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East Asian Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

The 7th Annual Meeting of
East Asian Society for the Scientific Study of Religion

Korea University, Seoul, Korea
July 18th to 20th, 2025

Religion and Citizenship
in the Asian Context:
Theory, Practice, and Trends

Organized by

Global Research Institute, Korea University
Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University

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Korea University
Institute for Religion and Civic Culture, Kyung Hee University
National Research Foundation of Korea
Daesoon Academy of Sciences, Daejin University

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Session Overview

	Registration(8:30—)	Room Number	10:00–12:00		13:30–15:20		15:40–17:30
July 18 (Friday)	**Room 214** **Greetings** 09:00 Dean **Jung-Sun Han** (Korea University) **Keynote Speech** 09:10–9:50 Professor **Ram A. Cnaan** (University of Pennsylvania)	215	Session 1-1	Lunch	Session 2-1	Coffee Break	Session 3-1
		216	Session 1-2		Session 2-2		Session 3-2
		217	Session 1-3		Session 2-3		Session 3-3
		219	Session 1-4		Session 2-4		Session 3-4
July 19 (Saturday)	**Room 214** **General Assembly** 09:20 – 09:50	215	Session 4-1	Lunch	Session 5-1	Coffee Break	Session 6-1
		216	Session 4-2		Session 5-2		Session 6-2
		217	Session 4-3		Session 5-3		Session 6-3
		219	Session 4-4		Session 5-4		Session 6-4

◆ **Dinner Restaurant (18:00–): Soodang-Samyang Faculty House of Korea University (수당삼양 패컬티하우스)**

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Religion and Citizenship in the Asian Context: Theory, Practice, and Trends

Citizenship is a legal status and identity that signifies a person's membership in a particular nation-state. It encompasses a range of rights and responsibilities, and can be understood through several key dimensions, including legal status, identity and belonging, political participation, naturalization, and social and economic integration as well as globalization and dual citizenship.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping individual and collective identities. It fosters a sense of belonging and community among its adherents, influencing their participation in civic life and their sense of citizenship. In many countries, religious belief and practices are intertwined with laws and political systems, affecting citizens' rights and responsibilities, particularly regarding religious freedom and discrimination. While religion can facilitate social integration by providing a framework for moral and ethical behavior that are aligned with civic duties, it can also create barriers when beliefs or practices conflict with secular laws or societal norms. The intersection of religion and citizenship often involves gender dynamics. Religious doctrines can shape gender roles and expectations, which in turn affect women's and LGBTQ+ individual's participation in public life and their access to equal citizenship.

Religion can have positive impacts on citizenship, fostering a sense of community, moral responsibility, and civic engagement. The transcendental orientation of religion can promote global community consciousness and values such as humanity, peace, and global justice which, in turn, can drive global-level civic engagement and action through international solidarity and cooperation. Other benefits include building community, providing moral and ethical guidance, inspiring volunteerism and charity, promoting social harmony, encouraging civic participation, offering support during crises, advocating for human rights, and preserving cultural heritage and traditions. However, religion can also have negative impacts on citizenship, such as the exclusion and discrimination of those who do not share the same faith. Religious differences can lead to conflict and violence, both within and

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between communities. In some cases, religious groups may attempt to impose their beliefs through laws and policies, resisting progressive social changes, such as human rights of minorities. Additionally, religion can be exploited as a tool for political manipulation, where leaders harness religious sentiments to gain power or suppress dissent.

The Program Chair of the 2025 EASSSR Conference

Andrew Eungi Kim

Organizing Committee

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　　Francis Jae-ryong Song (Kyung Hee University, jrsong@khu.ac.kr)
　　Kwang Suk Yoo (Kyung Hee University, ksyooii@khu.ac.kr)
　　Hyong-Chol Kang (Kyung Hee University, anoldcity@khu.ac.kr)
　　Hye-Yeon Jang (Kyung Hee University, janghy@khu.ac.kr)
　　Yun Sang Yun (Korea University, yys0214@korea.ac.kr)

◆ Executive Council Meeting ◆

July 17 (Thursday), 6 to 8 pm

(Google Maps) Chamchi Gongbang Jonggak (참치공방 종각본점)
Address: 8 Jong-ro 9-gil, Jongno District, Seoul, Korea
Contact: +82-2-732-8014
70m from Exit 3 or 7 of Jong-Gak Station (Subway Line 1)

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Session Information

[Plenary Session] Jul 18 (Friday), 9:00-9:50 am

(Room 214, International Studies Hall)

[Greetings]

Dean Jung-Sun Han

(College of International Studies &
Graduate School of International Studies, Korea University)

[Keynote Speech]

Prof. Ram A. Cnaan (University of Pennsylvania)

"The Power and Marginalization of Religion in Contemporary Social Thought"

This lecture draws upon years of research and field observation, exploring the role of religion in modern society. Among all areas of scholarly inquiry, religion remains one of the most emotionally charged and socially contested topics. Unlike other fields, the study

of religion, particularly outside of departments dedicated to religious studies, often demands a form of intellectual justification or even an implicit apology. One is frequently asked: Why study a phenomenon perceived by many as archaic, irrational, or incompatible with scientific rigor?

In this lecture, I will demonstrate that religion is not only relevant but continues to serve as a profound and enduring social force. Through empirical insights and theoretical reflections, I will highlight how religion shapes public life, identity, and moral discourse across cultures and contexts.

I will also examine the institutional reluctance—if not outright resistance—within the humanities and social sciences to engage seriously with religion as a legitimate area of inquiry. Drawing on both personal experiences and testimonies from students and scholars, I will show how the study of religion is often marginalized, not due to a lack of relevance or rigor, but due to a historical legacy of tension between religious authority and scientific inquiry. The lingering ethos of this conflict has led many in academia to treat religion not as a resource for social insight or improvement, but as a competitor to be sidelined or dismissed.

Ultimately, I argue for a more open and intellectually honest engagement with religion, one that recognizes its complexities, its social significance, and its potential as a force for both continuity and change in contemporary society.

Day 1 — Session 1

July 18 (Friday), 10:00-12:00 am

[Session 1-1] Religious Freedom and State Control *(Room 215)*

Moderator: Nanlai Cao (City University of Hong Kong)

Analyzing the Evolving Freedoms of Hui Muslims in China: Reconciling the Preservation of Distinctness with the Advancement of Ethnic Harmony

Jonathan Brasnett (University of Ottawa)

Islam has had a continuous presence in China since its introduction via the Silk Road in the seventh century. Successive Chinese rulers took different approaches to governing its Muslim minorities, but they were generally permitted to practice their faith openly and maintain the necessary religious institutions. Those Muslims that settled in regions that were predominantly populated by the Han Chinese ethnic group often intermarried or otherwise integrated with the majority Han, and over generations came to resemble them in everything but their religion affiliation.

These Muslims, known as the Hui, are dispersed throughout China's major urban centres, but are more densely concentrated in Central Chinese provinces such as Ningxia, Qinghai, Gansu, and Shaanxi. They differ significantly from Uyghur and other Central Asian predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities concentrated in modern-day Xinjiang, who maintain a distinct culture, language and identity, and who have historically advocated for their region's secession from China. To maintain control over Xinjiang and ensure regional peace and stability, the Chinese government has unsurprisingly imposed strict regulations on Islamic practices and institutions, limiting the influence of the religion over its local adherents and ensuring the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party. Conversely, until very recently, Hui Muslims have enjoyed relative freedom to practice their Islamic faith, albeit within the legal frameworks approved by the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Drawing on NGO reports, personal testimonies, and the author's fieldwork in Qinghai, Gansu, Yunnan, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Henan, and Beijing, this study examines the Chinese government's recent policy shifts toward the Hui. It finds that state-led efforts at Sinicization and expanded surveillance are increasingly targeting Hui Islamic practices, especially in regions with significant Hui populations. These measures reflect a broader national strategy to curtail the influence of ideologies beyond the state's control, promote a uniform national identity, and enforce "ethnic harmony" through centralized authority.

Reconfiguring Religious Globalization in a Muslim-Majority Context: The Variegated Landscape of Chinese Religions in Dubai

Yuting Wang (American University of Sharjah) & Nanlai Cao (City University of Hong Kong)

This study explores the divergent patterns of religious globalization in the Muslim-majority context of Dubai, UAE with a focus on the growing presence of immigrant Chinese religious communities. Dubai, a major global hub, provides a compelling case study of immigrant religions in a highly regulated yet cosmopolitan setting. Unlike many other Muslim-majority nations, the UAE promotes a policy of religious tolerance, positioning itself as a center of moderate Islam while maintaining strict state control over religious expression in public. This approach reflects neoliberal multiculturalism (Ong, 2006), where religious diversity is accommodated selectively, primarily serving economic and geopolitical agenda. As a result of shifting state priorities, religious groups perceived as non-threatening to the state-approved orthodox find a relatively favorable environment to practice their faith.

Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork, this study examines how immigrant Chinese religious organizations—Christians, Buddhists, Folk religions, and Muslims—navigate the UAE's religious regulatory framework, integrate into local institutions, and adapt their practices within a structured yet fluid religious landscape. We illustrate three types of religious globalization in the context of regulated religious

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cosmopolitanism, namely the transnational congregation of Chinese Christianity, the rooted ethnic religion of Chinese Islam, and the diffused chamber-based Chinese Buddhism. Each type has evolved distinctively to adapt to the changing political economy of the host society. By portraying the variegated landscape of Chinese religions in Dubai, we seek to shed light on the politics of religious diversity in this Muslim-majority context and contrast the UAE's model of state-managed pluralism with other religious governance models, including the U.S. free-market approach (Finke & Stark, 2005), China's state-controlled "three-color religious market" (Yang, 2006), and the French principle of laïcité, which seeks to minimize religious influence in public life. Unlike these models, the UAE constructs a controlled but accommodating religious sphere, likening itself to historic Cordoba, where religious coexistence is promoted as part of a broader strategy to enhance its global image and economic competitiveness.

Choosing God Over Caesar: Survey-Based Insights From Taiwanese and Hong Kong Theological Seminaries

Ray Wang (National Cheongchi University)

The theory of religious economy applies economic principles to religious behavior, particularly in relation to religious participation, interfaith competition, and the influence of religious institutions (Iannaccone 1994, 1998, 2016; Stark, Iannaccone, and Finke 1996; Finke and Stark 2000, 2005). While its supply-side focus offers valuable insights, it also leaves certain questions unanswered—particularly in the context of East Asian religious communities, where postcolonial politics have led to low-level inter-faith competition but extremely high-level of regulation, and even repression (Yang 2005; Cheng and Brown 2006; Ashiwa and Wank 2009; Kuo 2017, 2018; Vala 2018; Wang 2019). One unresolved issue is how micro-level decisions not only respond to but also shape supply-side conditions. To explore this question, this study surveyed Chinese alumni from two theological seminaries—one in Hong Kong and one in Taiwan—to examine whether their decision to study abroad influenced their career trajectories. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns and worsening human rights conditions in both China and Hong Kong, the study remains incomplete. However, preliminary survey findings support a revised version of the spiritual capital thesis and highlight the need for further research into the complex relationship between religion and politics.

Moderator: Wai-Chung Ho (Hong Kong Baptist University)

The Virtue of Love in Confucianism: Official Songs and Citizenship in School Music Education in Contemporary China

Wai-Chung Ho (Hong Kong Baptist University)

The concept of Confucianism encompasses three key dimensions in Chinese thought: the Confucian school (Ru Jia), the scholarly tradition associated with Confucius (Ru Xue), and the religious aspects of Confucian philosophy (Ru Jiao). While its role as an official political doctrine has diminished over time, the spiritual essence of Confucianism has endured for over 2,500 years, making it one of China's most influential philosophies. Central to this legacy is the virtue of love, which is integral to Confucian ethics and serves as a foundation for citizenship education. The I Ching (The Book of Change) succinctly captures this enduring wisdom, stating, "The sages devised guidance through the way of the gods, and the people of the empire became obedient."

In the 20th century, Confucian ideals faced significant opposition, perceived by revolutionaries as impediments to individual aspirations in a rapidly changing society. The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) marked a period of profound criticism and suppression of Confucian thought. However, the revival of Confucianism in the post-1980s period emerged as a response to these radical ideologies, reestablishing its relevance in contemporary society. Today, Confucianism offers a moral framework that emphasizes love, harmony, respect for authority, and social responsibility—values essential for fostering responsible citizenship amid economic transformation. This resurgence has significantly influenced educational curricula and governance policies, embedding Confucian ideals into public life and personal conduct. As part of a broader cultural renaissance, the revival of Confucianism celebrates traditional Chinese culture as a source of national pride, particularly within school music education. Here, the chanting of Confucian classics, traditional music, and mastery of classical instruments cultivates a deep appreciation for harmony, wisdom, and artistic expression.

This paper employs a qualitative analysis of officially approved music textbooks to explore the intersection of Confucianism, songs, the virtue of love, and political ideology within the context of citizenship education. It aims to enhance our understanding of how music education influences the socio-political and collective identities of Chinese students, focusing specifically on the theme of love. By investigating the unit titles, song titles, and lyrics within three sets of officially approved music textbooks—comprising a total of 36 volumes, with 12 volumes for each textbook series covering two terms per grade for grades 1 to 6 in primary

school—this study analyzes the role of school songs in promoting national and global harmony through the lens of Confucian values.

The central argument asserts that school music education, deeply rooted in Confucian principles and moral teachings, serves as a vital conduit for ideological messages that promote harmony on both national and global levels. In this context, citizenship education is intricately linked with the virtue of love as articulated in the song lyrics, highlighting the intersection of these themes within national and global frameworks. Lyrics centered around love in music education act as a powerful vehicle for conveying political ideology, effectively integrating Confucian values with the broader educational agenda. This analysis underscores how musical expressions in schools not only cultivate individual virtues but also contribute to a collective identity that resonates with national aspirations while fostering a sense of global harmony and interconnectedness.

Ikeda Daisaku on Artificial Intelligence: A Buddhist Perspective on Human Becoming at the Posthuman Turn

Jason Goulah (DePaul University)

Japanese Buddhist thought leader Ikeda Daisaku (1928 – 2023) engaged with the topic of A.I. across multiple publications since at least 1970. Here, I provide a meta-analysis of those works, none of which has been translated into English or excerpted in the anglophone scholarship. I synthesize Ikeda's perspectives on AI relative to two interlocking questions to which he consistently returns when assessing the impact of AI, computerization, and the hyperfocus on reason and rationality underpinning and engendered by these: What does it mean to be human? and What is the nature of civilization and humanity? Thereafter, I examine Ikeda's repeated calls to bring intuition into balance with reason, as well as his equating of intuition with what he terms the shigokoro (詩心), or "poetic mind/heart/spirit." I consider what Ikeda means by intuition and the poetic mind/heart/spirit and trace the roots and parallels of his perspectives on these in and with the work of Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), and Makiguchi Tsunesaburō (1871-1944), the latter two of whom also situate intuition within the poetic. I conclude with Ikeda's repeated calls for a "life-sized paradigm," which he situates within his broad framework of ningen kyōiku (人間教育; human education), to reestablish human interactions in reality, develop intuition and creativity, and restore the poetic mind/heart/spirit, for he argues such restoration "will lead to the restoration of education and be the driving force for children to secure true happiness for themselves."

A Spiritual Aspect of Animal Citizenship in the Hyper-Connected Society

Kwang Suk Yoo (Kyung Hee University)

Advancements in hyper-connected technology—driven by big data, the Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence—are creating a hybrid society that imposes a

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new kind of civic identity on both human and non-human animals. This paper explores a spiritual conceptualization of animal citizenship suited to the hyper-connected context, a perspective that has been largely neglected by existing theories of animal rights. Unlike the Western rationalistic tradition rooted in Cartesian and Christian dualism, Korean culture has long conceptualized animals not merely as domesticated livestock or cold-blooded beasts, but also as spiritual beings akin to humans. Evidence of Koreans' belief in animal spirituality, grounded mainly in Buddhism and folk religions, is readily found in historical texts and cultural traditions. Notably, such beliefs have successfully resisted the extreme anthropocentrism of Confucian rationalism in the past, and continue to do so against contemporary Christian or secular rationalism. Building on this tradition of animal spirituality, this paper argues that theories of animal rights should be conceptually complemented by the lived animal spirituality experienced in daily life, especially as mediated by hyper-connected technology.

[Special Session 1-3] Adaptation and Renewal: Transformation Strategies of East Asian Religious Organizations in Contemporary Society *(Room 217)*
(Part 1: Theoretical Frameworks and Traditional Adaptations)

Moderator: Gyungwon Lee (Daejin University)

How Traditional Religious Organizations Transform and Prosper? A Social Movement Perspective

Shun-hing Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University)

In Hong Kong, many traditional religious organizations in Daoism and Buddhism have faced stagnation and decline due to social and political changes. However, a few have successfully transformed and continue to thrive. This paper explores the compelling question of how some traditional religious organizations can survive and grow amidst a shifting sociopolitical landscape, utilizing a social movement perspective. Prominent scholars Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow proposed the "contentious politics" approach in the 1990s, emphasizing the importance of studying the mechanisms and processes involved in specific contentious episodes. These mechanisms are categorized into three types: environmental, relational, and cognitive. This paper applies the contentious politics approach to examine Sik Sik Yuen (嗇色園), a renowned Daoist organization dedicated to the worship of Wong Tai Sin (黃大仙). In Hong Kong, two Daoist temples honor Wong Tai Sin: Yuen Ching Kwok (元清閣) and Sik Sik Yuen. While Yuen Ching Kwok remains a small traditional Daoist shrine, Sik Sik Yuen has

evolved into a modern religious temple offering relief, medical, education and social services since the 1960s. This paper argues that Sik Sik Yuen has successfully navigated the challenges posed by a changing external environment, by fostering connections among individuals, groups and interpersonal networks, as well as by managing cognitive shifts in individual and collective perceptions. These factors have contributed to the growth and prosperity of this Daoist organization and temple in the modernized city of Hong Kong.

A New Look at Laozi from Three Early Biographies

Thomas Michael (Beijing Normal University)

The Chinese tradition holds that a historical person called Laozi 老子 was responsible for the teachings recorded in the Daodejing 道德經, but different early Daoist groups, which can be understood as interpretive communities, religious communities, or schools of learning, understood him differently: Huang-Lao Daoism 黃老道 saw him as a political philosopher heralding a vision of perfect government, Tianshi Daoism 天師道 as a cosmic deity revealing the Dao as a proper object of worship and the source of moral purification, and Yangsheng Daoism 養生道 as a master of bodily cultivation teaching the esoteric arts of nourishing the vital physical body . Positioned alongside the philosophy of the Daodejing, this presentation examines how some of the early biographies of Laozi, either by causation or consequence, are vitally tied to these different perspectives that demonstrate three early and important lines of the Dao stemming from Laozi and the Daodejing. Among these three ways of understanding him, the most familiar is as the political philosopher emphasized by Huang-Lao Daoism, but his recognition as the cosmic deity of Tianshi Daoism is anything but negligible. Nevertheless, the earliest Chinese understanding of him, which is also the least understood and least familiar among modern readers, is as the master of bodily cultivation of Yangsheng Daoism. And while the Daodejing does not refer to the particular bodily cultivation that fills its pages as yangsheng 養生, by the Han Dynasty, it was widely recognized and called as such. Because of this situation, this presentation pays particular attention to three biographies of Laozi that reveal him as the master of yangsheng, namely from the Shiji 史記, the Liexian zhuan 列仙傳, and the Shenxian zhuan 神仙傳.

The Contemporary Inheritance and Innovation of Taoist Health Preservation Techniques: A Case Study of the Ma Xian Belief

Lu Li (Xiamen University)

Taoist health preservation, with "the unity of heaven and man" as its core philosophy, emphasizes aligning with natural rhythms and achieving a balance

between body and mind. Its theories of "nurturing both form and spirit" and "cultivating both life and nature" provide a unique framework for modern health management. In response to the challenges of an aging society, Taoist organizations have transformed traditional health wisdom into quantifiable scientific practices through technological integration and community embedding, such as using virtual reality for guided exercises and co-building Taoist health communities. Simultaneously, Taoist health preservation is establishing legitimacy in its scientific transformation, for example, by validating the efficacy of "Baduanjin" (a traditional exercise) for chronic diseases in the elderly through clinical trials, and promoting the modernization of Taoist medicine through international intangible cultural heritage industrialization projects. However, the transformation process also faces ethical controversies arising from the public disclosure of traditional secret methods, as well as the impact of commercialization on the core value of "reducing desires and minimizing selfishness." Therefore, the contemporary transformation of Taoist health preservation is not only a creative interpretation of "following the way of nature," but also reflects the proactive strategy of religious organizations to reconstruct cultural authority in a secularized context, offering significant insights into how East Asian religions adapt to modern society.

