sky and the five sacred mountains on the earth." The paper discusses Ikeda's 2002 Peace Proposal, its relevance after 20 years, and the implications and problems of this Buddhist-humanistic gaze for Soka Gakkai's dialogue with science and politics. (The author has been a diplomat for 25 years, and has served inter alia at the United Nations and as Chair of the European Union Working Group on Humanitarian Aid).

Religion, Anti-Racism, and Race in the American Soka Gakkai Association

Holly Folk (Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA)

Abstract:

The Soka Gakkai Association (SGA) has a distinctive demographic portrait in the United States, compared to other forms of Buddhism that have attracted converts. In the US, converts to Buddhism have disproportionately been white Americans from the middle class; in contrast, the SGA is culturally diverse, and has been at least modestly successful in outreach to African-Americans. Yet, while many scholars have observed this pattern informally, little research has been done to assess the racial dynamics of the SGA. This paper considers the official publications and statements from the Soka Gakkai Association, as well as online discourse about the SGA, to interrogate the relationship between religion and race, and to question why SGA beliefs and practices, and its criticism of racism and of those, including scientists, who supported it with pseudo-scientific arguments, might have specific appeal to certain subpopulations.

Literature as Science of the Human Mind for Daisaku Ikeda and Soka Gakkai

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (University of Bordeaux Montaigne)

Abstract:

We tend to separate literature from science, literature being produced by an act of imagination, whereas science deals with hard facts. Yet, literature can also be firmly grounded in the factual world that it either bluntly portrays or reorganizes to produce meaning. Those novelists and poets who are preoccupied with educating their readers may do so by inventing a life-like construct geared towards a profound understanding of life, of society and of the universe. Because it analyses the inner workings of the human mind and may act upon them, literature can be seen as a technique to elevate the souls of the readers; this is why it is a major component of most school curricula.

Today, one religious group, Soka Gakkai, can be singled out as uniquely promoting various art forms as powerful tools to disseminate its spiritual values and notion of a humanistic science. Its president, Daisaku Ikeda, has regularly underlined the need to support all cultural expressions to improve the well-being of our societies. What he wrote in *Science and Religion* (1968, p. 301)— “[religion is] a kind of science which makes a special study of human life”— can definitely be applied to literature which he himself praised so much that he founded a museum near Paris entirely dedicated to one major 19th century French novelist, Victor Hugo. This paper will present the gradual organization of the museum and its outreach programs towards the public to pass on the powerful humanist and spiritual message of Hugo on spirituality and science as a forerunner of Ikeda’s.

Session 10 (Closed Session)

Spirituality, Science, and the Arts:

Soka Gakkai's "Life-Sized Paradigm" and Other Cases (2)

Moderator: Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))

Dalí's "The Three Sphinxes of Bikini" and Soka Gakkai's Criticism of Destructive Science

Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions))

Abstract:

Today the name "bikini" evokes a two-pieces female swimsuit. Few realize that the bikini was presented in Paris and given its name by French designer Louis Réard in 1946, just four days after the United States had conducted its first public nuclear test on the Bikini Atoll, near the Marshall Islands in the Pacific Ocean. While Réard was busy using the media impact of the atomic test to market its product as an explosion of femininity, Spanish artist Salvador Dalí was preparing his painting "The Three Sphinxes of Bikini," which continued his criticism of the American use of nuclear weapons he had started with "Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll," that he began on the very evening of the day when Hiroshima was bombed. While Dalí was also curiously fascinated by the physics behind the atomic bombs, his concerns resonated with Soka Gakkai's strong criticism and reject of nuclear weapons. After Japan, the second most important country for Soka Gakkai's anti-nuclear-weapon campaigns has been Italy, where the volunteers of "Senzatomica," an initiative of the Japanese Buddhist group that has had a significant impact on Italian politics, have been aware of the powerful role of the artists, from Dalí to Italian painters such as Voltolino Fontani and Enrico Baj, in expressing the fear of "bad" science and ultimate nuclear destruction.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution in Taiwan: Science Without Conscience?