The Tenrikyo Teaching of 'No Distinction Between Male and Female Pines,' and Present Society: Proposing Gender Equality Based on Tenrikyo

Midori Horiuchi (Tenri University)

In 1966, religious scholar Kazuo Kasahara published Religion at a Turning Point. In this book, Kasahara discusses Shinshu (True Pure Land Buddhism), Tenrikyo, and Soka Gakkai, and states that it is necessary to look back historically at the role of religion when it was born in response to the demands of the people in a new era. Tenrikyo, founded in 1838, incorporated a faith that transcended the framework of the traditional Buddhist parishioner (danka) system, and provided ordinary people the freedom of faith. Its doctrines presented the meaning of the creation of human beings, stating that each human being is equally a "brother and sister" as a "child of God" and that there is no hierarchy based on origin, status, gender, or other factors. In other words, the religion's doctrine aims to build a world realizing DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

Here, I would like to consider what Tenrikyo can propose for the realization of a gender-equal society, taking the Foundress's words, "No distinction between male and female pine trees," as a clue.

These words of the Foundress encouraged religious activity among women of that time, who customarily had low social status. In today's society, which is trying to move toward true gender equality, I will examine the contemporary potential of these words.

Daesoon Jinrihoe: A New Perspective on New Religious Movements in Modern Korea

Mohammad Alam (Dhaka University)

The emergence of new religious movements (NRMs) in Korea has been closely tied to periods of social upheaval. Throughout history, the emergence of world religions has often coincided with periods of chaos, as if each new crisis gave rise to a new religious movement. Major world religions, for example, including Abrahamic and Indian traditions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Nathism—have arisen in response to societal crises. This pattern is evident in the historical development of both global religions and Korean NRMs, which have often emerged amidst socio-political turmoil. Korea witnessed a surge in NRMs from the mid-19th century, beginning with the founding of Donghak in 1860. Early NRMs were politically engaged, opposing Western encroachment, but their focus shifted toward social welfare following the failure of the Donghak Revolution in 1894. However, from 1860 to 1969, NRMs in Korea faced significant challenges. Among these movements, Daesoon Jinrihoe, rooted in the teachings of Kang Jeung-san, formally emerged in 1969. Despite political fluctuations, Daesoon Jinrihoe distinguished itself through its well-structured doctrines, social commitments, and dedicated following. This study aims to analyze Daesoon Jinrihoe's historical roots, theological principles, and societal contributions, comparing its position with other Korean NRMs. In this connection, the study will trace the historical background and formation of Daesoon Jinrihoe through the lens of the history of Korean NRMs. It will also explore how the movement navigates contemporary challenges such as secularization and globalization. Methodologically, this research will adopt a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating historical analysis, theological examination, and sociological inquiry. Primary sources—including Daesoon Jinrihoe scriptures, official publications, and archival materials—will be examined alongside secondary academic sources. In sum, this study argues that Daesoon Jinrihoe, though classified as a New Religion, has deep historical roots in Korea's ancient religious traditions, signifying its indigenous nature. Its syncretic characteristics highlight its significance in Korea's broader religious transformation, making it a crucial yet underexplored subject of academic inquiry.

Moderator: Stefania Travagnin (SOAS, University of London)

Ageing in Buddhist China: Buddhist elderly care in contemporary China

Yajun Wang (SOAS, University of London)

This research focuses on the development of Buddhist philanthropy in elderly care and palliative care in response to the significant growth of ageing population in contemporary Chinese society. While ageing problem in China has become unprecedented due to the shirking working-age population and challenges from COVID, the demands of elderly care and funeral service have shoot up. Buddhism has been the expertise in solving death-related problems and find its way of serving elderly care in ageing society. Specifically, this project scrutinises a new trend of Buddhist nursing homes built by the Buddhist institutions next to the temples, to not only provide elderly care to the residents and deliver them Buddhist practices to reduce pain from illness and generate good karma for a better afterlife. This practice of Buddhist philanthropy is encouraged by Humanistic Buddhism, the major Buddhist movement throughout the modern period in China, then became as one of the core ideologies of Buddhist Association of China. Buddhist philanthropy on elderly care resonates with not only Chinese essential culture of filial piety but also the goal of the Chinese government to solve the urgent aging issue; the atheist Chinese state has been published many beneficial policies supporting Buddhist institutions to take social responsibility by delivering elderly care services.

Buddhist philanthropy in contemporary China has been extraordinarily little studied and remained many unsolved questions. This project aims to understand Buddhist philanthropy as a form of modern transformation of Buddhism, in relation to social and political changes. I will investigate historical and textual accounts of Buddhist aging support from imperial period to contemporary China, and Humanistic Buddhism in especial, to learn about the shift and modernization of Buddhist ideology. The Chinese policies on Buddhism will be analysed to understand the relation between religion and state in PRC. To comprehend Buddhist elderly care in contemporary China in the practical aspects, this research contains case studies of ethnographic works on three major Buddhist temples operating Buddhist philanthropy and elderly care: Nanshan Jiang Temple in Hangzhou 杭州南山讲寺, Donglin Monastery in Lushan Jiangxin 江西庐山东林寺 and Buddhist institutions in Mountain Emei; it examines Buddhist daily practices on elderly care and compares Buddhist institutions in different areas of China. This

project is not only the first study of Buddhist philanthropy on elderly care in Buddhist Studies, but also can be beneficial to the field of Religious Studies, Chinese Studies, Social Science and Development Studies in China.

Healthy Ageing: Religious Milieus and Long-Term Care in Taiwan

<div align="right">André Laliberté (University of Ottawa)</div>

My talk will present tentative findings about the responses from different religious milieus to the long-term care crisis faced by Taiwanese society. After introducing the methodological challenges of measuring the influence of religious circles on policy development, I will focus in particular on charitable associations associated with Catholicism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, and their specific contributions at both ends of the care chain. My presentation will emphasize that the differing responses from religions relate to the specific context of their embeddedness in local society rather than their theology. Based on documents from the Ministry of Interior' bureaucracy for religious affairs and the agencies responsible for social welfare, ageing, and health care for the last few decades, my paper will present the main features of long term care policies developed since 2000 and how religious milieus have responded. I will advance the idea of a religious division of labor in addressing the variety of issues relevant to care in an ageing society.

A New Good Death: Bodily Donations and Their Intersections with Religions in Contemporary Taiwan

<div align="right">C. Julia Huang (National Tsing Hua University)</div>

Bodily donations are often framed within the context of altruism, frequently analyzed through the lens of Maussian gift theory, which emphasizes donor and individual decision-making. This gift-of-life and individualist approach may be inadequate on account of the bodily donations in societies where the decision to treat human remains continues to be a family matter. In this work-in-progress paper, I will contextualize bodily donations in the shifting deathscape of Taiwan. The traditional mortuary practices have significantly changed, to name a few, from land burials to cremation, from a graveyard to a columbarium, and most recently, to the various "green" burials. Concomitant to the shifting deathscape is the prominence of large modern organizations of Buddhism, rising environmentalism, and the new arrangement of ancestor worship. Bodily donations for whole-body donation and organ transplants entered the public sphere about the same time when the shifting landscapes for death and religion were underway. How has the scientific practice of bodily donations intersected with Buddhism, environmentalism, and ancestor worship? I would argue that the increasing acceptance of bodily

donations involves framing a new "good death" with the Buddhist ethic of equanimity and the concept of shared – and transferable – family merits in Chinese culture. The medical procedure for gross anatomy and organ transplants is subsumed into the liminal stage between the end of life and the traditional mortuary practices.

An Inclusive Bodhisattva Path: The Tzu Chi Project of Global Citizenship and Global Community

Stefania Travagnin (SOAS, University of London)

The Taiwanese Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation was established by the Buddhist nun Cheng Yen in 1966, in Hualian, on the eastern coast of Taiwan. From a local charity group made of a few housewives, Tzu Chi gradually attracted volunteers and members from the entire island and later overseas and has eventually become one of the major Taiwanese transnational religious organizations. In several countries Tzu Chi has also been registered as INGO. At present, Tzu Chi has provided relief to 136 countries spread in all the continents, counts around 200 Buddhist nuns, a hundred thousand of certified members and millions of volunteers. Charity has been the leading mission of the Foundation, in line with the practice of 'Humanistic Buddhism' and the spirit of compassion of the Mahayana Bodhisattva path, but also drawing from Confucian moral values and universal ethical principles. Tzu Chi has built hospitals, universities, runs a major bone marrow bank, and is a world-leading organization in the support of global challenges like refugee crisis and environmental protection.

My research focuses on the multi-faith and non-Asian membership of this (Buddhist) global charity, and it is based on multi-site fieldwork in Tzu Chi missions in the Middle East (Turkey and Jordan, where the majority of volunteers and aid recipients are Syrian refugees), Africa (especially South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi), and Latin America (main focus on the Dominican Republic and Argentina). My study explains how and why Tzu Chi could create an inclusive environment where differences in belief and culture did not undermine but reinforced charity missions, addresses the Tzu Chi framework of cross-cultural negotiation and process of integration far from home, and unpacks Tzu Chi tactics of women's empowerment that have provided female communities with a new sense of self-confidence. In this talk, I will reflect especially on the potential of the 'Tzu Chi model' of humanitarian action in informing charity work worldwide, their contribution to a new template for global citizenship, and their foundation of a global community.

July 18 (Friday), 13:30-15:20

[Session 2-1] Religion and New Identity *(Room 215)*

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

An Inquiry into the Possible Factors Behind Shifts in Religious Identity in Taiwan

Gang-Hua Fan (Soochow University)

The influence of religion on human life has been widely discussed since the mid-20th century. On one hand, some scholars argue that the authority and significance of religion in human society have continuously declined in the process of secularization. On the other hand, with the rise of globalization, the competition and integration between Eastern and Western religions have become more frequent than ever. Although the number of regular churchgoers in institutionalized religions has gradually decreased, other scholars contend that the public's yearning for religion and spirituality has not diminished, leading to the increasing privatization and personalization of religious practices. Amid these differing academic perspectives, research on changes in individual religious identity has garnered growing attention. Changes in individual religious identity generally fall into three categories: individuals who have never had a religion; individuals who have consistently adhered to the same religion from childhood; and individuals whose religious identity has changed—whether shifting between belief and non-belief, or among different religions.

According to surveys, over 85% of adults in Taiwan self-identify as religious, placing the country among those with the highest religious adherence rates in East Asia. Religious beliefs and practices are therefore highly significant in the daily lives of Taiwanese people, making changes in individual religious identity a topic worthy of in-depth study. Since the 1990s, numerous scholars have explored religious conversion in Taiwanese society, accumulating a substantial body of empirical research. These studies have found that for Taiwanese people of different ethnic origins, religious conversion behaviors are influenced by factors such as social networks and major life events. However, most existing studies are small-scale qualitative investigations focusing on specific religious groups. Quantitative studies remain limited and often lack systematic comparisons of the socio-demographic characteristics between individuals who have experienced changes in religious identity and those who have not. Furthermore, few studies examine the relationship between uncertainty and religious belief. As a result, we

still lack a broad and clear understanding of the patterns of inter-religious shifts in religious identity among the general population in Taiwan, as well as the demographic and psychosocial factors influencing such dynamics.

To address this research gap, this study utilizes the most recent 2024 Taiwan Social Change Survey data to describe the current landscape of religious identity change among the Taiwanese population. It further employs socio-demographic traits and perceived uncertainty as predictive factors to explore the possible causes behind changes in religious identity in Taiwan.

Has Religious Life Become Stratified? A Study on Social Class and Regional Differences in Weekend Religious Activities

Kyuhyun Jung (Sogang University)

This study investigates how religious practices vary across socioeconomic class and geographical contexts. While religions traditionally espouse values of class integration, solidarity, and communal harmony, actual religious lives remain inextricably linked to socio-structural inequalities within communities. This contradiction forms the central tension examined in our research.

Previous scholarship on religion and class in Korean society has primarily developed along two trajectories: studies analyzing correlations between individual socioeconomic characteristics and religious characteristics, and research illuminating the cultural-political implications of region-based class features combined with specific religious affiliations. However, these approaches have failed to provide an empirical analysis of how class characteristics at both individual and local levels complexly interact with believers' lived religious experiences.

This research gap becomes particularly significant in the post-COVID-19 landscape where religious participation has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. While existing research documents accelerating unchurching alongside increasing diversification, individualization, and polarization of religiosity, limited attention has been given to understanding which groups continue engaging in collective religious rituals and communal networks, and within which local contexts this persistence occurs. This question is especially pressing for faith traditions that fundamentally emphasize face-to-face community.

To address this knowledge gap, our study employs data from the 2023 'Seoul Survey' to analyze hierarchical and regional differences among Protestants and Catholics organized around Sunday (weekend) religious participants. Through multilevel binary logistic regression modeling, we examine how class differences at the individual level and class-cultural differences at the district (Gu: an intermediate administrative division within metropolitan cities and the capital, Seoul) level of residence correlate with Sunday religious activity patterns.

Our analysis reveals complex interactions between socioeconomic factors and religious participation in a post-pandemic urban environment. By empirically

documenting the class implications of Christianity within the restructured religious-cultural landscape of metropolitan South Korea, this study contributes to the sociology of religion in the urban context and enhances our understanding of how religious communities are evolving in response to social stratification pressures.

We anticipate that our findings will illuminate the socioeconomic dimensions of contemporary religious practice and deepen scholarly understanding of religious community transformation in the post-pandemic era. This research ultimately questions whether religious spaces—traditionally conceived as sites of class integration and solidarity—have themselves become subject to the same stratification processes observable in other domains of social life.

When Faith Takes a Backseat: Explaining Individual Differentials of Secular Attitudes in South Korea

Hyun Woo Kim (Chungbuk National University)
& Francis Jae-Ryong Song (Kyung Hee University)

This study investigates individual differentials in secular attitudes in South Korea, conceptualizing secular attitudes as the prioritization of worldly values—such as wealth, longevity, career success, personal happiness and others—over religious commitment. Unlike traditional secularization theories that focus on macro-level religious decline, this study emphasizes the micro-level determinants of secular attitudes. Using a newly developed measurement approach, the analysis examines how demographic characteristics, religious identity, and the strength of religiosity shape variations in secular attitudes. The findings suggest that secular attitudes are not merely the inverse of religiosity but represent an independent dimension influenced by diverse social factors. By distinguishing between religious commitment and the competition between religious and secular values, this study provides new insights into the formation and implications of secular attitudes in a rapidly changing religious landscape.

On the Modern Challenges, Applications, and Healing of Religious Practice

ChinChen Cheng (National Cheungchi University)

Modern citizenship, which marks a person's belonging to a nation-state, plays an important rolein many dimensions with its series of rights and responsibilities. It has its own personal identity, legal status, belonging, political participation, social and economic integration, and globalization response and support. The role that religion and faith play in their lives, in addition to cultivating a sense of belonging and social awareness, influences participation in civic life and civic consciousness, and even provides a moral and ethical behavioral framework that is consistent

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with civic obligations to promote social integration. The global sense of community and values such as humanity, peace and justice are testing the challenges of ethnic groups that appear to have conflicting interests but are nonetheless closely linked to each other due to their living environments and have no choice but to cooperate with each other. This article attempts to present some of the current attempts to use religious practices to address some of the challenges of the modern environment, as well as their applications in other areas and the hopes and visions that appear to bring about personal healing and environmental sustainability. Contemplative practice, meditation, mindfulness, Zen, insight, yoga, contemplative prayer, spirituality, awakening, Tao, etc., use different cultures and media to convey messages between humans and the universe. The concepts of quantum theory and quantum entanglement from modern scientific research are used to interpret the changes and impacts brought about by religious practice. Can the transcendental orientation of religion truly transcend the framework of national culture, resolve obstacles and bring about a synchronous ascension of global community consciousness?

Keyword : Religious practice、Healing、quantum theory、quantum entanglement、Contemplative

[Session 2-2] Religion and Social Welfare in East Asia *(Room 216)*

Moderator: Koki Shimizu (Doshisha University)

Effect of Social Network on Happiness: The Moderating Effect of Religion and Religiosity

Myeonghwan Hwang (Yonsei University)

This study aims to empirically analyze the effects of religion (including no religion) and religiosity (the degree of religious belief and frequency of attendance) on happiness and the mediating effect of the social network between them. To this end, 2023 Korean General Social Survey(KGSS) data is used for data analysis. The research question is follows:

First, does religion (including no religion) and religiosity (degree of religious belief and frequency of attendance) affect the size of social networks?

Second, does the size of social networks have an effect on happiness?

Third, does religion (including no religion) and religiosity (degree of religious belief and frequency of attendance) influence happiness?

To answer these research questions, regression analysis is used. Here are the expected outcomes of this study:

First, religion (including no religion) and religiosity (degree of religious belief and frequency of attendance) will have a positive effect on the size of social

networks. This impact of religion and religiosity on the size of social networks will vary depending on the type of religion, i.e, whether it is Buddhism, Protestant, Catholic or no religion.

Second, the size of social networks will have a positive effect on individuals' happiness. It seems that the bigger the social network is, the higher happiness becomes.

Third, religion (including no religion) and religiosity (degree of religious belief and frequency of attendance) will positively affect individuals' happiness. The effect of religion and religiosity on happiness will be different according to the type of religion (Buddhism, Protestant, Catholic, and no religion).

Therefore, the results of this study will demonstrate that types of religion (Buddhism, Protestant, Catholic, and no religion), the extrinsic religiosity (frequency of attendance), and the intrinsic religiosity (degree of religious belief) will heighten one's happiness and are mediated by the size of social networks. In other words, people who have different types of religion will have different social networks and it results in the difference in happiness among them.

How Religious Practitioners Engage with Death and End-of-Life Care: A Quantitative Text Analysis

Emi Mase-Hasegawa (J. F. Oberlin University) & Koki Shimizu (Doshisha University)

In contemporary society, religion is often viewed as a private matter. Individuals shape their own religious perspectives by drawing from various traditions, creating a melting pot, mosaic, or à la carte belief system. In Japan, where folk beliefs rooted in animism and ancestor worship remain prevalent, religious boundaries frequently blur across traditions such as Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, and new religious movements.

However, despite the growing privatization of religion, death remains a universal existential reality. Religious practitioners play a crucial role in alleviating patients' anxieties about death and supporting bereaved families. While previous studies have explored their roles in terminal care and grief support, few have systematically examined how they personally confront death and the dilemmas they face. This study addresses this gap through quantitative text analysis of qualitative interviews with 16 Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian practitioners.

This presentation is structured in two parts. The first part provides an overview of our broader research project, outlining its objectives and scope. The second part presents empirical findings from our qualitative interview study. Using quantitative text analysis, we identify underlying thematic structures and cross-religious variations in how religious practitioners conceptualize and articulate death. Additionally, we examine the challenges and dilemmas they encounter in end-of-life care and explore how these experiences shape their perspectives on death.

This study contributes to the sociology of religion by offering empirical insights into how religious practitioners navigate existential challenges. Moreover, the findings have practical implications for interfaith approaches to palliative and grief care in aging societies.

A Feminist Approach to Later Life: A Study Focusing on Sapporo YWCA

Jinger Zhou (Hokkaido University)

In contemporary Japan, where the challenges of an aging society are becoming increasingly pronounced, the traditional concept of "successful aging" has faced significant criticism for its underlying heteronormative and ableist assumptions, rendering it inadequate. In response, there is a pressing need to move beyond merely describing the current state of aging and instead adopt more inclusive and diversified perspectives in aging studies.

This study, based on a sociological investigation of the Sapporo YWCA, a local women's Christian NGO, observes the presence of a feminist and spiritual approach to later life. Christianity inherently carries values of compassion and care, and as the aging population grows, older adults have transitioned from being perceived solely as recipients of aid to becoming integral members within their communities. Yet beyond the confines of family roles, they continue to maintain agency through active participation in volunteer and learning communities － a form of agency that is both religious and feminist.

At the YWCA, interpersonal relationships are characterized by participation, dialogue, and communication, fostering a sense of relaxed sisterhood. This inclusive environment enables members of different faiths to engage in free and equal exchanges. Furthermore, within a matriarchal belief system, older women are symbolically represented as the final stage in the maiden-mother-crone archetype. Unlike the negative perceptions and stigmatization often associated with aging, the crone archetype embodies reflection, spiritual growth, and expanded awareness. This study aims to compare this archetype with traditional Christian representations of older adults and explore whether it can serve as a means of reclaiming more positive and empowering images of elderly women.

Through examining the role of religious practices and women's community organizations, this research seeks to contribute to the diversification of aging narratives and promote more affirmative discourses on later life. Ultimately, it aspires to challenge the prevailing negative perceptions of aging and support the development of more inclusive and personalized approaches to aging and eldercare, empowering older adults to choose lifestyles that best suit their needs and preferences.

Moderator: Gyungwon Lee (Daejin University)

Meanings of Daesoon Jinrihoe Chiseong: Honoring of Nature and Human Equality

Soyeon Joo (Daesoon Academy of Sciences)

In Daesoon Jinrihoe, a new Korean religious movement, the term Chiseong indicates a series of ritual ceremonies held throughout the year to commemorate major natural cyclical days, including the beginning of spring or winter solstice, and important days of the order, such as the birthdate of Sangje Kang Jeungsan. Chiseong can be seen as a creative inheritance of the Korean tradition of ritual ceremony, especially of Confucian rituals called Jerae or Jesa. Korean Jerae originates from ancient Cheonje(a ritual ceremony offered to the Heavenly God). It would be interesting to find how the tradition of Korean ritual ceremonies from ancient times is inherited and performed in a Korean new religion in modern times.

Daesoon Jinrihoe Chiseong has meanings in two ways concerning the social transformation of modern times. First, Chiseong is a way to honor the natural cyclical phenomenon which provides resources for all living beings. One of the critical issues humans are facing is environmental problems. Humans began to realize they had to change their views and attitudes toward nature. The harmony with nature always has been fundamental in East Asian thought. Daesoon Jinrihoe seems to be more focused on respecting nature because they see nature as the manifestation of divine beings and try to give thanks and harmonize with nature through the Chiseong ceremonies.

Second, Daesoon Jinrihoe Chiseong contains the idea of human equality or Injon(human divinity). Sangje Kang Jeungsan eliminated the gap between heaven and God and people by allowing people to perform offering ceremonies directly to heavenly God. It is different from the ancient ritual ceremonies that were only performed by Kings and Confucian Jerae by Kings or Confucian elites who were males. So it was illegal for normal or lowly people to perform ritual ceremonies to heaven. It can be said that in Daesoon Jinrihoe, the followers participate in Chiseong as eqaully noble humans and in harmony and mutual respect with divine beings.

In this way, Daesoon Jinrihoe Chiseong can be seen as a transformative act for religion to meet the modern requirements to be in harmony with nature and respect everyone's equal status in building an ideal society.

Keywords: Chiseong, Cheonje, Jerae, nature, human equality, Injon

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Digital and Material Re-Forming of Chinese Goddess Mazu- The Political Clout of Collective Imagination

Kai Shmushko (Amsterdam University)

Stories and legends concerning the figure behind the sea goddess Mazu are abundant in Chinese historical records and literary sources (Yuan 2006). The historical figure is a shamaness from Fujian province who is said to have lived in the late 10th century. Mazu's principal legend concerns her saving members of her family when they were caught offshore during typhoon when she was only sixteen. After her death, she became revered as a deity of Chinese seafarers. Her worship spread throughout China's coastal regions and is overwhelmingly popular in contemporary Taiwan. Mazu is also popular among overseas Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia. Her worship and significance differ locally (Zhang, Shu, and Liu 2024), creating a rich body of diffused, trans communal and transnational types of worship, often seen as a part of Chinese folk religion or referred to as Mazuism.

This paper discusses the place of collective and curated imagination of Mazu, based on observations from Meizhou Island, the birthplace of the goddess. The small fisherman island, located in Fujian province, China had become, over the past decades, a tourist and pilgrimage destination, visited by 2.5 million people annually. Through an expanding network of temples and learning centers, 3D mapping light and shadow shows, and the recently added digital film installation "First Sight of Mazu", the Mazu island park is creating a new interpretation and contribution to Mazu heritage formation and culture.

The study turns to ask: What does the new visual and material reproduction of Goddess Mazu add to its corpus of legends and more broadly to its heritage? In what ways does the planning and management of the island plays a part in the political dynamics between China and Taiwan? How does this particular site impact the cross-strait community of Mazu worshipers?

In the present day, alongside tension between the two Chinese political entities (China and Taiwan), Mazu is subject to political instrumentalization by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Questions of localization and authenticity regarding the spiritual and material heritage of the goddess are subject to politicization. It has been suggested that under Xi Jinping, China is using the popularity of Mazu worship among Taiwanese as a tool in its "peaceful reunification" agenda with Taiwan (Pomfret & Lee 2023). The case of Meizhou Island and its particular Mazu culture aims to shed light on this issue. The paper explores curated imagination as a driving force centered in the nexus of cross-trait diplomacy, religious heritage management, and cultural and communal identity formation. The study shows how digital media serves as a creative tool in reshaping a collective experience for the island visitors and beyond. Furthermore, it proposes that despite China's atheistic nation-state structure, this case study challenges Anderson's framework of nationalism as modern imagined communities (1983) in which religion plays no structural role.

The Vietnamese Government's Orientation Towards Hoa Hao Buddhism Through the Press: An Analysis from the Perspective of Invented Tradition

Ngoc Linh Trinh (Vietnam National University)

Hoa Hao Buddhism is a widely influential religion in Vietnam, particularly in the Mekong Delta region. This study is a qualitative research that applies the theory of invented tradition to analyze how a new tradition is formed and practiced within Hoa Hao Buddhism in alignment with the Vietnamese government's orientation, as reflected through media coverage. The research data is collected from official news articles in Vietnam to clarify how the state represents and directs Hoa Hao Buddhism in mass media.

The findings identify five key trends in how Hoa Hao Buddhism is portrayed in the press: (1) Emphasizing its positive contributions to charitable and social welfare activities; (2) Honoring major religious holidays and events, demonstrating state recognition; (3) Reinforcing its alignment with national interests through messages such as "For the Dharma, for the Nation" and "Live a good life, practice a beautiful religion"; (4) Regulating religious practices within the legal framework; and (5) Highlighting its role in rural development.

The study also reveals that Hoa Hao Buddhism has strategically adapted to state policies to preserve its religious identity while actively contributing to the community. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between public policy and religious activities in Vietnam, providing recommendations for policymakers and the Hòa Hảo Buddhist community in developing sustainable strategies.

Keywords: Hoa Hao Buddhism, religious policy, media, invented tradition, religious adaptation, Vietnam.

The Transformation Development of Chinese-Attributed Religions in Indonesia: A Case Study of Yiguandao, MATAKIN and Mile Dadao

Yeh Ying Shen (Singapore University of Social Science)

Indonesia has experienced two significant anti-Chinese crises in its history, both of which profoundly impacted the Chinese community and its cultural practices. During the New Order period (1966–1998) under former President Suharto, Chinese culture was strictly suppressed. The government enacted policies that prohibited the public use of the Chinese language and discouraged the practice of Chinese traditions, leading to a break in the continuity of Chinese cultural identity. The result was a situation where the Chinese community in Indonesia had to find new ways to maintain its identity and religious practices under these restrictive conditions.

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In this context, Chinese-attributed religions were compelled to adapt in order to survive. These religions, including Yiguandao, MATAKIN (Confucianism), and Mile Dadao, began to evolve in ways that would comply with government policies and the broader societal norms of Indonesia. This paper explores how these three Chinese-attributed religions navigated the political landscape and the process of localisation, adapting both their practices and teachings to fit within the frameworks set by the Indonesian government.

Among these religions, MATAKIN (the Indonesian Confucian Association) was formed by local Chinese leaders in Indonesia. It aimed to transform Confucianism into a monotheistic belief system to align with the dominant Islamic religion, which required a focus on a single deity. This adaptation helped make Confucianism more acceptable within Indonesian society and allowed it to maintain its relevance. On the other hand, both Yiguandao and Mile Dadao were introduced from Taiwan. Mile Dadao had already undergone a process of localisation prior to the New Order period. It successfully adopted the Indonesian language for preaching and rituals, allowing it to integrate more seamlessly into the local culture.

Yiguandao, which arrived during the latter years of Suharto's rule, faced a particularly challenging environment due to the prevalent anti-Chinese sentiments and strict government regulations. In response, Yiguandao adopted various creative strategies to continue its mission while evading the restrictive policies. Despite these challenges, it was able to establish a foothold in Indonesia.

Currently, all the three Chinese-attributed religions are legally recognized in Indonesia, with national-level associations that have helped further their development. The ethnic Chinese community in Indonesia, while a minority, has overcome significant historical challenges. These three religions, despite their tumultuous history, have achieved national recognition, which is a testament to their resilience and the adaptability of their faiths in the face of adversity. Their ability to survive and flourish in the context of an often hostile environment makes their development worthy of further study and reflection.

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[Special Session 2-4] Buddhist Minorities in Southeast Asia: Adaption, Negotiation, and Pluralism *(Room 219)*

Moderator: Jack Meng-Tat Chia (National University of Singapore)

Buddhist communities across Southeast Asia operate within diverse sociopolitical and religious landscapes, often navigating their minority status through strategic adaptation and negotiation. As minority religious groups, they must contend with challenges such as political exclusion, doctrinal marginalization, and pressures to align with dominant religious frameworks. In response, they employ strategies of localization, doctrinal innovation, and interfaith engagement to assert their presence while maintaining religious distinctiveness. Their experiences highlight both the constraints imposed by state policies and the creative agency of Buddhist leaders and communities in shaping religious discourse and practice. By examining these communities, this panel critically engages with broader themes of religious pluralism, minority survival, and the intersection of politics and Buddhism in maritime and mainland Southeast Asia.

Jack Meng-Tat Chia's paper explores the pivotal role of Ashin Jinarakkhita in institutionalizing Buddhism in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim nation. His Buddhayana movement strategically unified Buddhist traditions while aligning with Indonesia's religious policies, demonstrating how doctrinal innovation and localization can secure the survival of Buddhism as a minority religion. Bowen Liao's research on Malaysian Buddhism reveals the complex interplay between state policies, Islamic dominance, and Buddhist identity formation. By engaging in interfaith dialogue and adapting to national narratives, Buddhist groups negotiate their place within an increasingly Islamizing Malaysian nation. Tan Lee Ooi's paper investigates the role of Fo Guang Shan Malaysia in promoting interfaith cooperation in a multireligious yet politically fraught society. Despite challenges posed by religious intolerance and social divisions, FGS's efforts to foster dialogue underscore both the potential and the limitations of Buddhist organizations in bridging interfaith divides. Finally, Tzu-Lung Melody Chiu's study examines the adaptation strategies of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhists in Myanmar, where Theravāda Buddhism dominates. Their efforts to balance integration with the preservation of Mahāyāna traditions illustrate how minority Buddhist ethnic and sectarian communities navigate religious boundaries in a majority-Buddhist country. Together, these papers contribute to broader discussions on religious adaptation, identity formation, and interfaith engagement in Southeast Asia. By analyzing the strategies employed by Buddhist minorities, this panel sheds light on the evolving dynamics of religious pluralism and the complex interactions between Buddhism, state policies, and societal relations in the region.

Charting the Periphery: Locating Theravada Buddhist Minorities in Maritime Southeast Asia

Jack Meng-Tat Chia (National University of Singapore)

This paper explores the understudied presence of Theravāda Buddhism in maritime Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. While Theravāda Buddhism is typically associated with mainland Southeast Asia, recent scholarship has revealed its dynamic and diverse expressions across the maritime region, where Theravādins often constitute religious minorities in predominantly Muslim societies. These communities provide a valuable lens to examine how diasporic Buddhists adapt and negotiate their religious identities within new socio-political and cultural contexts. Focusing on rituals, vernacular texts, and local institutions, the paper highlights how Theravāda Buddhist minorities have sustained their religious traditions while responding to broader societal forces. Case studies include Ceylonese and Thai monastic institutions in colonial and postcolonial Singapore and Malaysia, as well as the evolving practices of Kelantanese Thai Buddhists in northern Malaysia. The paper also turns to the Indonesian context, examining the contributions of Ashin Jinarakkhita and the development of the Buddhayāna movement, which creatively blended Theravāda and Mahāyāna elements to construct an "Indonesian Buddhism" that aligned with national ideals.

In recent decades, Theravāda Buddhists in Indonesia have embraced contemporary cultural forms to connect with younger generations. The emergence of Buddhist rock music groups—such as True Direction and Buddhist Worship—demonstrates how religious expression is being reimagined through popular music and social media, blending Buddhist teachings with accessible musical styles to create new forms of devotion and community. These developments signal a broader shift in the ways Theravāda Buddhism is being localized, modernized, and mediated through digital culture. By focusing on Theravāda Buddhist minorities in maritime Southeast Asia, this paper argues for a more inclusive and plural understanding of Southeast Asian Buddhism and calls for further ethnographic and comparative research on how minority Buddhist communities navigate issues of identity, ritual, and modernity in complex and often challenging environments.

The Making of Malaysian Buddhism(s): Doing Religion in an Islamizing Nation, 1957–2024

Bowen Liao (National University of Singapore)

Fo Guang Shan Malaysia in the Struggle for Interfaith Cooperation in a Multireligious Society

Lee Ooi Tan (Penang Institute)

This study examines the role of Fo Guang Shan (FGS) Malaysia in promoting interfaith understanding through various initiatives. Grounded in the principles of

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compassion, altruism, and social engagement, FGS seeks to bridge religious and ethnic divides amid the growing polarization fueled by internal political upheavals, shifting power dynamics, and external geopolitical forces. The idea of interfaith in a multi-ethnic Malaysian society as envisioned by FGS founder Hsing Yun was examined through his writings. Discussion on trans-ethnic efforts of FGS has enriched an understanding from two dimensions of meaning in social actions of Chinese Buddhists which has framed narrative for new imagination. While FGS's initiatives aim to bridge divides, the deepening polarization in society casts doubt on whether these efforts can genuinely overcome the entrenched prejudices and systemic tensions that persist in Malaysia, especially considering the limited influence of minority religious struggles.

Negotiating Boundaries: Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism's Adaptation and Resilience in Myanmar's Theravāda Landscape

<div align="right">Tzu-Lung Melody Chiu (Nanhua University)</div>

Day 1 — Session 3

July 18 (Friday), 15:40-17:30

[Session 3-1] National Identity and Religion (Room 215)

Moderator: Mark Mullins (University of Auckland)

Consideration of the origin of Shinto from the Koma Shrine

<div align="right">Toshifumi Uemura (Japan Lutheran College)</div>

Shinto is actually requires multi-angle consideration from many aspects. During the Jomon era there is little conflict for more than 10,000 years, and there was Shinto based on the tradition of the Jomon period. Then so-called Yayoi period after Jomon when many immigrants flowed in almost 2000 years ago. After so-called the Kofun period, which thousands of huge tombs were built, Japan experienced a truly revolutionary change in the middle of the 7th century. "Kojiki" and "Nihonshoki", as national history, have been compiled. In the same century, there were many changes in China and the Korean Peninsula, and Japan was also affected by them. Major historical changes, especially on the Korean Peninsula, such as the Battle of Baekgan in 663, the destruction of Goguryeo in 668, and the unification of Korea in Silla in 676, have also directly influenced changes in Japanese social structure. Shinto is no exception, and this time, we will consider

one of the diversities of Shinto in Japan by considering of the Koma Shrine in Saitama Prefecture, which situated in the northern part of Tokyo. The origin of Koma Shrine comes from the fact that prince Jakko of Goguryeo fled to Japan, moved to the Kanto region during the reign of Emperor Tenchi, and established his home base in present Hidaka town in Saitama Prefecture. Jakko has been enshrined at Koma Shrine as deity. As a stream of Shinto, a person who is called a hero or dedicated to the nation has been worshiped as a god. In Shiga Prefecture, north of Kyoto, there are still many shrines that worship the royal family of the Korean Peninsula as gods. The royal family of Silla and Baekje is also enshrined in the same way. And as a shrine originating from Goguryeo, the identity of Koma Shrine clearly shows its origin to the present day. This would be also a suggestion to know what Shinto is. In rethinking the long relationship between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, I would like to examine what Shinto is through the Koma Shrine.

Nationalisms in Conflict: Religion and Politics in a Post-Abe World

Mark Mullins (University of Auckland)

Over the past half-century, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Association of Shinto Shrines have been engaged in collaborative efforts to "restore" Japanese values and traditions that were undermined during the Allied Occupation of Japan. Prime Minister Abe Shinzō was a leading figure promoting a version of Shinto nationalism in recent decades and a political agenda to restore patriotic education, support Yasukuni Shrine, and revise the Constitution. Following PM Abe's assassination (8 July 2022), the influence of the controversial Unification Church on LDP politicians and their policies has been exposed and generated widespread criticism and public debate. This paper identifies the tensions and fundamental contradictions in the core values of Shinto nationalism, which Abe championed for decades, and those promoted by the Unification Church. It also reviews some of the representative political and religious responses to the assassination and to the revelations of the LDP's involvement with a problematic Korean-born New Religion. The fact that Abe and LDP politicians have been able to cooperate with both the UC and the neonationalist Shinto coalition indicates a lack of ideological consistency and an effective compartmentalization of issues for expediency and mutual benefit. While the symbiotic system of conservative religion and politics forged by Shinto elites and Abe may have lacked widespread support, it generated relatively little public criticism and opposition over the past decade. With the recent revelations of the involvement of many LDP politicians with the UC following Abe's assassination, however, the calculus may have changed. Given the public outcry over these connections, it will be interesting to see if the political involvements of the National Association of Shrines and other right-wing religious groups will also come under greater scrutiny in the years ahead. Investigations

and legal proceedings surrounding the incident are ongoing, so it is still uncertain what the fallout will be for both organized religions and the world of Japanese politics. The Tokyo Court still has not issued a decision on the government's request that the UC's status as a religious corporation be revoked. At the very least, these revelations have tarnished the legacy of Abe and put a damper on the nationalistic movement he promoted during his tenure as prime minister.

The Concept of Peace in Early Jewish Sources

Uri Zur (Ariel University)

In this topic I argue that the concept of peace in early Jewish sources can be defined as existing on four levels. The first level encompasses the association between man and God, and between God and man, as well as the divine blessing of peace given by God to man. The second level discusses peace as characterizing an individual`s state and a feature of one's relationships with others. The third level discusses biblical Moses and Aaron as exemplars of peace. Finally, I examine the concept of peace and war between nations, and the potential conflict between peace and truth. Contemporary Judaism is characterized by challenging questions and numerous controversies concerning peace, viewed from various perspectives such as Jewish law, ethics, practical implications, and international implications. At present, although opinions within Judaism are divided on many issues, all Jewish believe in the concept of peace, although each supports a concept of peace that is subject to different limitation or reservations.

[Session 3-2] Religion, Women, and Sustainable Citizenship
(Room 216)

Moderator: K. James Wu (Chang Jung Christian University)

Narrative of Mythology on Goddess and Women in India: Focusing on Religious Festival Durgā Pūjā in West Bengal

Dagyung Jung (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Keywords: Durgā Pūjā, Goddess, Śakti, Vedic Women Scholar, Hindu Mythology
This study examines Vedic women scholars and the symbolic representation of the Hindu goddess mythology, focusing on how linguistic and cultural frameworks shape perceptions of women's roles in modern Indian society, separated from the original tradition. It centers on the Durgā Pūjā festival, especially as celebrated in West Bengal, to analyze how religious narratives intersect with social realities. While Durgā

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Pūjā is now a major cultural and economic event, its mythological roots are increasingly overshadowed by its societal functions. A notable example highlighting this disconnect occurred in August of the previous year, when public protests erupted in Kolkata during the festival. Citizens used the occasion to voice outrage over the rape and murder of a female medical trainee, criticizing the contradiction between worshipping goddesses and the mistreatment of women in daily life.

The study underscores those religious festivals like Durgā Pūjā function beyond spiritual realms, influencing economic, political, and cultural spheres. The 2024 Durgā Pūjā, for example, contributed approximately ₹32,377 crore to West Bengal's economy around 2.58% of the state's GDP. Despite such substantial impact, the festival's current significance often appears driven more by commerce and cultural spectacle than by its spiritual or mythological essence.

Importantly, the paper does not simply advocate for women's rights through traditional gender binaries or focus solely on goddesses as symbols. Instead, it revisits the non-dualistic philosophy of the Vedic period, where women were seen as equal participants in the pursuit of ultimate truth, transcending gender distinctions. In this historical context, women were acknowledged as capable of achieving the highest forms of knowledge. The study poses a critical question: Why is there a contradiction between the veneration of powerful female deities and the marginalized status of women in modern Indian society?

To address this, the paper reexamines both the historical and present-day meanings of Durgā Pūjā. It traces the festival's mythological origins, investigates its evolving significance, and analyzes how cultural and economic forces have reshaped its contemporary expression. Ultimately, the study aims to provide a renewed understanding of Durgā Pūjā by situating it within broader discussions of religious practice, cultural transformation, and gender dynamicsin India today.