Juselia S.F. Lin (Taiwan institute of Economic Research)

Daniel Y.C. Lee (Portal Intellectual Property Right Group)

Abstract:

Based on their respective experiences—Lin as a former advisor in one of the leading government think tanks in Taiwan and former university lecturer, Lee as a patent attorney—the authors examine the Fourth Industrial Achievement in Taiwan and its achievement that had been widely celebrated throughout the world, including in the patent field. On the other hand, they note that a common criticism by Taiwanese scholars is that the legal and tax system did not develop as quickly as the industrial and technological sector, and still maintains remnants of the pre-democratic Martial Law era. Not only is this detrimental to the very development of science and technology in Taiwan, which would require clear and uniformly enforced legal and tax rules, it has also created problems of human rights and freedom of religion or belief. The street protests about the Tai Ji Men case derive from the fact that the movement has won all its criminal cases and has been recognized as not guilty of any

criminal activity, including tax evasion, but continues to be harassed by the tax authorities, who exhibit a clear prejudice against minority spiritual movements. The future progress of Taiwan, the paper argues, require that laws, regulations, courts of law, religious liberty, and administrative bureaucracy achieve the same level of excellency for which Taiwan's science and technology institutions are now well-respected throughout the world.

Session 11

Religion, Science and Technology: The New Perspectives

Moderator: David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)

The Scientific Nature of the Study of Religion in the West and Asia

Shunichi Miyajima (Faculty of Humanities and Human Sciences, Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

In the West during the first half of the 20th century, the study of religion was more religious than scientific. Many religious scholars were involved in religious studies as confessional people. In Germany, Friedrich Heiler and Rudolf Otto were prime examples. They believed that religion was an innate ability of human beings and attempted to clarify its nature. Their activities were of a practical nature and linked to their religious movements.

After World War II, the “religious” study of religions was criticized, and the scientific nature of religious studies was emphasized. In particular, religious studies after the critical theory of the concept of religion criticized the Western-centeredness of the concept of “religion.” On the other hand, empirical scientific studies of religion flourished during the postwar period. Examples include sociological and cognitive scientific studies of religion. Both the former and the latter insist on the scientific nature of religious research, but there are differences between the two. The former does not directly address the question, “What is religion?” Rather, it views religion as a social phenomenon and clarifies the relationship between various elements of society and religion. Such research is mainly derived from sociology and has a different genealogy from past studies of religion. In contrast, cognitive-scientific religious studies in Europe and the U.S. view religion as an innate ability of human beings and consider it to be a universal phenomenon for humankind. In practice, however, researchers who argue for the necessity of cognitive-scientific religious studies harshly criticize the former religious and practical nature of religious studies.

At issue is the study of religion in Japan and other parts of Asia. Religious Studies in Asia include not only social and natural scientific studies of religion, but also many philosophical and practical studies. To Western scientific religious scholars, such studies appear to be “lagging behind.” While it is reasonable to argue that religious studies must be distinguished from religious activities, is a kind of “evolutionary theory” from religious studies to scientific religious studies a universal movement rather than a Western-centric one? Rather, could there be possibilities for the study of religion in Asia that are uniquely Asian? We would like to use this presentation as an opportunity for further reflection on this subject.

Non-Modern Perspectives on Science and Religion

Mike Brownutt (Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge)

Abstract:

Religions have a rich diversity of expressions around the world. Similarly, sciences – and people’s

engagement with them – take on diverse forms in different times, places, and cultures. It should therefore not be surprising that – in considering the interaction of science and religion – there is a radical diversity of questions that people have, answers that people find acceptable, and opportunities that arise for engagement.

Much of the contemporary discussion of science and religion is framed in Modern terms, arising from (post-) Enlightenment Western contexts. Even in the contexts for which it was developed, this framing obscures certain problems, while creating others. Furthermore, attempting to shoe-horn the concerns of non-Modern contexts into a Modern framing can create apparent problems where none exist, and obscure genuine issues of interest.

This talk proposes a framing for the interactions of science and religion as a relational network, and argue that such a framing provides fruitful insights for engaging with science and religion in a variety of diverse contexts globally.