Inter-ritual Engagement as a Model for Sustainable Citizenship: Navigating Religion and Citizenship from a Confucian-Christian Perspective

K. James Wu (Chang Jung Christian University)

This paper examines inter-ritual engagement—the dynamic interaction and mutual transformation of ritual practices across religious traditions—as a model for sustainable citizenship. Focusing on sacrificial rites in Confucian and Protestant Christian traditions and their ecological implications, this study explores how inter-ritual engagement between these traditions can provide a framework for sustainable citizenship, negotiating environmental concerns while maintaining ritual integrity as a civic responsibility.

In societies deeply embedded in Confucian ethos, rituality (li 禮) and citizenship have been inextricably interwoven. Sacrificial rites shaped by Confucian ethos—though explicitly shaped by Buddhist, Daoist, and folk religious traditions—have

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historically reinforced moral cultivation, civic responsibility, and social cohesion. However, sustainability challenges arise when certain sacrificial rituals, such as the burning of incense, joss paper, and firecrackers, contribute to environmental degradation, particularly through air pollution, today.

Studies have indicated significant increases in particulate matter (PM2.5) concentrations during large-scale religious festivals, raising concerns about public health and environmental sustainability. These issues necessitate a critical reassessment of rituality and citizenship by appealing to conceptions of inter-rituality and sustainable citizenship that extend beyond the legal and political dimensions to encompass ecological responsibility, environmental ethics, and sustainable development.

Key questions arise from this intersection: Must sacrificial rituals inherently lead to environmental degradation? Can sacrificial rituals be adapted to promote sustainability? Does an interreligious study of ritual engagement provide a theoretical foundation for sustainable citizenship, allowing ritual practices to evolve in ways that support ecological sustainability as a civic responsibility?

To address these questions, this study employs a methodological approach that integrates the sociology of religion and comparative religion. By examining sacrificial rituals within broader socio frameworks, this study argues that rituals are not only shaped by societal values but also active in shaping them (Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens). Theories of ritual creativity provide a lens for understanding how sacrificial practices may be adapted and negotiated in response to contemporary social challenges (Catherine Bell and Ronald L. Grimes).

Additionally, this paper adopts a comparative approach, bringing Confucian and Christian traditions into dialogue to explore how sacrificial rituals can be reinterpreted in light of environmental ethics and civic responsibility. The Confucian classics, particularly the Liji and Xunzi, emphasize the moral and social functions of ritual, suggesting that rituality is not merely about adherence to tradition but is subject to reinterpretation in response to personal cultivation and societal needs. In parallel, Christian eco-theology, particularly within Protestant thought, critiques anthropocentric dominion and advocates for stewardship and sustainability, emphasizing sacramentality and ecological ethics (Moltmann and Nash). This interdisciplinary approach provides an ethical framework that reorients sacrificial practices toward ecological sustainability and civic responsibility.

Rather than viewing ritual as inherently incompatible with environmental responsibility, this study argues that inter-ritual engagement provides a constructive framework for reinterpreting traditional practices in ways that align with environmental ethics. This interdisciplinary analysis positions inter-ritual

engagement as a viable model for sustainable citizenship, offering insights into how religious traditions can contribute to ecological consciousness and civic responsibility.

The Practice of "Release of Living Beings" in Korean Buddhism and the Ban on Turtle Imports

Hyong-Chol Kang (Kyung Hee University)

The Buddhist ritual of fang sheng (放生), or the "release of living beings," originated in India and became a widespread practice in East Asian Buddhism. This ritual involves freeing captive animals into the wild, motivated by the intention to cultivate compassion, mitigate harmful karma, and accumulate merit (good karma). While the practice is rooted in benevolence, its contemporary implementation has raised ecological and ethical concerns, particularly in South Korea, where commercial exploitation and ecological disruption have emerged as unintended consequences.

In modern Korean Buddhism, the ritual remains popular, yet it has inadvertently contributed to problematic cycles. To supply animals for release, hunters capture wildlife for commercial sale, creating a demand that perpetuates harm rather than alleviating it. This paradox—where an act meant to preserve life instead endangers it—has been criticized in various countries, including Korea.

This presentation examines a specific case involving turtles, highlighting the ecological and regulatory challenges that arose in Korea. Beginning in the 1980s, red-eared sliders (Trachemys scripta elegans) were imported as pets, and many were later released into local ecosystems by Buddhist groups—sometimes explicitly for fang sheng. As an invasive species, these turtles disrupted native biodiversity, prompting the Korean government to ban their import in the early 2000s. However, the ban led to the importation of another species, the river cooter (Pseudemys concinna), which was also eventually prohibited due to similar ecological risks. Authorities identified ritual release as a key driver of the problem.

Yet, the issue is more complex than it appears. This presentation analyzes the socio-religious, economic, and ecological dimensions of the conflict, exploring how well-intentioned traditions intersect with modern environmental governance. It also discusses the collaborative efforts between the Korean government and Buddhist organizations to address these challenges, balancing religious freedom with ecological sustainability. By investigating this case, the study sheds light on broader tensions between cultural practices and environmental conservation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Living on "Miracles": New Religion Group's Discovery, Capturing, and Sharing of Everday Mystical Images

Jongseok Bak (Korea University)

In South Korean society, where Protestantism has a strong political and social influence, Protestant-based new religions are the particularly vulnerable minority groups at risk of being labeled as "heretical." They rely on "miracles" as a means to defense their beliefs in the face of criticism and stigmatization, maintaining their symbolic and cognitive boundaries from the outside world. What are the implications of their practice of discovering, recording, and sharing miracles?

The case study for this research is Church A, a Protestant-based new religion known for its mystical practices. Its members are keenly attuned to their audiovisual senses in order to see the "miracles" in their daily lives, rejoice when they discover them, and record them with their smartphone cameras. They share their "miracle" photos or videos with each other to develop their belief together. Every cloud shape in the sky, every rainbow, every contact with flora and fauna could be a miracle for them.

This study interviews members of Church A through the photovoice interview method, based on the "miracle" photos and videos they routinely capture, asking them about their encounters with their objects, their experiences of capturing and sharing them, and the meaning of their religious life. It explores the sensuous modes (respective physiological activations) and codes (sociocultural pathways of interpretation) through which they catch miracles, and the individual and communal cognitive frameworks through which they receive and interpret them.

[Special Session 3-3] Education on Religion and Media for Global Citizenship *(Room 217)*

Moderator: Jinkyu Park (Seoul Women's University)

In his best-selling book Religious Literacy (2007), Steven Prothero argued that "you need religious literacy in order to be an effective citizen" (p. 9). He even states that, in a world in which religion still matters, staying illiterate in religion can be dangerous. Meanwhile, in this media-saturated world, the importance of "media literacy" has become most prominent, so much so that almost everyone has at least heard of the term before. This panel attempts to bring the two imperatives – the need for religious literacy and media literacy – together and show how scholarship and education on various intersections between religion and media can be a key addition to the pursuit of global citizenship.

Depending on how the terms "religion" and "media" are understood, the interactions between the two can take many forms. Most citizens come to know about different religions – especially the ones that are not of their own – through different media outlets. Likewise, religious groups and organizations also heavily rely on media technology not only for the purpose of outreach but also for various religious rituals and practices. Furthermore, religion can be found across the ubiquitous popular entertainment media. In many ways, religion today is highly mediated. Such a context necessitates the inclusion of courses on the relationship between religion and media in university curricula.

Depending on the institutional context, which can include national, cultural, and political aspects, college courses on religion and media can render different kinds of promises and challenges. This panel will bring together scholars and teachers from very diverse backgrounds and have them share their experiences and insights. The presenters have taught in the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and Thailand at various higher education institutions including public universities, religiously affiliated private universities, as well as religious seminaries. Likewise, the approaches and topics of focus each presenter has engaged in the classroom also vary. It is expected that the attendees will gain insight and information regarding designing and teaching courses on various intersections between religion, media, and culture.

Benefits and Challenges of Courses on Media and Religion: Comparing Different National and Institutional Contexts

Seung Min Hong (International Christian University)

It is a delight to invite students to observe and think about the various ways in which religion and media interact with each other. Students' areas of interest include finding religious symbols or motifs in their favorite films and TV shows, critiquing the secular news media's coverage of religion, and exploring the development and uses of different religious apps. Some students also favor the approach of applying broader definitions of religion and analyzing patterns of consumption or fandom as "religious" social phenomena. Class assignments designed to develop students' passion and enhance their understanding of how religion and media work together can make major contributions to broadening their outlook on our contemporary society as global citizens. At the same time, however, individual backgrounds and perspectives as well as institutional settings can bring challenges to advancing productive discussions in the classroom on the media's representation of religion, religious uses of media, or even the question of what counts as religion. This presentation will summarize a number of insights gleaned mainly from the presenter's years of experience with teaching courses on

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media and religion in the U.S. and in Japan while partial examples will also be taken from courses taught in South Korea. Topics will include possible course materials and assignments as well as some potentials and limitations of different institutional settings and student compositions. Discussions will also revolve around student projects, comments and responses. Overall, this presentation is meant to offer a comparative and tentative exploration of the benefits, possibilities and challenges the instructor should be aware of in the process of designing a course on religion situated in today's media-saturated world for the purpose of equipping the students as global citizens.

Media Education as a Bridge: Negotiating Gender, Faith, and Citizenship

Ji Yoon Ryu (ACTS University)

In contemporary South Korean society, the relationship between Christianity and democratic citizenship is increasingly characterized by tension and opposition. Conservative Christian groups have become vocal in opposing the enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and in supporting conspiracy theories surrounding alleged election fraud. Such political engagement poses a serious challenge to the democratic principles of equality and the rule of law. As a result, Christian identity and democratic citizenship are often perceived as incompatible.

A notable development in recent years is the generational shift within conservative Christianity. Views once concentrated among older demographics are now gaining traction among younger Christians, including students at theological institutions. Among some Christian youth, there has been a marked rise in far-right ideological tendencies, a trend that is becoming increasingly evident in theological education settings. This shift has been particularly observable in courses that address media and its sociocultural dimensions.

Due to the inherently social nature of media, media education is often linked to the cultivation of civic awareness and responsibility. However, the integration of civic themes in the classroom has frequently met with resistance from students. Many hold a dualistic worldview that positions Christianity as superior to other religions and perceives engagement with broader social values as a compromise of faith or even moral decline. This binary framework becomes especially pronounced in discussions of gender, where religious doctrines are often invoked to justify discriminatory attitudes toward marginalized groups.

This presentation examines the pedagogical challenges and limitations encountered in theological education, while also considering the potential of media studies as a transformative space. Media education is proposed as a site for mediating between religious belief and civic imagination, functioning as a platform for critical reflection and the reconfiguration of entrenched perspectives. In response to the ongoing conservative shift among Christian youth, this presentation explores how media education can serve as a pathway for fostering

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democratic citizenship and reimagining the relationship between religious identity and civic responsibility in more dialogical and inclusive terms.

The Consumption of Religious Goods and Material Spirituality

Min Hyung Lee (Sungkyul University)

One of the most noteworthy consumer cultures among young Koreans today is the growing interest in and consumption of religious "goods." Interestingly, the consumption of religious goods has been observed to foster interest in the practices of religious values as well as religion itself among the younger generation. This phenomenon is undoubtedly significant when viewed in the context of the social climate in Korea, where there is a notable decline in religious interest with age. The initial segment of this presentation will offer a concise synopsis of my recent research article, which delves into the phenomenon of religious goods consumption. The article discusses the notion of religious goods as material media and the consumption of these goods as a religious ritual. Through these rituals, young Koreans reflect on their religiosity and gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental values of a particular religion. Consequently, the article posits that the consumption of religious goods can serve as a significant opportunity for contemplating a more fulfilling way of life. The subsequent segment of this presentation will elaborate on the aforementioned argument by sharing the insights gathered from the presenter's teaching experience. Drawing from the observations made during his teaching engagements, particularly in courses focused on the relationship between religiosity and material religious media, this presentation will delve into the interests and consciousness of the younger generation of Korean society that underpin the consumption of religious goods. Additionally, it will underscore the significance of educating material media of religion, emphasizing their role in shaping human beings' religiosity and religious moral ethics. In essence, the presentation will demonstrate the capacity for engagement with material religious goods to foster global citizenship as a lived religion.

Decolonial Pedagogy and the Formation of Global Citizenship: Teaching Media and Religion in a Thai Classroom

Seung Soo Kim (Chulalongkorn University)

This presentation reflects on the pedagogical project of the course Media and Religion, taught at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Rather than approaching religion and media as discrete, institutional domains, the course reconceptualizes both as dynamic practices and technologies of mediation that bridge domains otherwise considered separate—such as between the immanent and the transcendent, the material and the spiritual, the traditional and the modern, or the

local and the global. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks such as Ninian Smart's seven dimensions of religion—experiential, narrative, ritual, doctrinal, ethical, institutional, and material—and a multi-perspectival understanding of media—as text, industry, culture, and technology—the course provides students with an analytically precise and flexible conceptual toolkit for examining religion-media intersections in everyday life.

This approach is particularly effective in the Thai context, where religiosity is marked by hybridity, complexity, and political sensitivity. Although officially a Theravāda Buddhist country, Thailand's religious life is shaped by overlapping layers of Brahmanic-Hindu cosmologies, local animistic beliefs and practices, and the quasi-sacralization of the monarchy. These formations are mediated through embodied rituals, Thai visual culture, and global digital platforms. Within this landscape, the course encourages students to approach religion not merely as doctrine or belief, but as embodied practice, material forms, and sensory experience—enabling them to grasp the fluidity and multiplicity of lived religion beyond institutional boundaries. It also fosters sensitive yet critical engagement with politically charged sacred imaginaries, including representations of monarchy, Buddhist authority, and gendered rituals.

Importantly, the course moves beyond the passive transmission of Euro-American theories by emphasizing their epistemological critiques—particularly those that challenge Protestant theological assumptions privileging inner belief over embodied practice, individual conscience over collective ritual, and doctrinal purity over material mediation. Engaging with decolonial works by scholars such as Charles Taylor and Birgit Meyer, students learn to provincialize these universalist claims and explore how Thai religious phenomena demand alternative modes of theorization. Thai religious practices—grounded in ritual repetition, material offerings, and affective community—are thus repositioned as generative sources of theory, not merely as data for validating Western models. This process transforms students from passive recipients of Western knowledge into active participants in global knowledge production.

The course fosters global citizenship grounded in epistemic humility, critical reflexivity, and ethical attentiveness to religious and cultural pluralism. Students are trained to recognize how power circulates through sacred material forms, how sacred meanings are negotiated across technological and material mediations, and how their own cultural assumptions are implicated in these processes. In an era of algorithmic visibility, religious nationalism, and intensified political polarization, this pedagogical approach equips students not only to understand the complexities of the contemporary world but also to navigate them ethically. Ultimately, it serves as a transformative space for learning to think otherwise—beyond doctrinal and institutional essentialism, Eurocentric and Protestant-centric frameworks, and binary oppositions between the religious and the secular, the spiritual and the material, and the immediate and the mediated—toward a more situated, dialogical, and responsible mode of global engagement.

Moderator: Seil Oh (Sogang University)

Divided Civil Religions in Post-Secular South Korea

Seil Oh (Sogang University)

This paper explores the fragmented landscape of civil religion in South Korea, analyzing how its competing narratives have contributed to increasing political polarization. Civil religion (Robert Bellah 1970), defined as a set of sacred symbols and rituals that bind a political community, has historically played a unifying role in Korean society—especially during the rapid modernization and democratization processes of the late 20th century. However, contemporary South Korea exhibits a divided civil religious sphere, where contrasting ideological projects vie for moral legitimacy.

Central to this division is the persistence of anti-communist ideology, which continues to function as a quasi-religious doctrine in conservative discourse. The legacy of the Korean War and ongoing tensions with North Korea have solidified anti-communism as a sacred national myth, invoked to justify state authority and suppress dissent. On the other hand, progressive forces have developed a counter-narrative grounded in democratization, social justice, and resistance to authoritarianism—often casting the conservative establishment as morally compromised.

The rise of populism further complicates this terrain. Both left- and right-wing populist leaders in South Korea have employed civil religious language to portray themselves as the true voice of the people against a corrupt elite. This sacralization of political struggle deepens societal cleavages and transforms political opposition into moral antagonism.

Through an analysis of political discourse, public rituals, and media narratives, this study argues that South Korea's civil religion is no longer a shared symbolic framework but a battleground of competing faiths. This fragmentation not only reflects but also reinforces the broader socio-political polarization of Korean society, posing challenges to democratic deliberation and national cohesion.

A Comparative Study of Various Funeral Rituals in Post-Secular Korean Society

Jimin Oh (Sogang University)

This study explores the diversification of funeral rituals in post-secular Korean society, where Confucian customs have long shaped death practices. Non-religious individuals increasingly challenge the relevance and exclusivity of traditional forms,

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especially in cases such as the deaths of unmarried women or children. In response to the absence of unified narratives about the afterlife, funeral professionals such as directors often mediate metaphysical meaning in secular contexts. Meanwhile, Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist groups now incorporate or distance themselves from elements of Confucian rites while reinforcing their own ritual frameworks, often through affiliated funeral services. This study examines how funeral practices are unfolding along two trajectories: the diversification of secular ceremonies and the production of intensified religious content by institutional religions.

Functional Differentiation and Varieties of Structural Coupling in World Society: A Systems-Theoretical Analysis of the Korean Protestantism

Hyukmin Kwon (Seoul National University)

This article examines how functional differentiation, as a central feature of world society, is shaped and altered by regional semantic legacies. Using Korean Protestantism as a case study, it explores how religion has been structurally subordinated to the political and economic systems in South Korea through the process of code subordination. While functional differentiation creates formal global uniformity, it simultaneously reveals regional diversity through historically embedded structural couplings. By applying semantic analysis and systems theory, this study identifies patterns in which religious communication in Korea has been redirected by political and economic logics—particularly anti-communism, nationalism, and prosperity theology. This regional case illustrates that functional differentiation does not unfold uniformly across the globe but instead interacts with local semantics to generate hybrid, delayed, or hierarchical forms. The study argues that Korean Protestantism has often operated as an ideological extension of political and economic systems, challenging the ideal of systemic autonomy. By proposing "code subordination" as an analytical concept, the article contributes to the comparative sociology of world society, suggesting a framework for examining similar structural asymmetries in other regions.

Is Monastery an Illiberal Heterotopy? Human Rights and Contemporary Catholic Monasticism

Maciej Potz (University of Lodz)

Catholic religious orders exist in a state of normative/legal pluralism. They are semiautonomous entities within the Church, subject to both general canon law and their own regulations (rules, constitutions etc.), and the state's secular law. In the West, they often function within a political system based on liberal principles, including the normative regime of human rights. Yet, they are almost by definition founded on a set of values radically different from the liberal ones: they are communitarian rather than individualistic, hold property in common, rely on strong, authoritarian power, and create total social structures with permanent control of behavior.

As a consequence, it is often charged that the monastic environment is

inconsistent with human rights protection, either because of its oppressive disciplinary practices or, more fundamentally, because the decision to enter such a community, however voluntary, entails unacceptable self-deprivation of dignity and the rights and liberties derived from it. In view of this, is monastery a kind of human rights-exempted, "exterritorial" social space?

The purpose of the paper is to reflect on this question on the basis of my ongoing project on "monastic politics" – power and status in contemporary religious orders in Poland. In-depth individual interviews conducted in male and female monastic institutions of various types reveal both the actual disciplinary practices and the members' perceptions and definitions of them. Specifically, I aim to:

1. Provide an accurate empirical account of the extent to which various freedoms are restricted in a monastery, to establish if, to use Goffman's term, it is indeed a total institution.

2. Explain how the members make sense of their own situation: how they understand the notions of freedom, dignity, subordination or violence, and how these understandings relate do the human rights definitions of these notions. Is living in a monastery an oppressive or a liberating experience?

There is no doubt that religious orders, especially contemplative, cloistered communities, exert a nearly permanent control on their members' behavior and seriously restrict what the liberal "world" regards as inalienable rights and liberties, such as freedom of movement, correspondence, private property etc. However, the members' perception of their situation is shaped by a number of important considerations, mostly from outside of the human rights discourse.

First, their decision to join is fully voluntary and preceded by a long preparatory period. They are also free to leave at any time, a fundamental difference compared to other total institutions.

Second, their subordination within the organization is mediated by the theological concept of obedience they vow to Christ and realize through submitting to superiors and accepting the limitations of the monastic way of life. Superiors' power is legitimated as emanating from God; from the members' perspective, it facilitates the realization of their monastic vocation.

Third, they actually have "voice" in the institution – opportunities for political participation. In most contemporary orders, members elect their superiors and participate collegially in the governing of their communities. In this sense, the orders are democratic islands in the hierarchical and autocratic structure of the Church.

Finally, in the case of religious women, many of them see monastic life as emancipatory, freeing them from the duties and constraints of other female social roles, especially connected with biological family.

The accounts of the religious persons suggest they would perceive the foreclosing of the possibility to choose the unliberal, communitarian way of life offered by a religious order as a violation of their freedom. This freedom collides

with the radical interpretation of the human rights doctrine, prevalent in some European legal systems, according to which individuals – as bearers of dignity – are barred from willingly disposing of their own bodies – in this case, by entering a total institution.

Day 2   Session 4

July 19 (Saturday), 10:00-12:00 am

[Special Session 4-1] The Korean Christian Diaspora During the Colonial Rule and Beyond (Room 215)

Moderator: Fr. Simon Young Kyun Choi (Korea Christian Thought Institute)

This panel elucidates and contributes to an improved understanding of the mobility and religious journey of the pioneering Korean diaspora during the imperial order and beyond. Koreans were forced to leave their motherland as it was annexed by Japan in 1910. The main reasons for their leaving are generally known to be political constraints to avoid Japanese imperial threats. However, taking a closer look, 'religion' also served as a crucial factor in their immigration and settlements. This panel presents four distinct cases of Korean expatriates, aiming to reach a more nuanced understanding and dynamics of the Korean Christian diaspora during the colonial structure and beyond.

Haeseong Park explores Ha Ransa who was the second Korean woman to complete a Western college education. Ha embraced Christianity at Ohio Wesleyan University, contrary to the common belief that it happened while studying at Ewha. This distinction is significant for understanding the relationship between her national and Christian identities, as well as her involvement in the American missionary enterprise in Korea. Park investigates Ha's national activism and how Christianity empowered her to carve out a place for herself both within and outside Korea.

Jieun Han presents why An Chŏnggŭn, a well-known Korean nationalist An Chunggŭn's younger brother, and his whole family members had to leave their motherland in 1910 and how they settled in Russia or China, as Chunggŭn eliminated the first Japanese Resident-General in Korea Itō Hirobumi. While their migration is often attributed solely to political pressures, Han highlights the significant role of the family's Catholic faith and their ties to French missionaries in shaping Chŏnggŭn's decision to obtain Russian citizenship—despite Russian Orthodoxy being the state religion.

Jin Suk Bae deals with the cross-cultural missionary work of Rev. Kim Soonho

in China during the Japanese occupation. Rev. Kim, born into a Christian Korean family and studied at Yokohama Women's Seminary in Japan, was dispatched to the Shandong Province, China in 1931 as the first female missionary of the Korean Presbyterian Church. Using the motto "Women's Work for Women" effectively, she converted and enlightened Chinese women sponsored by the National Federation of Women's Evangelistic Association. Bae examines how her gender, ethno-racial identity, and citizenship status, as well as the rapidly changing political situation, intersected and affected her evangelical work with "other" Asian, specifically Chinese women.

Finally, Allen J. Kim examines the more than thirty-year ministry of a Korean Catholic Jesuit in Tokyo to understand how religious vocation can shape and reflect experiences of intercultural exchange, belonging, and citizenship in contemporary Japan. Father Mark Jeong Mo Koo offers one illustrative narrative of the complex dynamics of religious and civic identity in taking his role in Japanese society as a mentor, bridge-builder, and moral voice, even though his citizenship status as a Korean may have placed him on the margins. From a sociological perspective, Kim explores how religion can shape and mediate the concept of citizenship within minority contexts.

Ha Ransa: Navigating Nationalism, Christianity, and Women's Agency in Early 20th Century Korea

Haeseong Park (Francis Marion University)

Ha Ransa, also known as Nancy Ha, is the second Korean woman to complete a Western college education at the beginning of the twentieth century when Korea faced imperial threats. Ha endured and witnessed the hardships experienced by Koreans, particularly Korean women, during this period. Despite overwhelming odds, her courage and intellect enabled her to achieve this milestone. During her journey to acquire Western knowledge, Ransa embraced Christianity.

Christianity represents exploitation and empowerment in Korean history. For Ransa, converting to Christianity allowed her to assert her respectable membership in both the nation and the global community when the West and its religion of Christianity dominated the world order. Contrary to the common belief that Ha converted to Christianity while studying at Ewha, a Christian school for Korean women established by an American missionary in 1886, she actually embraced the faith during her time at Ohio Wesleyan University. This distinction is significant for understanding the relationship between her national and Christian identities, as well as her involvement in the American missionary enterprise in Korea. Ha was conscious of the limitations and benefits of her Christian identity at the turn of the 20th century.

Furthermore, her status as a woman, particularly as a female entertainer and concubine, underscores her struggle for women's advancement in Korea. Her

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consciousness regarding women's liberation may not have been as pronounced as her national and Christian identities, given that the first wave of feminism in the West focused on suffrage and had not yet reached Asia. However, as Ransa overcame traditional restrictions placed on women and engaged in nationalist efforts, her life illustrates women's agency in response to national urgencies.

Recent research on Ha Ransa has emphasized her nationalist activism within the framework of postcolonial discourse. Not only does this paper investigate her activism, but it also explores how Christianity empowered her to carve out a place for herself both within and outside her nation, inspiring and being inspired by her feminist subconscious.

Exiled National Activist An Chŏnggŭn: His Russian Citizenship and Catholic Faith

Jieun Han (Sogang University)

Cyril An Chŏnggŭn (安定根, 1885-1949) was the younger brother of Korean nationalist An Chunggŭn (1879-1910). In 1910, Chŏnggŭn and his entire family were forced to leave their hometown and move to the Russian Maritime Province after his elder brother Chunggŭn assassinated Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909), the first Japanese Resident-General in Korea. Around the same time, their cousin James Myŏnggŭn (1879-1927) was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment for raising military funds for Korea's independence movement. Almost all members of the An clan had to leave their motherland for Manchuria or Russia to avoid severe Japanese suppression and surveillance.

Since then, Chŏnggŭn became an independence activist, following his elder brother's footsteps and moving around many places such as Shanghai, Beijing, Weihaiwei, and Hong Kong during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Even after Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Chŏnggŭn could not come back to Korea and passed away in 1949 in Lüshun, where his elder brother had been executed. Chŏnggŭn was buried on March 22, 1949, in the Shanghai International Cemetery (萬國公墓), a public cemetery for foreigners, following Catholic rites.

The An Family is characterized by two factors: devoted Catholic faith and dedication to the independence movement. In January 1897, nearly all members of the clan converted to Catholicism when Fr. Wilhelm (1860-1939) visited their Ch'ŏnggye-dong village in Hwanghae Province, encouraged by Chŏnggŭn's father, An T'aehun's (1862-1905). T'ahun accepted the Catholic faith in order to resolve his legal problems with the help of Western priests. However, once baptized, his devotion to the faith deepened. Despite the French missionaries' strict policy of separating religion from political activity—discouraging participation in any kind of national movements—the An family did not desert their faith until the end while devoting their lives to the cause of national independence.

Chŏnggŭn became a naturalized Russian citizen in 1912, two years after settling

in Ussuriysk. This is often seen as a strategy to avoid ever-strengthening Japanese surveillance of Koreans living in Russia. With Russian citizenship, Japanese authorities could not arrest him—even after he, along with his younger brother John Konggŭn (1889–1939), killed Kim Chŏngguk, who was suspected of being a Japanese spy. Furthermore, in order to protect himself from persistent Japanese pursuit, Chŏnggŭn voluntarily joined the Russian Army in Khabarovsk in August 1914. However, this analysis provides an incomplete picture. Through a careful examination of Chŏnggŭn's and his family's relationship with the Catholic Church and French missionaries, it can be understood how religion played a crucial role in adopting his new citizenship. Therefore, this paper argues that Chŏnggŭn's devout Catholicism and his family's ties to French missionaries also served as a major factor in his naturalization in Russia, where Russian Orthodoxy being the state religion.

Rev. Kim Soonho's Missionary Work Among the "Other" Asian Women in China During the 1930s: Gender, Ethno-Racial Identity, and Citizenship

Jin Suk Bae (Soongsil Institute for Peace and Unification, Soongsil University)

"Religion" has played a significant role in the migration and settlement of Korean diaspora members in numerous countries. Prior research demonstrates that Korean churches in host countries have served not only religious but also social roles for Korean migrants. Additionally, Korean emigration has included laypeople as well as religious leaders and missionaries who evangelize not only Koreans but also among other ethnic and racial groups. The Republic of Korea has become the world's second largest missionary-sending country after the United States, dispatching 12,000 missionaries around the world. Despite the incredible growth in the number of Korean missionaries, this study highlights the problem of female Korean missionaries being neglected in religious studies despite their religious and social achievements and contributions.

Against this backdrop, this study utilizes a gender-specific analysis and oral life history perspective to explore the cross-cultural missionary work of Rev. Kim Soonho in China during the Japanese occupation. Rev. Kim was born into a Christian Korean family, studied at Yokohama Women's Seminary in Japan, was appointed the first female missionary of the Korean Presbyterian Church, and was dispatched to the Shandong Province, China in 1931. This study examines how her gender, ethno-racial identity, and citizenship status, as well as the rapidly changing political situation, intersected and affected her evangelical work with "other" Asian, specifically Chinese women. During the nineteenth century, the religious activities of female missionaries in North America focused primarily on women's ministry under the motto of "Woman's Work for Woman." Protestant American women concluded that only women could reach other women with the gospel, and argued that education, medicine, and social reform were essential to the evangelization of women.

This article examines how Rev. Kim used the motto to effectively convert and enlighten Chinese women. Additionally, this research focuses on gender dynamics and conflicts within the Korean missionary community in China. Rev. Kim was sponsored by the National Federation of Women's Evangelistic Associations, a Korean religious organization for women established in 1928, and was dispatched to China as an officially appointed missionary, rather than as a missionary's wife. However, at that time, the Shandong mission in China was dominated by male Korean missionaries and Rev. Kim was subjected to constraints and prejudices due to her gender and national backgrounds. This study elucidates and contributes to an improved understanding of the mobility and religious journey of a pioneering female Korean missionary.

Thirty Years of Mission and Mutuality: A Korean Jesuit's Journey Through Religion and Citizenship in Japan

Allen J. Kim (International Christian University)

This paper explores the more than thirty-year ministry of a Korean Catholic Jesuit in Tokyo as a lens through which to understand how long-term religious vocation can shape and reflect experiences of intercultural exchange, belonging, and citizenship in contemporary Japan. Father Mark Jeong Mo Koo's (b. 1961) experiences offer one illustrative narrative of the complex dynamics of religious and civic identity in Japan. "Civic identity" in this context emphasizes his active role in society—as a mentor, bridge-builder, and moral voice—even though his citizenship status as a Korean in Japan may have placed him on the margins. His commitment to intercultural friendship, particularly by bridging cultures between Japan and diverse scholastics and community members, innovative evangelization through art, and engagement with issues of aging and minority citizenship highlight the complex interplay between religion and civic life over the life course. Through his roles as a university professor, spiritual mentor, and especially as a director of scholastics, Father Koo played a critical role in forming religious and community leaders in Japan. He not only provided spiritual and educational guidance but also actively supported scholastics' integration into Japanese society, helping them navigate complex cultural adjustments. His deep appreciation for Japanese culture and society, along with his understanding of the country's social and spiritual landscape, informed his mentorship of both Japanese and international students, his engagement with other Christian groups, and his use of religious art. These qualities enabled him to develop unique methods of evangelization rooted in mutual respect, friendship, and cultural exchange. In doing so, he created inclusive environments that fostered intercultural and inter-Christian dialogue, implicitly broadening the meaning of citizenship to encompass shared humanity, relationality, and reciprocal understanding. Employing a qualitative biographical approach informed by life course theory, the

study uses in-depth interviews to explore how Father Koo's identity evolved over time, influenced by rapid social and economic change. Life course theory, from a sociological perspective, examines how individuals' lives are shaped by historical and social contexts, personal decisions, and life transitions across different stages. This framework highlights how Father Koo's personal experiences and choices provide unique insights into the evolving ways religion can shape and mediate concepts of citizenship within minority contexts.

In his later years, reflections on his Korean heritage and identity underscored the tensions between religious affiliation, national belonging, and citizenship, particularly as he confronted the challenges of aging as a migrant. The cultural symbolism of food became a significant medium for expressing diasporic nostalgia, illustrating how life transitions and personal histories shape migrants' relationships with religious and civic identities. Ultimately, this paper contributes to broader theoretical discussions on religion, citizenship, identity, and transnational belonging in Asia.

[Session 4-2] Religion and Historical Heritage in East Asia *(Room 216)*

Moderator: Daan F. Oostveen (University of Humanistic Studies)

Safeguarding Bukit Cina, Sacralizing Ethnic Sanctuaries: Inventing Quasi-Religious Ritual, Cemetery Tour, and Lived Memory Map in Postcolonial Malacca World Heritage City

Ke Liang NG (National Taiwan University)

How does an unkempt burial hill transform into an ethnic sanctuary? This article examines how Bukit Cina, located in the buffer zone of the Malacca World Heritage Site, evolved from an overgrown cemetery into a sacred hill that preserves ethnic symbols, memories, and solidarities. It highlights the nationwide Chinese community's collective resistance in the 1980s against assimilationist government plans to demolish Bukit Cina, emphasizing their efforts to safeguard ancestral tombstones as truth-spots testifying to their ancestors' migration from China and settlement in Malaysia.

This study finds that over four decades, the movement to safeguard Bukit Cina, driven by alliances among clan associations, guilds, and cross-dialect communities, has initiated tombstone surveys and beautification, creating an ethnic sanctuary to preserve collective memories. Drawing on a field study conducted between 2024 and 2025, including 30 interviews with local communities and an analysis of news reports and historical archives from the 1960s to the present, this article explores the quasi-religious practices employed by the Chinese community to safeguard

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Bukit Cina from future destruction and oblivion.

This study identifies three quasi-religious practices that transform Bukit Cina into an ethnic sanctuary: (1) re-inventing Chinese festivals and ancestor worship to create localized rituals that infect the ethnic community with the spirit of safeguarding Bukit Cina; (2) organizing cemetery tours that engage citizens and tourists with tombstones, geomancy, and inscriptions, fostering resistance against forgetting; (3) positioning Bukit Cina as a sacred center to build ethnic solidarity, develop lived memory maps, and establish a Storyeum, thereby challenging the spatial divisions of center and periphery in the official and World Heritage mapping.

Finally, this article argues that adopting the lens of quasi-religious practices provides a deeper understanding of how ethnic minorities in post-colonial contexts construct ethnic sanctuaries in modern cities to mobilize quasi-religiously inspired civic engagement and assert their mnemonic agency in imagining a collective future, while avoiding the methodological and theoretical biases of Western-centered approaches.

Revisiting the Formosan Encounter: How the Dutch-Formosan Religious Imagination Informs Contemporary Taiwanese

Daan F. Oostveen (University of Humanistic Studies)

The Dutch East India Company encountered in 17th Century "Formosa" (Taiwan) an indigenous population whose religious practices were not yet influenced by either Christianity or Buddhism. In this paper, I will explore how the encounter between Dutch protestant missionaries and local indigenous religious practices shaped the foundation for a hybrid Dutch-indigenous Taiwanese culture and its influence on contemporary citizenship. I will do this by reviewing the literature of the "Formosan Encounter", reports of Dutch missionaries and East India Company personnel on indigenous Formosan religious practices. Secondly, I provide some case studies from fieldwork in Taiwan on the legacy of Dutch colonialism in indigenous Taiwanese folklore.

The report of the Reverend Candidius, Discourse and Narrative of the Island Formosa, provides us with an account from the Dutch perspective on the religious practices on Taiwan before the arrival of both Chinese culture and Christianity. Though these reports are certainly colored by the biases of the missionaries, it should still be regarded as a unique account of pre-Chinese religion in Taiwan.

The legacy of the Dutch-Formosan encounter can still be found around Taiwan in folk temples. I will present the case studies of the temple of the Dutch Princess of the Eight Treasures in Kenting and the temple of the Dutch General in Chegangshang.

By comparing these two angles: the historical accounts of Dutch missionaries and East India Company personal on Formosan religion, and the ongoing legacy of Dutch culture in indigenous Taiwanese culture, I aim to provide insight on how the specific Dutch-Formasan encounter informed contemporary Taiwanese citizenship, as it is informed by Christian and indigenous heritage. Finally, I will emphasize that the imagination of the Dutch by the Taiwanese will continue to inform a sense of unique citizenship, separate from Chineseness, by looking at the rhizomatic structure of Dutch-indigenous encounterculture as a unique substratum to Taiwanese culture and citizenship

[Special Session 4-3] New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy *(Room 217)*

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

Taiwan has one of the largest percentages of new religious movements in the world in proportion to its population. Compared to Mainland China, Taiwan is hailed today as a beacon of religious liberty for these movements—and rightly so. However, new religious movements suffered discrimination and even outright persecution during the Martial Law period, for different reasons. Members of Yiguandao escaped persecution in Mainland China only to find new problems in authoritarian Taiwan. Soka Gakkai was also persecuted because of its Japanese origins and had to disband. As late as 1996, there was a crackdown on several religious movements for political reasons. Today, as evidenced by the case of Scientology, even new religious movements highly controversial elsewhere operate freely in Taiwan, although the cases of Happy Science and the Christian Gospel Mission show the persistence of a media opposition against movements stigmatized as "cults." The session explores both the intrinsic features of some NRMs active in Taiwan and the dynamics of Martial Law repression and post-authoritarian opposition.

The 1963 Suppression of Soka Gakkai in Martial Law Taiwan

Rosita Soryte (Center for Studies on New Religions)

Note: The paper is intended as part of the panel "New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy."
In the 1950s and early 1960s, economic exchanges between Taiwan and Japan led several Taiwanese to discover Soka Gakkai. In May 1961, five "districts" were formed. Soka Gakkai's Taipei chapter was formally established in August 1962. On

January 27, 1963, some members met President Daisaku Ikeda as he was changing planes at Taipei airport. These were, however, the years of the Martial Law in Taiwan. On April 3, 1963, the leader of Soka Gakkai in Taiwan was summoned to appear at the Taiwan Garrison General Headquarters, responsible for the application of the Martial Law. He was told that Soka Gakkai was an illegal organization and that an order of dissolution was imminent. In fact, on April 9, the order to disband Soka Gakkai in Taiwan was served to its leaders. In the evening, a meeting of district leaders was held under the supervision of a senior police officer, and they approved a motion dissolving the organization. Members continued to be kept under surveillance, and some had their careers compromised. Many continued to practice their religion privately, until in 1990, three years after the end of the Martial Law, Soka Gakkai was officially registered in Taiwan. The paper discusses the dissolution of Soka Gakkai and its reasons within the context of the religious repression of the Martial Law years and compares it with the post-authoritarian crackdowns on other groups in Taiwan.

Why Yiguandao? A Religious Movement and Martial Law in Taiwan

Massimo Introvigne (Center for Studies on New Religions)

Note: The paper is intended as part of the panel "New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy."
Author is both session organizer and presenter
Yiguandao is a "redemptive" or "salvationist" Chinese new religion dating back in its present form to early 20th century, although its remote origins can be traced back to the Middle Ages. It was heavily persecuted in Mao's China, which led tens of thousands of devotees to escape to Taiwan. There, Yiguandao followers were also looked at with suspicion and repressed until the end of the Martial Law period in 1987—which did not prevent the movement from continuing its activities underground and even grow. The paper presents the history of repression of Yiguandao in Martial Law Taiwan. It then compares the early crackdown and media slander against Yiguandao in Taiwan with more recent opposition and journalistic campaigns against other groups. It concludes that there are differences in Taiwan between authoritarian and post-authoritarian repression of certain religious movements, yet some old attitudes persist.

Localization and Gender Discourse of a Transnational New Religious Movement: A Survey of Female Clergy in Taiwan's Christian Gospel Mission

Li Yu-Chen (Chengchi University)

Note: The paper is intended as part of the panel "New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy"

As a branch of an international new religion, Christian Gospel Mission (CGM) from South Korea has faced conflicts arising from religious ecology and cultural differences during its 40-year development in Taiwan. To a great degree, Taiwan's CGM ("TCGM") not only continues the controversies surrounding the missionary methods of its mother church but also "inherits" the gender-related burdens from it, forcing them to seek a new positioning. Both the mother church and the local TCGM in Taiwan are regarded as new religions, characterized by a high proportion of female and young members among their clergy. Female members make up the majority of the pastoral ranks, which is a common phenomenon in new religious groups or "primitive churches," as they provide a more equitable promotion mechanism for women. In TCGM's leadership and management levels (primarily focused on clergy in this paper), women hold a dominant ratio (32.22% male to 67.78% female), though acceptance may vary due to cultural differences. This paper introduces and analyzes the motivations for female pastors' commitment to TCGM and their self-positioning in terms of gender and religion through my interviews conducted in the Spring of 2023, which is coherent with the opportunities afforded to women by TCGM in terms of doctrine and organization. The development process in Taiwan helps readers understand transnational new religious movements from a gender perspective, as well as the transnational spread of Asian new religions in the middle of controversies. Specifically, the different cultural backgrounds between Korea and Taiwan had made the two churches present different notions of gender attitudes among the journey of modernization.