Post-naturalist anthropology its implications for science and religion studies in Asia

David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)

Abstract:

The “ontological turn” refers to a movement within anthropology since the early 21st century, whose proponents question the metaphysical dichotomies between nature and culture or reality and representation that underpin the social sciences, but instead seek to understand, not different cultural “representations” of a single world, but different modes of world-making. This approach is “ontological” in that it both unpacks the naturalist ontological assumptions of social theory, and seeks to understand indigenous ontologies and the worlds they create. By relativising “nature” as a Western ontological category and studying how different societies distribute agency and personhood among humans, non-humans and meta-humans, ontological anthropology is directly relevant to debates on science and religion and on the construction of the category of “religion” in non-Western contexts. In this essay, I discuss four key texts that illustrate different approaches within the ontological turn, and their relevance to debates on science and religion in Asia: Bruno Latour’s *We Have Never been Modern*, Philippe Descola’s *Beyond Nature and Culture*, Tim Ingold’s *The Perception of the Environment*, and Eduardo Kohn’s *How Forests Think*.

God, Transcendence and the Human Being in the Age of Transhumanism and AI

Michal Valčo (Comenius University Bratislava)

Abstract:

In this paper, we will explore the intersection of theology, anthropology, and ethics in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the movement of transhumanism. The rapid advancement of science and technology in this new era poses significant challenges to traditional theological and

philosophical understandings of God, transcendence, and the human being.

We will examine the implications of transhumanism, which aims to enhance human capabilities beyond their current biological limitations, for our understanding of the human person and the concept of dignity. We will also consider the emergence of conscious artificial intelligence and its impact on our understanding of consciousness and personhood.

Furthermore, we will reflect on the changes in our understanding of transcendence in light of the new technologies and advancements in IR 4.0. The paper will argue that these developments require a re-evaluation of traditional theological and philosophical concepts and a corresponding transformation of theology, anthropology, and ethics.

The paper will draw on Christian perspectives to address these challenges and provide insights on the question of what constitutes a human being and how we should understand the nature of God and transcendence in the age of transhumanism and AI. The paper will conclude with recommendations for further research and discussion on these important issues.

Session 12

The Intersection of Religion, Society, and Policy in East Asia (2)

Moderator: Gang-Hua Fan (Soochow University)

The Growth of Mega-churches and Urban Development in Gangnam, Seoul

Jang Hyung Chull (Induk University)

Abstract:

This research aims to analyze how five mega-churches in the Gangnam area have been affected by urban development from the 1970s to the 2000s and how they have contributed to shaping the socio-cultural character of Gangnam as the most affluent area of Seoul. In the 1970s and 1980s, they were part of the “growth machine” during the development of Gangnam. They laid the foundation for becoming mega-churches by means of absorbing the Shinjungsancheung flowing into Gangnam. In the 1990s, the “built environment” was created to resolve overaccumulation from economic development in Seoul. During this period, they spent the increased offerings on expanding their chapels and building annexes, halls in the countryside, and social welfare institutions. After the 2000s, they became simulacra, calling themselves ‘the best church in Korea,’ as hyper-reality through simulation in Gangnam’s high-end consumption culture. However, they are facing problems of a collapse in the simulation system.

Is the Relatively High Proportion of Religious Affiliation in Taiwan an Artifact? An Empirical Examination Using Survey Data from Japan, Korea, and Taiwan

Gang-Hua Fan (Soochow University)

Abstract:

Demographic data usually show that the proportion of religious affiliation is higher in Taiwan than those in Japan and in Korea. Instead of concluding that Taiwanese are generally more religious among these East Asian countries, some scholars suspect the relatively low proportion of non-affiliated in Taiwan is an artifact resulted from the measurement of “folk religion” in Taiwanese surveys. That is, Taiwanese who are classified as “Folk-religion-followers” (a response item only in Taiwanese surveys but not in other East Asian countries’ surveys) are actually non-religious and would have been categorized as “non-affiliated” if “folk religion” were not included in the Taiwanese questionnaires. The “true” proportion of the non-affiliated in Taiwan should be similar to those in Japan and Korea. Accordingly, if this “artifact hypothesis” is true, the empirical data should exhibit the following three patterns: (1) the combined proportion of the non-affiliated and folk-religion-followers in Taiwan is similar to those in Japan and in Korea; (2) no significant differences in terms of religiosity between the “non-affiliated” and “Folk-religion-followers” in Taiwan; (2) the degree of religiosity among the combined group of Taiwanese non-affiliated and folk-religion-followers should be similar to those of non-affiliated Japanese and Korean. In order to test the “artifact hypothesis” and to investigate whether Taiwanese are really more religious than Japanese and Korean, this research intend to use data drawn

from International Social Survey Programme: Religion IV - ISSP 2018 to examine whether the above-mentioned patterns exist.