Reframing Gender Through Faith: A Questionnaire Survey Analysis of the Christian Gospel Mission in Taiwan

Yowting Shueng (National Cheongchi University)

Note: The paper is intended as part of the panel "New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy"

In global religious contexts, women have long been marginalized in theological discourse and leadership positions. Despite increasing emphasis on gender equality, inequality remains prevalent in religious settings. The Christian Gospel Mission (CGM) in Taiwan, also known as the Providence Church, is a new religious movement characterized by a high level of female participation in leadership roles, providing a significant case that challenges traditional Christian gender structures. Previous studies have explored the gender structure and theological context of CGM through interviews and organizational observations; however, systematic data analysis on how individual members perceive and internalize this egalitarian atmosphere in their faith practice is lacking. This study employs a questionnaire survey as the primary method, supplemented by qualitative analysis of open-ended textual responses, targeting a sample of CGM members across Taiwan to

investigate their perceptions and cognitions regarding women's religious participation and empowerment. The findings reveal that, regardless of gender or position, members perceive the church as a space to express personal characteristics and act autonomously according to individual will. They resonate with the core doctrinal language of CGM's "Bridal Theology," which posits that each member is a beloved bride of God. Additionally, the survey statistics indicate a high proportion of women expressing willingness to serve, and actual engagement, in leadership roles. Through empirical data, this study supplements existing qualitative research, further elucidating how religious language is internalized in daily practice, offering theoretical and practical insights for the diverse development of religion in Taiwan and global gender equality initiatives.

'Taiwan Has Issues, Japan Has Issues': The Political Practice of the Happy Science Religion
Chien-Yuan Tseng (National Central University)

Note: The paper is intended as part of the panel "New Religious Movements in Taiwan: From the Martial Law to Democracy"

The Happy Science religion in Japan claims to base its fundamental doctrines on "love, knowledge, reflection, and development," viewing political engagement as a means of human spiritual practice, which led to the formation of the Happiness Realization Party. In its party platform, the Happiness Realization Party identifies the defense of Taiwan as a key mission, believing that communism is atheistic and uses people as mere tools. The existence of the Chinese Communist Party and the state it established, the People's Republic of China, poses a threat to all religions. Therefore, Taiwan, which guarantees religious freedom, is seen as the primary target for elimination by the People's Republic of China. As such, while the Happiness Realization Party prioritizes the policy of "protecting Japan and the world from China's malevolence," it also regards Taiwan as a sacred place to resist evil spirits. This paper will focus on observing how the Happy Science religion promotes and justifies its doctrines, linking Taiwan through political practice, how it aims to establish a divine paradise of happiness in Japan and the world, and how it has encountered opposition in both countries.

[Special Session 4-4] Emerging Voices in the Study of Chinese Religions (Room 219)

Moderator: Jack Meng-Tat Chia
(Society for the Study of Chinese Religions)

Buddhism in Fujian (3rd-15th Century): Textual and Quantitative Analyses of the *Bamin Tongzhi* 八閩通志

Rouying Tang (Temple University)

Dream-Praying at Jiuli Lake: Imperial Examination Dreams and Folk Pilgrimage in the He Jiuxian Belief.

Linchen Zheng (Xiamen University)

Ming Memory in Chinese Folk Religion: Case Studies of Sun Star-lord Worship and Zhutian Worship

Zhaoshen Wang (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Building Faith and Identity: The Case of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia

Bowen Liao (National University of Singapore)

Filial Piety as a Religious Virtue in Confucianism: An Interdisciplinary Research

Wenxu Zhang (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Day 2   Session 5

July 19 (Saturday), 13:30-15:20

[Session 5-1] Religion and Political Environment (Room 215)

Moderator: Chao Wang (Shaanxi Normal University)

Religious Power and Authoritarian Regression: The Paradox of a Pro-Democracy Christian Organization

BeomGyu Seo (Sogang University)

This study critically examines how religious power is structured and exercised within a Christian organization (E) through the case of an unfair dismissal. It explores how power becomes concentrated via crisis discourse, generates a state

of exception, and marginalizes dissent. Using Otto Maduro's theory of religious power as the primary analytical framework, supplemented by concepts from Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, and Émile Durkheim, the study reveals how informal decision-making structures weaken procedural diversity and institutional balance. Empirical data, including official rulings on unfair dismissal issued by the Labor Relations Commissions and internal interviews, demonstrate that religious power functions not merely as symbolic authority but as an operative form of governance that legitimizes authoritarian practices. The findings highlight the need for reflexive institutional mechanisms to safeguard democratic procedures and prevent symbolic domination within religious civil society.

The Dispute Review: How Does Religion Survive Under The Rules of Communism China

Chao Wang (Shaanxi Normal University)

At the beginning of 21st Century, the religion in China have developed and spread widely and flourished. It seemed like that the religion revival in Communist China. The government and religious scholars started to rethought the relationship between religion and state. From 2010 to 2020, a discuss on how religion survival under the rules of Communist China attracted people's attention. The government, the scholars, and some other people gave a different theories, policies, and strategies and hope to deal with the relationship between religion and state harmoniously. Such as: Ecological Theory of Religion , Religious market theory , Religious Rule of Law Theory , and others. They presented their data and analyses to urge to be accepted by more people. on the other side these theories were conflict to some extent. This paper will review the dispute and discuss the relationship between religion and state in Communist China.

Faith at a Crossroads: Protestant Discourse and Anti-Discrimination Law in South Korea

Saehwan Lee (University of Notre Dame)

Contemporary debates over comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (포괄적 차별금지법) in South Korea have revealed deep ideological and moral rifts, particularly concerning sexual orientation, gender identity, and fears of "reverse discrimination." Central to these discussions are Protestant communities, whose theological and cultural repertoires range from liberal to conservative (Kim, 2021; Kang, 2023). Yet scholarship has offered limited insight into how such communities construct, legitimize, and circulate religious narratives that inform public opinion and policymaking, particularly on LGBTQ+ issues. This study addresses that gap by examining how Protestant discourse shapes, and is shaped by, broader debates over anti-discrimination measures.

Challenging the notion that these controversies are mere clashes between

progressive human rights standards and conservative moral imperatives, this research highlights a complex interplay of religious belief, national identity, family ideologies, and moral order (Kim, 2024; Lee, 2011, 2022). While conservative Protestant groups employ tactics like mass rallies, lobbying, and public campaigns to frame their positions as biblically mandated guardians of social and spiritual order (Yoon & Oh, 2021), more progressive Protestant coalitions—such as the National Council of Churches in Korea—collaborate with Catholic and civil society organizations to advocate for inclusivity and social justice. This contrast underscores how religious communities not only reflect but also actively reshape social debates.

Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data from the 2022 Korean Protestant Equality Perception Survey (N=2,000) with qualitative, critical discourse analysis of online statements from four major Protestant associations. The survey data reveal significant variations in how Protestant respondents perceive discrimination, shedding light on denominational distinctions and divergent theological orientations. The qualitative analysis uncovers how official narratives construct moral communities that either resist or support anti-discrimination legislation, using biblical references, moral claims, and cultural repertoires to assert legitimacy and influence.

By treating these narratives as discursive systems that define social problems and reconfigure moral boundaries (Fairclough, 2001), the study illustrates how religious rhetoric can grant "privileged legitimacy" (Smith, 1996; Beyerlein et al., 2015) to particular policy positions, amplifying their impact on public debate and policymaking. Consequently, this work advances the sociology of religion by showing how faith communities function as active sites of meaning-making and collective identity formation, shaping social change in an increasingly contested public sphere. Through a nuanced lens on Protestant discourse, the research reveals how divergent theological frameworks can either endorse or challenge comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, ultimately influencing the course of human rights discourse in South Korea.

The Reality of "Monkless Temples" in Rural China: A Case Study of Yuncheng City

Duan Yu (Hokkaido University)

This study examines the phenomenon of "monkless temples" in rural China, focusing on Yuncheng City, Shanxi Province. Due to population decline and religious control policies, many Buddhist temples in rural China lack resident monks. The study investigates the causes, operational challenges, and possible strategies for sustaining these temples.

Since the Reform and Opening-Up period, Buddhism has revived in rural China, leading to the construction of new temples. However, during the Cultural Revolution, many temples were destroyed, and monks were forced to return to

secular life. In the 1980s and 1990s, due to a severe shortage of monks, local believers took over temple management. However, the Chinese government does not officially recognize temples managed by local believers as religious organizations, making them vulnerable to government control. Additionally, urbanization has led to rural depopulation, further weakening temple operations.

Yuncheng City, located in northern China, has experienced significant population decline and aging. As of 2020, its population had decreased by 360,000 from 2010, with a negative natural growth rate and an aging rate of nearly 20%. This demographic shift has severely impacted the sustainability of Buddhist temples. The study, based on field research conducted from June 2023 to March 2024, surveyed all 54 government-registered Buddhist temples in Yuncheng. It found that 21 temples (nearly 40%) are "monkless temples."

Two types of individuals manage these temples. The first type consists of senior disciples of deceased monks who take over temple administration. However, as these lay caretakers age, concerns arise about the future of temple management. The second type involves local believers who have historically managed temples. These believers, often temple founders or long-time supporters, assume leadership roles without formal monastic training.

The study identifies several major operational challenges for "monkless temples." First, temple facilities are deteriorating due to financial constraints, with many temples unable to afford necessary repairs. Second, there is a significant decline in the number of believers, particularly dedicated lay practitioners, who play a crucial role in temple maintenance and funding. Third, monkless temples struggle to conduct religious ceremonies, as they rely on visiting monks from neighboring temples. Consequently, they hold fewer rituals and attract fewer worshippers, leading to financial instability.

Despite these difficulties, some "monkless temples" remain active through community involvement. Similar to Japan, where declining populations have led to innovative temple management strategies, China's monkless temples may benefit from increased local participation and collaboration with external networks. Japanese examples show that laypeople can successfully maintain temples as community centers, even without resident monks.

This study raises the question: Can China's rural monkless temples adopt similar strategies to sustain their operations? By analyzing case studies in Yuncheng, this research explores the survival strategies of monkless temples in an era of demographic decline. While financial and political challenges persist, strengthening community engagement and forming partnerships with religious institutions could enhance their resilience in the long term.

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Moderator: Zhaoshen Wang (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Memory, Ritual, and Communitization: A Case Study of the Zhutian Folk Worship in Zhejiang, China

Zhaoshen Wang (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

This research examines the worship of the deity Zhutian 朱天, which gained popularity in Zhejiang, China, beginning in the late nineteenth century. Zhutian worship briefly emerged as one of the most compelling folk religious ritual traditions in major cities such as Hangzhou, Shaoxing, and Jiaxing during the early twentieth century and spread as far as Shanghai and Suzhou before rapidly disappearing with only scattered temples and ritual remnants surviving today. In origin narratives, Zhutian has been widely believed to be the incarnation of the tragic Ming dynasty Chongzhen emperor. Zhutian worship thus is accepted as having been created by seventeenth-century Ming loyalists to preserve historical memories related to anti-Qing resistance and Ming restoration aspirations.

This study draws upon textual research and ethnographic fieldwork at over forty temples that currently or formerly enshrined Zhutian. It demonstrates that Zhutian worship originated from the Daoist deity Thunder Ministry Marshal Zhu, emerging from the northern Shaoxing region only after the 1870s before spreading westward and was subsequently reinterpreted as a worship activity connected to Ming memories during its transmission. Nevertheless, ritual participants have always focused on efficacy and whether worship could benefit their daily lives, remaining utterly indifferent to the historical memories. After dramatic socioeconomic changes, this worship tradition, which had not been deeply rooted in cultural memory or institutionalized religion, was immediately marginalized, except for a few cases that successfully achieved "communitization"—rapidly evolving into guardian deities meeting the comprehensive needs of local community residents.

This research reveals the significant limitations of Chinese folk beliefs in preserving and transmitting historical memory across generations while highlighting the frequent misalignments and romanticized interpretations that intellectual elites imposed upon folk religious practices. The findings also demonstrate that "communitization," the process of transforming from specialized function to comprehensive community protection, represents the only viable pathway for most diffused religions to survive in Chinese society.

The Establishment of Mosques by Pakistani Immigrants in Japan and Subsequent Changes

Tomoko Fukuda (Chiba University)

This paper describes the history and subsequent changes in the establishment of mosques in Japan by Pakistani immigrants. Newcomer Muslim immigrants have established mosques since the 1990s. Why did the establishment of mosques increase after the 1990s? At a time when the number of Newcomer Muslims was gradually growing, the number of existing institutions was minimal, and there were compounding factors such as the problem of geographical discrepancy and the connection between Newcomer Muslims and religious groups (religious movements) in their countries of origin. Pakistani immigrants established and operated many of them. Why Pakistanis? Indonesians, who ranked first in population size, had many trainees and technical interns, and their residence status was unstable. In contrast, many Pakistanis ranked second in population, were spouses of Japanese nationals or permanent residents, and had stable residence status. How have mosques that Pakistani immigrants primarily run changed since then? Mosques should not be for a specific ethnic group. However, when immigrants establish a mosque in the host society, there are many cases where a particular ethnic group gathers. Some 30 years have passed since then, and there have been cases where mosques have transformed into transnational mosques that include Japanese nationals. We can observe diverse changes in each mosque. In the case studies, there was a multinationalization of participants, participation of Japanese Muslims in the operation, and changes in the composition of the participants (nationalities, occupations, etc.). In addition, different needs would lead to further derivation. In some cases, religious organizations try to "choose" affiliation. This paper focuses on the cases of mosques in Chiba, Japan. It describes the circumstances of its establishment, its subsequent transformation, and the activities of a new mosque derived from an old mosque.

Living Faith under Suspicion: Korean Muslims and the Experience of Islamophobia

Sunhan Kim (Sogang University)

In recent years, public discourse on Islam in South Korea has intensified, often shaped by fear, moral panic, and the perception of Islam as culturally incompatible with Korean society. This climate has prompted a growing body of academic work on Islamophobia, much of which focuses on migrant Muslim populations, refugee controversies, or the global circulation of anti-Muslim sentiment. While these studies have advanced our understanding of how Islam is framed and contested in Korean public life, they have also produced a significant gap: the near-total absence of research on Korean Muslims—South Korean nationals who have converted to and practice Islam.

This presentation addresses that gap by exploring how Korean Muslims experience and negotiate Islamophobia in a society where religious homogeneity

and secular nationalism remain powerful cultural forces. As citizens who are simultaneously perceived as religious outsiders, Korean Muslims offer a critical lens through which to reexamine dominant assumptions about national identity, religious legitimacy, and cultural belonging in contemporary South Korea. Existing frameworks tend to treat Islamophobia primarily as a reaction to foreign presence; however, the presence of Korean Muslims unsettles this binary and demands a more nuanced account of how religious difference is managed within the boundaries of citizenship.

To investigate these dynamics, this study proposes a qualitative approach that combines in-depth interviews and netnographic observation of online discourse. The research will examine how Korean Muslims articulate their faith, respond to suspicion or hostility, and navigate the tension between religious expression and societal conformity. Particular attention will be paid to the intersecting roles of gender norms, state secularism, and political ideology in shaping the conditions under which Islam is either marginalized or rendered invisible.

Ultimately, this research-in-progress highlights the need to expand the sociology of religion in South Korea by attending to the lived realities of religious minorities within the national citizenry. Far from representing a peripheral case, the experiences of Korean Muslims illuminate broader theoretical questions about the configuration of religion, identity, and power in East Asian societies. This study contributes to critical debates on religious pluralism, post-secular governance, and the politics of belonging in contexts marked by cultural homogeneity and political ambivalence toward religious diversity.

'A Church is a Building, Too': Multiple Affordances of Religious Structures for (Non)migrant Activities in Seoul, South Korea

Bubbles Beverly Asor (De La Salle University Manila)

The physicality and materiality of churches are largely understudied because of the popular notion that a church is more than a building but a symbolic carrier of faith and community. As this paper demonstrates, however, churches and religious buildings are also material phenomena whose architectural, physical, and spatial configurations have a structuring role by providing affordances or multiple possibilities and limitations (dis)allowing for religious and social activities by migrant congregants, non-migrant congregants, and outsiders. Using J. Gibson's notion of affordances, Glaeser's activity concept and drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork in Hyehwa Catholic Church in Seoul, South Korea, I explore what the physicality of a church could offer to (non)migrants at the individual and community level with regard to religious and secular activities. Within the context of migration, the church building that includes various spaces and objects within and outside its premise has multiple affordances for one or more activities – religious affordances for sacred activities and quotidian affordances for placemaking activities.

By identifying these multiple affordances of church buildings and surrounding vernacular streetscape, I endeavor to present an approach to studying religion's materiality and physical environment within the sociological discussion of agency and structure.

I explore the religious and social roles of a church's physical structure and what activities are made possible to be enacted by multiple actors by the physical and spatial features of the church. First, I provide the concepts of religious structures, affordances and activities that underpin the paper. Then I present the data and methods used to answer the main and ancillary questions: What are the multiple affordances of a religious building to multiple actors? What possibilities and limitations of actions and activities are afforded by the physical and spatial features of a religious building? Through these (non)migrant activities that emanate and flow from the religious building, how does the dual process of emplacement of the 'out-of-place' migrant body and displacement of non-migrant body occur with both as responses to navigate and contest the spatial regimes in place?

[Session 5-3] Religion and Social Integration *(Room 217)*

Moderator: Chitose Sato-Kitano (Hokkai School of Commerce)

Faith in Transition: How Religious Switching and Inheritance Shape Religious Engagement and Psychological Well-being in Taiwan

Kuo-Hsien Su (National Taiwan University)

Sociologists have long examined the intergenerational transmission of religious faith, yet less attention has been given to how religious mobility—shifting from one's family religious tradition to another—affects individuals' levels of religious commitment and psychological well-being, particularly in East Asian contexts. On the one hand, religious switching can entail significant social and emotional costs, including diminished familial support and difficulties in acculturating into a new religious community. These challenges can be particularly pronounced when individuals move from a less demanding religious tradition to a stricter one, as the heightened doctrinal expectations and behavioral requirements may impose psychological strain. On the other hand, a compensatory mechanism may occur: religious switchers may demonstrate higher levels of religious commitment than their religiously stable counterparts, seeking to validate their conversion through increased participation and identification with their new faith.

Drawing on data from an internationally collaborative survey on religiosity and employing Lou's improved Mobility Contrast Model (MCM) to isolate the distinct

effects of religious switching. Specifically, we disentangle the total effects of religious mobility into (1) the influence of family religious tradition (origin effect), (2) the impact of the newly adopted religious identity (destination effect), and (3) the unique effects of religious mobility itself, including experiences of conversion or reaffiliation. Our findings indicate that religious switching is associated with heightened religious commitment and well-being, underscoring the complex interplay between religious inheritance, identity shifts, and psychological adjustment. By employing an advanced methodological framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of religious mobility and its role in the broader process of intergenerational religious transmission.

How Buddhism is Fading Across East Asia

Yunping Tong (Pew Research Center)

This study analyzes change in Buddhist identity, practice and belief in East Asia using two different types of data. Using new Pew Research Center demographic estimates, we present patterns of change in Buddhist shares within countries of East Asia from 2010-2020. We also compare rates of identification with Buddhism between younger and older adults in recent surveys and examine age patterns in Buddhist beliefs and practices to address the limitations of measuring Buddhism using religious identity. Additionally, we discuss other demographic dynamics – such as religious switching, age structure, fertility, and migration – that are constraining Buddhist population growth. Altogether, the evidence shows Buddhists are declining in number, making up a shrinking share of East Asian publics, and that most types of Buddhist devotion are less common among today's young than they are in older generations. While Buddhism is fading overall, there are some exceptions including belief in Buddhist concepts of karma and rebirth and the practice of meditation.

Confronting Wildfires: Civic Implications of Tzu Chi USA's Disaster Relief Practices in Los Angeles

Yining Liu (Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts)

In January 2025, Los Angeles experienced a catastrophic wildfire that resulted in substantial economic loss and the displacement of numerous residents. In the wake of this crisis, the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation USA, an Asian American faith-based organization, promptly initiated relief operations. Grounded in the Buddhist ethos of great compassion, Tzu Chi extended both material assistance and psychosocial support to affected individuals across diverse ethnicities and religious affiliations.

This study examines the localized disaster response efforts of Tzu Chi USA through a combination of in-depth online interviews, secondary data analysis, and

ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Los Angeles area. Preliminary findings suggest three key dimensions underlying the organization's disaster relief logic. First, Tzu Chi volunteers interpret engagement in relief efforts as an embodied expression of Buddhist religious practice, particularly through the enactment of compassion and altruism. Second, Tzu Chi's relief initiatives transcend sectarian boundaries, fostering interreligious inclusivity by offering aid to disaster victims regardless of faith tradition. Third, the organization's rapid and organized response to the crisis exemplifies the characteristics of "public religion," wherein religious actors participate in civil society through humanitarian action.

Overall, Tzu Chi, as a transnational NGO rooted in Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, demonstrates how religious organizations can serve as significant agents of public engagement in times of crisis. This case provides a compelling lens through which to explore the contemporary articulation of public religion in pluralistic and disaster-prone societies.

Chinese Christian Communities in Japan: Ethnic Churches in a Society with Restrictive Immigration Policies

Chitose Sato-Kitano (Hokkai School of Commerce)

In the late 2010s, a new wave of migration has been observed in Chinese society, triggered by heightened social control particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the backdrop of China's expanding economic power, the destinations of migration have diversified. In Japan, the number of Chinese residents has been increasing, particularly in major metropolitan areas such as Tokyo and Osaka.

On the other hand, Japan's immigration policy is characterized by a stance of "strategic ambiguity." Successive Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) governments have avoided implementing a comprehensive immigration policy. However, in light of Japan's record-low birth rate, the government has acknowledged the growing number of foreign residents. As a result, immigration has increased, with Chinese migration to Japan being one of the most notable cases.

This presentation focuses on Chinese Christians who have migrated to Japan, particularly those who fled increasing religious restrictions under the CCP administration. Since the 2010s, Chinese Christians in Japan have either joined existing Chinese churches—some of which have been active since the early 20th century—or established their own small-scale congregations. As a result, the number of Chinese churches and regular Christian gatherings in Japan has doubled between the late 2010s and the early 2020s.

This presentation will analyze the process of Chinese church formation in Japan since the 2010s, based on case studies of Chinese churches in the country. It will examine both push factors, such as the intensification of religious restrictions in China, and pull factors that have encouraged migration to Japan.

Furthermore, this presentation will explore why the number of Chinese Christian

migrants has increased despite Japan's general reluctance to accept immigrants. It will also examine the role of newly established ethnic religious communities in shaping the identity of immigrant groups and facilitating their integration into a host society that remains relatively closed to immigration. This analysis will be conducted in comparison with ethnic churches in North America and non-Chinese ethnic churches in Japan.

[Special Session 5-4] Soka Gakkai International and Global Citizenship (Room 219)

Moderator: Kwang Suk Yoo (Kyung Hee University)

Religious Worldviews for Promoting Ecological Citizenship: Focusing on Ikeda's Philosophy of Life

Dong Uhn Suh (Kyung Hee University)

To be an ecological citizen today, we must go beyond the limitations of the Western modern concept of citizenship, more precisely the ancient Greek and modern concept of citizenship in the West, which is anthropocentric, rational, and established as a contract between man and man or individual and state. The modern understanding of citizenship has become an impediment to solving the current ecological crisis. Nevertheless, there are still those who try to solve the ecological crisis based on the concept of citizenship associated with that of human rights. To go beyond the modern anthropocentric and rationalistic citizenship rights, we must first recognize that humans are in relationship with other living beings based on their bodies, and learn how to respect the rights of nonhuman living beings. However, respecting all non-human beings, which has been regarded as non-living, as the same life is difficult to understand in the modern rationalistic way of thinking. What is called for here is the reinstatement of the thoughts of religious traditions that have been dismissed as superstitious since the Enlightenment. Although superstitious and mythical from a modern perspective, the recovery of this forgotten religious reason is necessary to overcome the current ecological crisis. Ikeda's philosophy of life is represented as the most comprehensive intellect of this spirituality of religious reason.

Daisaku Ikeda's Human Education: A Pathway to Korea-Japan Academic and Cultural Exchange

Woon Hwa Lee (DePaul University)

This paper explores Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of human education and its application to Korea-Japan relations, particularly in fostering academic exchanges and reconciliation. Rooted in Buddhist principles such as interdependence and dependent origination, Ikeda's concept of education emphasizes dialogue, global citizenship, value creation, and poetic spirit as means to develop both individual potential and collective harmony. His commitment to mutual growth and intercultural understanding has played a significant role in bridging historical divides between Korea and Japan, despite ongoing political tensions. By critically analyzing Ikeda's writings and their influence on academic collaboration, this study argues that education, when centered on humanistic values, can serve as a transformative force for historical awareness and peacebuilding. Ultimately, Ikeda's philosophy offers a framework for transcending national boundaries, fostering ethical leadership, and cultivating a more sustainable future through dialogue and shared learning.

Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue: An Examination of Daisaku Ikeda's Thoughts

Andrew Eungi Kim (Korea University) & Johngman Kim (Kyung Hee University)

Soka-gakkai (also known as Soka Gakkai International or SGI) is a new religious movement ¯ that originated in Japan in 1930. For more than a half century, the religion was led by its president Daisaku Ikeda, who played a significant role in its growth from 1960 until his death in 2023. Although SGI is one of the largest new religions in the world—it claims to have over 12 million members in 192 countries —there has to date been very limited scholarly attention paid to the religion and Ikeda's religious thoughts. The latter is particularly important given the fact that Ikeda has written extensively on the applicability and implications of the doctrines of the SGI in many global issues of the day, including peace, education, environment, and interreligious dialogue. Among a wide variety of issues which can be examined, the paper focuses on the following question: What are Ikeda's religious thoughts, particularly his stance on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue? In view of this question, this paper examines how his religious ideas are not immersed in any specific religion, but emphasizes the importance of pursuing interreligious dialogue while acknowledging other religions and cultural traditions. This paper also critically assesses whether Ikeda's call for interfaith dialogue and collaborations with various religious groups is indeed taking place in the SGI's commitment to fostering a culture of peace and understanding. It is hoped that the examination of Ikeda's stance on religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue indirectly allows for the exploration of a religion that is largely unknown and misunderstood.

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Weaving Faith into Action: How Soka Gakkai Shapes Culture and Community in Taiwan

Suhyun Lee (Kyung Hee University)

This study explores the activities of Soka Gakkai (創價學會) in Taiwan, focusing on its contributions to cultural, educational, and social development. Originating in Japan, Soka Gakkai has effectively adapted its mission to align with Taiwan's unique social and cultural landscape. Its initiatives include promoting peace, fostering community connections, encouraging cultural exchange, and advancing education. This makes it an exemplary case of how a global religious movement can successfully integrate into and contribute to a local context.

Using organizational documents, event observations, and interviews with members, this research organizes Soka Gakkai's activities into three main areas: 1. Cultural Activities: These include art exhibitions, public lectures, music festivals, cross-strait cultural exchanges, and discussion forums, all aimed at promoting cultural understanding and diversity. 2. Educational Activities: The group organizes academic talks, student exchange programs, and training sessions for middle school, high school, and university students. These programs focus on global citizenship, peace, and humanistic education. 3. Social Engagement: Soka Gakkai is involved in disaster relief, community service, local cultural activities, and charity events to help and empower vulnerable groups.

Soka Gakkai's activities in Taiwan align with the universal values of peace and the promotion of human well-being. By tailoring their diverse programs to meet local needs, they not only contribute to religious development but also help foster cultural connections between Taiwan and other regions. Furthermore, by comparing the activities of Soka Gakkai in Taiwan with those in South Korea, we can gain insights into how this Japanese religious organization fosters religious and social progress across different countries and communities. Ultimately, this study focuses on the Soka Gakkai case to provide valuable insights into how religion is evolving in its role in shaping civil society in contemporary Asia.

The Jazz of Enlightenment: Daisaku Ikeda's Vision of Buddhist Wisdom through the Rhythm of Life

Hyong-Chol Kang (Kyung Hee University)

This presentation explores Daisaku Ikeda's innovative philosophical synthesis in "Jazz, Buddhism, and a Joyful Life," where he examines the deep connection between the improvisational essence of jazz and the transformative wisdom of Mahayana Buddhism. By analyzing Ikeda's dialogues with musicians and his philosophical reflections, this study highlights how jazz transcends mere musical expression to become a metaphor for Buddhist practice and human flourishing. Ikeda, a celebrated Buddhist philosopher and peace advocate, identifies three core parallels between jazz and Buddhism: 1. Spontaneous Creativity and Mindfulness:

Jazz improvisation exemplifies mindfulness in action, akin to the Buddhist practice of cultivating presence and adaptability in each moment. 2. Interconnectedness and Harmony: Jazz balances individual expression with collective harmony, reflecting the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness (*Engi*, 縁起), where personal awakening contributes to universal well-being. 3. Resilience and Transformation: The joyful resilience in jazz mirrors Buddhism's approach to transforming suffering into sources of wisdom and creative energy.

The study particularly emphasizes Ikeda's conversations with jazz legend Herbie Hancock. Their discussions reveal how musical collaboration serves as a model for compassionate engagement with the world. Ikeda views the jazz ensemble as a microcosm of the Buddhist sangha—a community where mutual inspiration creates something greater than individual contributions. This metaphor extends to Ikeda's vision of global citizenship, where cultural diversity fosters creative synergy rather than conflict. Methodologically, this presentation integrates textual analysis of Ikeda's writings with comparative philosophy. It draws connections between Nichiren Buddhist concepts like ichinen sanzen (一念三千) and esho funi (依正不二) and jazz aesthetics, while incorporating insights from contemporary musicology. This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates how Ikeda's interpretation of jazz functions not merely as an analogy but as a vehicle for expressing profound Buddhist truths about reality and human potential. Ultimately, this presentation argues that Ikeda's jazz-Buddhism synthesis offers a compelling paradigm for 21st-century spiritual practice. In an era marked by fragmentation and anxiety, his vision unites artistic expression, philosophical depth, and social engagement. Jazz becomes a powerful metaphor for disciplined practice—whether musical or spiritual—leading not to rigid perfection but to liberated creativity. This exploration invites us to reconsider how wisdom traditions can resonate through contemporary art forms, redefining spiritual practice as both profoundly serious and joyfully playful.

Day 2 Session 6

July 19 (Saturday), 15:40-17:30

[Session 6-1] Religion and Political Life *(Room 215)*

Moderator: David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)

Iconocracy: The Sovereignty of a Statue and the Dominion of a Crown.

David Palmer (The University of Hong Kong)

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This paper will draw on fieldwork on a ritual tradition in rural Guangdong to bring studies of Chinese deity cults into engagement with political philosophy and with anthropological theories of human-object assemblages. We will attempt to theorize a political regime of self-government ("iconocracy") in which sovereignty is vested in wooden statues and images (gods who are "kings" and "generals") that are themselves enshrined, activated, paraded and manipulated by representative assemblies and technical experts, and that frame community decisions, negotiations and resource allocation. In an act of symmetrical anthropology, we will compare the procession of a local statue (the local Goddess Caozhu) with that of a crowned body (Queen Elizabeth II), producing mutual insights on the sacralization and operation of sovereign objects. After sketching the basic structure in the locality of the Huanghua field case, we will consider the articulations between such "polities" at the horizontal level (translocal networks of interpenetrating sovereignties) and at the vertical level (between local, regional and imperial sovereignties). Finally, we will interrogate to what extent iconocracy exists in other statuary cultures, and discuss the implications for theorizing the political power of assemblages of images, objects and people in contemporary society.

The Dissolution of the Unification Church and its Imprecation on Politico-Religious Relations in Japan

Yoshihide Sakurai (Hokkaido University)

A Tokyo district court ordered the dissolution of the Unification Church as a religious corporation on March 25, 2025, which would revoke its legal status of tax exemption and require it to liquidate its assets. Of course, the Unification Church could continue its organization and activities as a religious organization with its conglomerate groups. However, the Unification Church will completely lose credibility among the general public so that it cannot acquire new members and raise funds for South Korea where the living Messiah couple, Sun Myung Moon and Han Hak-ja have demanded Japanese contribution. Therefore, the president of the Unification Church of Japan stated at a press conference that the dissolution order was the same as a death sentence, and he immediately appealed to the Tokyo High Court.

In this presentation, I will first examine the content of the dissolution order decided by the Tokyo District Court and the counterargument from the Unification Church. Next, while looking at overseas media reports, etc., I will discuss the particularity of the Unification Church issue in Japan and the implications for the sociology of religion, which examines the relationship between politics and religion in the modern era.

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Another Fundamentalism?: Some Characteristics of Korean Conservative Protestantism

Hyung Chull Jang (Induk University)

Prominent figures in the sociology of religion characterize fundamentalism as an ideological stance that directly opposes communism and seeks to politicize religious beliefs. It is characterized by eschatological worldviews and the presumption that public policy ought to reflect religious principles. Furthermore, fundamentalism often emphasizes a specific historical period, expressing a longing for a return to an idealized state as represented in biblical narratives. It perceives modernity as a significant threat and operates as a reactive movement against the forces of modernization. These characteristics align with what is referred to as "historic fundamentalism," which is primarily associated with American Protestantism. Nonetheless, fundamentalism can manifest in diverse forms across various religious traditions and geographical contexts. This research identifies some distinct characteristics of Korean conservative Protestantism that resonate with the broader framework of fundamentalism. In this analysis, three salient features emerge: First, Korean conservative Protestants frequently prioritize anti-communism as a foundational principle, to the extent that it can supersede biblical injunctions. Second, they tend to idealize and reconstruct a pristine past based on subjective life histories, rather than relying on conventional biblical or ecclesiastical narratives. This constructed past often evokes the so-called "golden era" under former President Park Chung-hee, a period characterized by policies heavily centered on national security and economic growth. Third, while there is a pronounced opposition to modernity, it is noteworthy that Korean conservative Protestants experienced considerable church growth and economic development during a period marked by economically motivated modernization. This indicates that rather than being purely reactive, they exhibit a complex openness to the process of modernization. Finally, it is plausible that variations in the expression of fundamentalism arise from Korean geographical and historical factors. Therefore, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of fundamentalism globally, a nuanced consideration of geographical and historical contexts is essential. (NRF-2024S1A5A2A01026936)

The Discourse on 'Public Religion' and the Far-Right Movement in South Korea

Hairan Woo (Seoul National University)

Until recently, Korean scholars of religion have emphasized the active role of religion in the public sphere, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus is largely a response to declining social trust and the diminishing influence of religion in society. However, since President Yoon declared martial law on December 3, South Korea has experienced an unprecedented political movement: leaders from certain Protestant churches have taken to the streets, rallying a

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diverse segment of the public around extreme conservative ideas. This group is often referred to as 'the asphalt right.' Consequently, Korean Protestant churches have become a significant driving force behind the far-right movement, forming alliances with conservative political factions. Given this context, it is essential to reevaluate the academic and religious discussions surrounding 'public religion.' This presentation will explore the complex background of the political activities of certain Protestant churches within contemporary Korean society, as well as their fundamentalist orientation.

[Session 6-2] Religion and Diaspora in East Asia *(Room 216)*

Moderator: Ka Shing (Hokkaido University)

The Christian Community of Diaspora Hongkongers in Japan

Ka Shing (Hokkaido University)

The migration of Hong Kong residents in the wake of the 2019-2022 socio-political unrest has led to the formation of diaspora communities across various countries, including Japan. While existing studies have explored the broader trends of Hong Kong emigration, limited research has focused on the experiences of Hong Kong Christians in Japan. This study examines the challenges faced by Hong Kong Christian migrants in Japan, the role of religious faith in their adaptation process, and the support provided by local churches.

The increasing number of Hong Kongers relocating to Japan reflects broader patterns of migration influenced by political dissatisfaction, declining trust in legal institutions, and a desire for stability. Data from the Immigration Services Agency of Japan indicates a significant rise in Hong Kong migrants following the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2020 implementation of the National Security Law. While Japan has not been a primary destination compared to countries such as the United Kingdom or Canada, the influx of Hong Kong migrants has nonetheless contributed to a growing diaspora community.

Religion plays a critical role in the migration experience, providing not only spiritual support but also facilitating social integration and identity preservation. The study builds on existing scholarship that highlights the role of religion in diaspora communities. Research by Wuthnow and Hackett (2003) and Yang (1999) suggests that religious institutions offer spaces for cultural continuity, community building, and selective assimilation. Similarly, studies on Tamil Hindus in Germany and other migrant religious communities have shown that religion aids in adjusting to new social environments (Baumann & Salentin, 2006; Bonifacio & Angeles, 2010). This preliminary study indicates that Hong Kong Christians in Japan face multiple

challenges, including cultural adaptation, language barriers, and difficulties in maintaining religious practices. The case of Church X demonstrates that local churches play a crucial role in providing a sense of community and support. However, challenges such as the lack of Cantonese-language services and potential tensions between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese Christians highlight areas that require further attention. The study suggests that linguistic barriers may affect the participation and spiritual fulfillment of Hong Kong Christians in Japanese churches, while socio-political divisions between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese migrants may also manifest in religious spaces.

Further research is needed to explore the evolving nature of the Hong Kong Christian community in Japan, its interaction with local religious institutions, and its role in the broader diaspora experience. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to discussions on migration, religious identity, and integration in host societies.

The Christian Community of Diaspora Hongkongers in Taiwan

Yosuke Matsutani (Kinjo Gakuin University)

Since the large-scale protests against the proposed amendment to the Extradition Law in Hong Kong in 2019—and especially following the enactment of the Hong Kong National Security Law in 2020—emigration from Hong Kong to overseas destinations has steadily increased, with the total number of emigrants reportedly reaching several hundred thousand. Among the main destinations, the United Kingdom has received the largest number of emigrants due to the relative ease of migration via the British National (Overseas) passport (BNO), but a significant number of Hongkongers have also relocated to Taiwan.

There are several reasons why Hongkongers have chosen Taiwan as a migration destination, including its geographical proximity and the linguistic compatibility, as Mandarin is the predominant language in daily life. At the time of the large-scale protests in Hong Kong, Taiwan was in the midst of its presidential and legislative election campaigns. Then-president Tsai Ing-wen made public statements expressing support for accepting Hong Kong migrants, which contributed to a notable influx of Hongkongers into Taiwan. However, the Taiwanese government later revised its policies regarding the settlement rights of Hong Kong immigrants, tightening the screening process. As a result, some Hongkongers who had migrated in Taiwan subsequently relocated to the UK or other countries in a so-called "second wave of migration."

Against this backdrop, several Hongkonger Christian communities were established in Taiwan after 2019. The author conducted field research on Hong Kong Christian communities in Taiwan during three research trips in 2023. This presentation focuses on two primary case studies: the "Hong Konger Fellowship" at the Chi-nan Presbyterian Church, and the "Tamsui Hong Kong Church," which was founded in

2021 and held its gatherings in a rented room at the Tamsui Presbyterian Church, before disbanding in December 2023.

By analyzing the background and current state of these communities, and comparing them with cases of Hongkonger Christian communities in the United Kingdom and Japan, this presentation seeks to clarify the distinctive features and challenges faced by Hongkonger Christian communities within the specific social institutions and conditions of Taiwanese society.

The case of Japan will be addressed in another presentation at this symposium, namely Ka-Shin Ng's "The Christian Community of Hongkongers in Japan."

Rethinking the Modern Vietnamese Buddhist Revival: Historical and Cultural Linkages with Japan and Korea

Ichika Sugahara (University of Tokyo)

This paper is intended to shed light on how the Buddhist revival movement in Vietnam emerged and developed in the 1920s in the international context of East Asia, focusing on Japan and Korea in particular.

In the late 1920s, Vietnam saw the emergence of the Buddhist Revival Movement (Phong trào chấn hưng Phật giáo), which sought to modernize and reform Buddhism in response to colonial challenges and internal religious transformations. The concrete activities of the Buddhist revival movement included the organization of monks and lay Buddhists, the translation of Buddhist scriptures, and the publication of periodicals and Buddhist books.

Previous scholarship on the international aspects of this movement has primarily paid attention to its connections with Chinese Buddhist reform, particularly the influence of Taixu, a Chinese monk who was a central promoter of the modernization of Chinese Buddhism, as well as its interactions with Cambodia, Laos, and France within the framework of French Indochina. However, this perspective overlooks the broader transnational influences that shaped Vietnamese Buddhist reform, including interactions with Japan, Korea, and even other Western countries. Examining these underexplored connections allows us to reassess the various dimensions of modern Buddhism in East Asia and reconsider how Vietnamese Buddhists positioned themselves within regional and global Buddhist networks.