Enchanted Companionship and Holistic Wellbeing among Korean religious youths

KYUHYUN JUNG (Sogang University)

Abstract:

The youths in South Korea, are in an uncertain global situation, face existential vulnerability in their life course. Particularly, the intensive economic development and shifting neo-liberalism system affect the existential insecurity of youths in the context of Compressed individualization. i.e., the mixture of Chang's(2001) compressed modernity and Beck's(1986) individualization of a (global) risk society. Drawing on the social background, the "privatization of religion"(Berger, 1967) is intertwined with diverse cultural codes including traditional, modern, and post-modern forces to Korean youths. This study focuses on religious youths: What does religion offer youths to overcome or cope with their vulnerability in the 'secular-risk' society?

We select over twenty youths for in depth-interviews from different religious groups e.g., Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhism.

"Enchanted companionship" is a significant experience for young believers who feel wellbeing nevertheless the situation of existential insecurity and compressed individualization.

Despite of religious characteristics, the "enchanted companionship" they relished for wellbeing was analyzed as holy-holistic healing, reciprocal transcendence, and solidary union. In particular, Catholic youths would pursue a community of haven; Protestant youths endeavor to witness 'evangelical triumphalism' on a secular battlefield; and Buddhist youths tend to flee to internal peace from the utilitarian complexities.

To sum up, the common factors of youth believers actively participating in religious groups are spiritual growth, reciprocal consolation, holy-holistic healing, and seeking the fullness of life. These factors boost holy-holistic welling: transcendental attitudes, and a sense of communal solidarity to overcome individuals' anxiety and vulnerability.

Unveiling the Complexities of Religious Perceptions in Japan:

A Survey-Based Study

Koki Shimizu (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

Japan is often considered a secular-rational society due to the relatively low number of individuals with religious affiliation. However, when asked about beliefs in gods, Buddhas, or the afterlife, many Japanese people respond positively. They actively participate in religious and cultural practices such as visiting shrines, attending New Year festivals, and conducting ancestral rituals at home.

The unique perception of religion in Japan can be attributed to the term "religion" itself. Coined

during the Meiji era as a translation of the English term, it did not originally exist in the Japanese language. When Japanese people hear the word "religion," they associate it with institutional religions from foreign countries or new religious movements that emerged after the Meiji era. As a result, while they are familiar with religious and cultural practices, they do not consider them as "religion" in the conventional sense.

To investigate this phenomenon, a survey titled "The Youth Attitudes Survey on Culture, Health and Religion in Japan" was conducted. The survey obtained responses from 751 Japanese residents aged 18-45. Participants were asked about their perceptions of various activities, celebrations, and events, and whether they believed them to have religious meaning or to be customary practices.

The survey revealed intriguing findings. Only around one-third of respondents considered activities like shrine visits and grave-visiting to have religious meaning. Surprisingly, Christmas was perceived as more religious than traditional Japanese practices. Furthermore, individuals who engaged in donation activities also perceived them to have religious meaning, suggesting that personal beliefs rather than institutional affiliation played a role in shaping their perceptions.

An exploratory factor analysis identified three factors: institutionalism, counter-culturalism or emphasis on alternative beliefs, and humility/hesitation in religious judgments. These factors provide typologies of religious perceptions among the Japanese population. Factors such as gender and educational attainment did not significantly influence these perceptions.

These findings shed light on the complex nature of religious perceptions in Japan. Further research is needed to explore the historical, sociocultural, and psychological factors that contribute to these perceptions. Understanding the diverse perspectives on religion in Japan is crucial for comprehensive studies of religion and for gaining broader insights into cultural and religious dynamics in society. Comparative studies with other countries can also provide valuable cross-cultural perspectives on religious perceptions and practices.

Session 13

Case Studies: Regional and Community Focus on Religion in East Asia

Moderator: Wei-hsian Chi (Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica)

How Does Vegetarianism Contribute to Well-Being? The Case of a Vegan Temple in Phitsanulok, Thailand

Kangjian WENG (Hokkaido University)

Abstract:

The rise of spirituality concept has led to the development of new sociological studies of religion that have their focus on marginal cultures that are used to be seen just a tradition or custom in previous studies. Vegetarianisms are one of such phenomena that lie on the “boundary” between the sacred and the secular.

Vegetarianisms are observed in various societies today, and in often cases, they have religious origins. The vegetarianism in Thailand is also rooted in religion used to be practiced by Chinese immigrants in Phuket. However, in the process of spreading throughout Thailand, peoples understanding on vegetarianism has changed. Today, Thai people considering vegetarianism as a form religious practice is minority. However, when looking at the major motives of those who enjoy vegetarian food, they tend to emphasize the improvement of their physical and mental conditions. In that sense, vegetarianism still has a spiritual aspect that works similarly to religion in people’s mind.

Then, how exactly do Thai people understand vegetarianism today? Is it totally non-religious nor spiritual? And how is it linked with their well-being? To explore these questions, the author conducted interviews, and a questionnaire survey of visitors to the vegan temple “Xi Thi Huk Tung” that is located in Phitsanulok Province. This paper analyzes both the interview and the survey data and report the major findings.

Incense, Pilgrimage and Materiality: New Approach to Ritual Study

Wei-hsian Chi (Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica)

Abstract:

Pilgrimage is a very special type of ritual activity in religious activities that involves a cross-regional element. The pilgrimage of popular religion in Taiwan is different from the Christian pilgrimage in that it involves a relationship between two temples. This study attempts to explore how the pilgrimage in Taiwanese popular religion has developed a new model in line with modern life form of Taiwanese people. The pilgrimage theory will be used to examine the function of Taiwans indigenous pilgrimage rituals. I would like to theorize the empirical findings, and the concepts of "fateful affiliation" and "potential effervescence" will be proposed to illustrate the religious characteristics of Taiwans popular religion. The cultural concept of "fateful affiliation" belongs to the personal interpretation of religious belonging, while "potential effervescence" belongs to the understanding of collectivity in the field of religion. The former is like the pursuit of faith identity, while the latter is like the intensity of the

traction of collective behavior. Using these two concepts, we can clearly see the key differences between the local pilgrimage in Taiwan and the Christian pilgrimage.

Traces of Chinese Taoism's Influence on Vietnamese Cao Dai Religion through the Worship of Guanshengdijun

Phuoc Tai Nguyen (FPT University)

Tran Phuong Chi (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics)

Abstract:

Taoism, a significant aspect of Chinese culture, has exerted a profound influence on various regions of China, such as those situated close to the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and beyond. This impact has also extended to other Asian countries, including Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, where it has played a crucial role in shaping the spiritual and cultural lives of local communities. In Vietnam, Taoism has contributed to the development of indigenous religions like Buu Son Ky Huong, Tu An Hieu Nghia, and Hoa Hao Buddhism, as well as influenced the practice of ancestor worship during religious ceremonies. Notably, the veneration of GuanShengDijun, a historical figure from China, has become a well-known symbol of the Cao Dai faith, which originated in Southern Vietnam. By examining the Taoist scripture Táoyuán Míng Shèngjīng associated with GuanShengDijun, one can comprehend the reasons why Vietnamese Cao Dai followers regard this figure as a significant part of their religious belief.

Keywords: Cao Dai religion, Guan Gong, Guan Di, religious belief, indigenous religion, Táoyuán Míng Shèngjīng.

The Chinese Way of Religion & Artificial Intelligence

Stefania Travagnin (SOAS, University of London)

Abstract:

The Buddhist robot-monk Xian'er, which was created and hosted at Longquan Monastery in Beijing, and the robotic version of the Confucian intellectual and calligrapher Wang Yangming (1472-1529), which is located in a Wang Yangming-themed park in Guiyang, are two examples of the adoption of artificial intelligence within the religious and philosophical spheres in China. The presence of robotics is a recent phenomenon in Chinese religions, but at the same time this is just a continuation and new development in the long-term interaction between religion and technology in Buddhism and other traditions.

This talk will address specifically the interface of religion and artificial intelligence in China. In a previous study I have examined the Buddhist robot-monk Xian'er within the context of Chinese Buddhism, from the perspective of Buddhist philosophy, within the wider domain of the use of robotics by world religions, and in relation to theories of post-humanism. In this talk I will shift my attention to the context of classical Chinese thought; I will explore Chinese philosophical perspectives and

current intellectual debates on the adoption of robotics, and assess this novelty as a Chinese phenomenon that is part of recent changes and trends in Chinese culture and society.