This paper will clarify on the historical exchange between Vietnam, Japan, and Korea in the context of Buddhist modernity, drawing on archival materials and historical records. I will highlight the contributions of Kim Yung-Kun, a Korean scholar affiliated with the École française d'Extrême-Orient who played a key role in introducing the Vietnamese Buddhist situation to the Japanese Buddhist community, and how the two nations perceive one another in Japan and Vietnam.

Specifically, I will investigate the writings on overseas Buddhism in "Kaigai Bukkyo Jijo," a Japanese magazine published in modern times that focused on

overseas Buddhism, and "Đuốc Tuệ," a periodical published by a Vietnamese Buddhist revivalist organization, to examine what kind of exchanges were taking place.

By shedding light on these transnational connections, this study contributes to broader discussions on religion and national identity, religious networks in East Asia, and the role of Buddhism in shaping modern conceptions of citizenship and cultural belonging. It also challenges the conventional framework of East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism, proposing an expanded perspective that fully incorporates Vietnam into discussions of modern Buddhist transformations.

Gender and Social Participation Practices in Taiwanese Buddhism in Japan: Focusing on Bhikkhunis' Narratives

Mi Tingmei (Ochanomizu University)

This presentation explores the social participate practices of Taiwanese Bhikkhunis (fully ordained female monastics) in Japan from a gender perspective, and examines the potential of feminist Buddhism. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the role of Buddhism in contemporary society, particularly in relation to gender dynamics.

Buddhism has faced increasing criticism due to the persistence of gender-discriminatory doctrines and the unequal distribution of power between men and women within institutional structures. The rise of feminist movements has further intensified these critiques. For Taiwanese Buddhism, which actively participates in social activities, addressing gender inequalities within its doctrinal and organizational frameworks while responding to contemporary gender norms has become an urgent and complex challenge.

To examine this issue, this study focuses on Taiwanese Buddhist group Mountain A's Temple B in Japan as a case study. Mountain A is a Buddhist organization established in the 1960s. Since the 1990s, it has expanded its presence in Japan, founding six temples in major cities such as Tokyo, Yamanashi, and Osaka. Among these, Temple B is the largest and serves as the central temple of Mountain A in Japan. Temple B is home to more than ten Bhikkhunis, each of whom holds a key administrative role. The temple operates under a governance structure centered on Bhikkhunis, enabling them to assume leadership positions in its management. Beyond its religious rituals, Temple B actively engages in diverse social initiatives, including tourism, environmental conservation, the arts, and education, reflecting a multifaceted approach to social participation.

Employing participant observation and interviews, it analyzes the narratives of Bhikkhunis to explore how they interpret gender-discriminatory doctrines and how they construct meaning in their contemporary social participate practices.

The research methodology consists of long-term participant observation and interviews. Through the narratives of Bhikkhunis, this study examines how they

interpret gender-discriminatory doctrines(such as the Eight Special Rules), the gendered conflicts they encounter in their social participate practices, and the gender norms that emerge through these practices. By analyzing these dynamics, this study aims to explore the potential of feminist Buddhism.

[Session 6-3] Religion and Local Community *(Room 217)*

Moderator: Francis K.G. Lim (Nanyang Technological University)

The Role of Religious Facilities in Promoting Multicultural Coexistence: Case Studies from Suburban Communities in South-Eastern Gifu area, Japan

Wataru Kawazoe (Rissho University)

Religious activities among foreign residents in Japanese local communities have often been overlooked in discussions on "multicultural coexistence." Despite their potential as significant social capital, religious facilities in Japan rarely participate in local multicultural coexistence initiatives compared to those in other countries. Nevertheless, there has been a steady increase in religious facilities serving foreign communities, particularly in metropolitan and suburban areas. As suburban communities diversify, these facilities are progressively integrated into the public sphere. This study explores the evolving role of religious facilities within the context of transnational migration and the flow of migration-related capital. Focusing on Minokamo City and Kani City in Gifu Prefecture as representative suburban cases, this research examines how religious facilities shape migrant support networks amid shifting residential dynamics. Since the 1990 revision of the Immigration Control Act, both cities have experienced a significant influx of foreign residents who now play a vital role in supporting local labor markets. In response, city governments have proactively implemented policies to cultivate a "multicultural society," including multilingual administrative services, integration support programs for immigrant children, and disaster communication systems. Such policies have transformed perception of foreign residents from "individuals requiring assistance" to "integral community members," promoting equitable coexistence with Japanese residents. To capture the daily lives of foreign residents and the expansion of their religious activities, on-site interviews were conducted with local government officials, representatives from migrant support organizations, Brazilian and Filipino residents, as well as leaders and practitioners of religious facilities. This study analyzes the role and positioning of religious facilities in suburban areas within the context of global changes, highlights their significance for transnational and cosmopolitan migrants. The findings suggest that religious facilities play a crucial role in enhancing household and community cohesion while

providing essential support for international migrants. These insights highlight the potential of religious institutions in promoting multicultural coexistence in suburban areas of Japan.

In-Between Worlds: A Study of Cross-Cultural Identity Formation at the Crossroads of Tianxia and Christendom during the Ming-Qing Transition

Kang Li (Wuhan University)

This paper focuses on missionaries who profoundly identified with Confucian culture and Chinese Catholic converts who adopted the "Chao Ru" (the superiority of Catholicism over Confucianism) stance during the Ming-Qing Christian-Confucian dialogue, examining their cultural universalist identity. This paper will argue that there exists a highly tense dual dimension in the cultural identification with Christianity and Confucianism: one is the inclusiveness of Confucianism and the exclusiveness of Christianity at the doctrinal level of religious transcendence, and the other is the tianxia-ism (all-under-heaven cosmology) of Confucianism and the universalism of Christianity at the level of civilization interaction. It is difficult to balance the two cultural identifications unless compromises are made in the exclusive domains of both traditions. This paper will analyze two exceptional cases—Jesuit missionary Joachim Bouvet (1656-1730) and Confucian scholar Li Zubai (?-1665) —who manifested cultural universalist identity combining Christian and Confucian identifications during the Biblical chronology controversy in China. Bouvet, as a founder of Figurism, regarded Yijing (the Book of Changes) as a divinely revealed text, identifying its author Fu Xi with Enoch. Li Zubai explicitly claimed in his Tianxue chuangai (A Survey on the Spread of the Learning of Heaven) that "China's primordial ancestors were descendants of Judea",attempting to graft Chinese ancestry onto Judeo-Christian salvation history. Nevertheless, both Bouvet and Li ultimately failed, exposing the profound dilemma of cultural universalism between Christian and Confucian. Through comparative analysis of these two cases, this paper will also argue that the "two-headed snake" phenomenon encompasses not only Confucianized Catholics but also missionaries who extensively studied and revered Confucian culture—both being subjected to dual "Cultural Imperatives", when facing conflicts, missionaries and believers either have to choose one of the two or integrate the two cultural identities on the basis of compromise. Therefore, the cultural universalism of Catholicism during the Ming and Qing dynasties itself had unstable factors. The more the dual cultural identity developed and the closer it leaned towards the other cultural identity, the more intense the resistance from the mainstream views within its own culture would be, and eventually it would touch the bottom line and lead to catastrophic consequences. According to John Hick's theory of religious dialogue, this pre-modern cultural universalism can be analogized to the dialogue mode of religious inclusivism. Inclusivism aims at

annexing heterogeneous cultures. In the 17th-18th centuries, both the booming Christian world and the ancient and huge Confucian China had profound cultural heritages, so neither side could annex the other. Therefore, whether it is the cultural universalism of Catholicism or Confucianism, it is doomed to be difficult to succeed.

Religious Currents Within the Greater Pearl River Delta: An Esoteric Buddhist Temple's Journey to Hong Kong

Edward Irons (Hong Kong Institute For Culture)

The modern era, from the late Qing, introduced new factors into Lingnan's 嶺南 cauldron of change, primarily colonialism, including the colonial entity Hong Kong, the nation state, industrialized production and social organization, mechanized warfare, and modern ideas of education and literacy. Religious change and movement within Lingnan were influenced by these forces in new ways. This paper focuses on one line of development that resulted in the establishment of a unique temple on Hong Kong Island, Sung Chu Temple (崇珠閣 chongzhuge).

Sung Chu Temple was founded in the early 1950s by immigrants from Guangdong and reflected elements of the Lingnan political and religious culture current in the 1930s and 1940s. Chief among these was an association with Guomindang political elite and a mixing of Daoist and esoteric Buddhist beliefs. The abbess of Sung Chu continued the active engagement with these elements in her new surroundings. The temple was fully embedded in the North Point society of the 1950s and 1960s and maintained close ties with both Buddhist and Daoist figures of the era. The temple began to lose its relevance in the 1970s as Hong Kong's economy took off and new attitudes rose to prominence. Today it is well-preserved but nearly empty, a shadow of its former presence.

The paper's primary focus is on factors unique to the Lingnan cultural area, which includes Hong Kong and the Greater Pearl River Delta. The paper describes the temple's development and traces the cultural forces that accompanied migration out of Guangdong in the late 1940s. conclude that religious actors and institutions play and active role in introducing, assimilating, and shaping social practice.

Religious Imaginary, Informal Religious Spaces, and Urban Citizenship: Yiguan Dao House Temples and Vernacular Shrines in Singapore

Francis K.G. Lim (Nanyang Technological University)

My paper examines the intersections of religious imaginary, informal religious spaces, and urban citizenship in Singapore, drawing on my research on the Yiguan Dao house temples and vernacular shrines. My conception of the religious imaginary draws upon Castoriadis' and Taylor's works on the social imaginary, where the religious imaginary encapsulates the collective beliefs, symbols and practices that inform social actors' understanding and experience of religion within a societal context. Singapore's urban landscape, shaped by its secular governance and multicultural policies, provides an appropriate context for understanding how grassroots religious practices adapt to regulatory frameworks and spatial constraints. Informal religious spaces, such as Yiguan Dao house temples— domestic Buddha halls embedded within private residences—and vernacular shrines located in public spaces like tree groves, void decks, and roadside altars, illustrate the resilience of grassroots religiosity in an increasingly urbanized environment. Yiguan Dao house temples transform private homes into sacred spaces, allowing members to practice their faith within the confines of state regulations that prohibit overtly religious uses of public housing. These house temples serve as community hubs for worship, doctrinal education, and social bonding, creating micro-communities within secular housing estates. In contrast, vernacular shrines —small, informal worship sites often initiated by local residents—occupy public spaces and foster interfaith engagement and communal identity. Despite their informal nature, these shrines face challenges from urban redevelopment and regulatory pressures but persist through community negotiation and adaptation. I argue that both Yiguan Dao house temples and vernacular shrines exemplify alternative forms of urban citizenship, where communities, mobilizing alternative religious imaginary, reclaim urban margins through micro-politics to sustain spiritual practices and foster belonging. These spaces challenge the boundaries of Singapore's secular governance by highlighting the coexistence of grassroots religiosity with state-driven modernization. Through a comparative analysis of these two case studies, my paper demonstrates how informal religious spaces contribute to Singapore's pluralistic identity while navigating tensions between regulation and cultural resilience.

[Session 6-4] Religion and Social Change *(Room 219)*

Moderator: Shun-hing Chan (Hong Kong Baptist University)

The Irrationality of Religion and Its Significance in Modern Times

Shunichi Miyajima (Hokkaido University)

When considering the relationship between religion and society, the irrational element of religion poses a challenge. In this presentation, I will discuss the

relationship between religion and society with respect to dynamics of rationality and irrationality. In this context, rationality and irrationality refer specifically to scientific rationality and irrationality, not the concept of Weber's Instrumental Rationality. There are numerous irrational elements in religion. In particular, religious scholars in the first half of the 20th century emphasized the irrational aspects of religion. For example, the German theologian and religious scholar Rudolf Otto considered the irrational element to be the essence of religion, removing the rational element from religion and naming what was left of the irrational as the Numinose. He was not alone in viewing religion this way. This view was the mainstream of religious studies at the time. However, after World War II, secularization theory became popular, and unscientific and irrational religions were encountering a notable decline. On the other hand, the rational side of religion was also highlighted, and there was a growing tendency shifting the view of religion from a private, mystical activity to a public one. Japanese religious scholar Hideo Kishimoto removed the irrational elements from religion and sought a rational form of religion.

Although religion plays a public role in the modern world, its rational activities minimize the possibility of conflicts with society. One example is volunteering for disaster relief in disaster-stricken areas. However, irrational activities may cause conflicts with society. Moreover, spiritual care in medical institutions is an issue of ensuring rationality. Conversely, if religion becomes merely rational, there will be no difference between religious and secular activities. If this happens, the raison d'etre of religion will be lost. For instance, if the aforementioned "spiritual care" becomes psychological and mental care, no mention of the term "spiritual" is necessary.

Nonetheless, it is becoming increasingly difficult in today's society to distinguish what is rational and what is irrational. For example, especially after the outbreak of the coronavirus, conspiracy theories lacking rationality have become very influential on social networking sites. Peter Berger once argued that modern society has lost its religious "sacred canopy," but today, the scientific "secular canopy" is also disappearing. The very axis of rationality is wavering in modern society.

Harmonizing two Meditation Traditions, Harmonization of the Society: Cheonghwa's Silsang-Yeombulseon in South Korean Buddhist Society

Hyung-Jin An (University of Delhi)

Dhyāna (hereafter Seon) and Buddhānusmṛti (hereafter Yeombul), the practice techniques spread from ancient India to East Asia. Bhikkhu Cheonghwa (1924~2003 AD) taught Yeombul-seon, which was a fusion of Yeombul and Seon practice handed down from ancient times. Seon is the main practice of the Seon School and is originated in India but was influenced by the Taoist School through China.

Yeombul is a major practice method of the Pure Land sect. Unlike Seon, which was mainly practiced by monks or intellectuals, Yeombul was mainly practiced by the common people.

The unique feature of Bhikkhu Cheonghwa's Silsang-Yeombulseon is that it uses Yeombul as a practice method but accepts the concept of Seon Buddhism's pure nature of mind. According to him, our pure mind itself is Amitabha Buddha, and Yeombul is a practice for realizing the nature of mind, not for rebirth in the Western Pure Land. He taught that the human mind is inherently a perfected Buddha, although we are not aware of it because of ignorance. Therefore, Yeombul, which recollects the name of Buddha and contemplates his image, and Seon, which searches for the true essence of the mind, are non-dual. Although the method of practice is different, the ultimate goal and the content of enlightenment to be achieved are the same.

If one practices Yeombul with all his heart, he will reach the state of Yeombul-Samādhi and see the Buddha in person. This same phenomenon is expressed as seeing true nature in Seon tradition, and as meeting Buddha in Pure Land Buddhist tradition. If one progresses further in this state, will ultimately experience for Dharmakāya, the essence of whole existence. A practitioner lives Pure Land in this life, and after he dies, reborn in Western Pure Land of Amitabha the Buddha.

This Yeombulseon has greatly contributed to popularizing Buddhist practice among Buddhists in modern Korean society, from intellectuals and wealthy people to the ordinary people. And its historical significance lies in the fact that it inherited the 'Interpenetrated Buddhist (Tongbulgyo)' tradition of Korean Buddhism by ensuring that the destinations of these two methods of practice are the same.

Keywords: Cheonghwa, Yeombulseon, Yeombul-Samādhi, Dharmakāya, Buddhānusmṛti, Dhyāna

Christian Nationalists in South Korea: Who are 'We'?, not 'Them'

Junsoo Jeong (Korea University)

This study is based on participant observation of Pastor Jun Kwang-hoon's Gwanghwa-mun rallies, which lie at the heart of South Korea's far-right politics. Unlike previous research that focused on worldviews or mobilization structures, this study offers a comprehensive account by examining how religion functions in political conflict and how it interacts with various societal domains. The analysis reveals that the rallies used religious language to justify and intertwine the political, economic, and internal orders, thereby sustaining a hierarchical structure alongside voluntary and devoted participation. These findings suggest that while religion can offer general principles of action in political conflict, its actual manifestations must be understood through its interactions with particular domains. The mechanism that enables the coexistence of hierarchical structure and committed participation remains an open question for future research.

The Intersection of Religion, Politics, and Civic Activism Related to Abortion in Japan: "Demonstration" as a Medium for the Generation of Meaning

Chen Hsuanyu (Tokyo University of Science)

Since the 1970s, the fluctuation of legal regulations surrounding abortion has consistently been a significant aspect of sexual and reproductive politics, as well as the influence of conservative religious movements in the political arena. Within the disciplines of sociology of religion and politics, the issue of abortion in the United States is recognized as a significant opportunity for evangelical Christianity to engage actively in the realms of politics and the public sphere. Gilles Kepel characterizes this as a religious movement striving to reclaim a theology-based worldview. This resurgence is fueled by a profound sense of crisis over the erosion of traditional perspectives on life and family that modernity has inflicted since the secularization of society (Kepel, The Revenge of God. Penn State Press, 1994).

Despite the different contexts, a similar trend can be observed regarding the involvement of conservative religious groups in politics, particularly in the discussion of abortion politics and religion in Japan. In the 1960s to 1980s, the Shinto-based new religion Seicho-No-Ie, as noted by Hotaka Tsukada, played a significant role in promoting political coalitions when the amendment to the now-defunct Eugenic Protection Law was presented in the Diet. This movement strongly connected the respect for the unborn fetus's life with notions of nationalism. (Tsukada, The junction of politics and religion. Kadensha Press, 2015). Although Seicho-no-Ie's movement to restrict abortion had a significant impact, it ultimately failed. In contrast to the growing involvement of American evangelicals in politics, Seicho-no-Ie withdrew from the political arena after its attempts to revise the law were unsuccessful. Consequently, the issue of abortion in Japan also lost popularity after the 1980s.

Although notable advancements may have occurred in the political arena, the narratives of "citizens" from conservative religious backgrounds—who voice their "anger" over societal issues and vehemently challenge the encroachment of secularism—remain strikingly similar. In contrast, the intricate dynamics between politics, religion, and civil movements deserve deeper exploration through rich, diverse, and multifaceted little narratives that reveal the complexity of these interrelationships.

This presentation will focus on the development and transformation of the March for Life, a small pro-life movement in Japan. The March for Life, which began in 2014, has evolved under the influence of the United States. Although it has a Christian background, it is not primarily shaped by a specific religious organization; rather, the meaning of the march has been defined by the people and organizations involved through the act of demonstration.

Through interviews with participants and organizations, this presentation will share

the little narratives of those involved in the march. It will highlight new perspectives on the politics and religion surrounding abortion, as well as the nature of civil movements.

Day 3

Field Trip (I), July 20 (Sunday)

- 09:30 | Exit 2 of An-Am Subway Station (Line 6)
- 10:00-13:00 | *Wonnam temple* of Won-Buddhism (圓佛敎),
  a new Buddhist movement originated in Korea
  (Temple Lunch included)
- 14:00-15:00 | *Jogye Temple*, headquarter of Jogye Order (曹溪宗),
  the largest denomination of Korean Buddhism
- 15:30-17:00 | *Myeong-dong Cathedral* (明洞聖堂)
  which represents Korean Catholicism symbolically
- 17:30 | Departure for An-Am Station
- 18:00 | Dinner included

Day 4

Field Trip (II) to *DaesoonJinrihoe*, July 21 (Monday)

- 8:30 | Departure for Yeoju
  (An-Am Station)
- 10:00 | Temple Complex
  & Museum Tour
- 12:00 | Lunch and Conversation
- 14:00 | Departure for Seoul

Daesoon Jinrihoe Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex, Yeoju City, Korea

Daesoon Jinrihoe was established in 1969 by the Holy Leader Park Wudang (1917-1995), though its religious origins trace back to Kang Jeungsan (1871-1909), the Supreme God who descended to earth and performed the "Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth" to establish a Heavenly Kingdom on Earth. The temple complex you will visit centers around "Yeongdae," the sacred shrine where various religious ceremonies take place. This visit offers a unique opportunity to experience this distinctive indigenous Korean religion.

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Venue

How to Get from Incheon Airport to Mangrove Sinseoldong Hotel

Option 1: By AREX + Seoul Metro
Time: About 80 minutes
Fare: About 14,400 KRW

1. At Incheon Airport Terminal 1 or 2, take the AREX.
2. Get off at *Seoul Station (서울역)*.
3. Transfer to Subway Line 1 (Dark Blue Line).
4. Get off at *Sinseol-dong Station (신설동역)*.
5. Exit 4 → Walk about 2 minutes to Mangrove Sinseol.

Tip: Use NAVER Map or kakaomap

Option 2: By Airport Limousine Bus
Time: About 80 minutes
Fare: About 17,000 KRW(Ticket Booth in Airport)

1. Take the Limousine Bus 6002 from Incheon Airport.
2. Get off at *Sinseol-dong Station* bus stop.
3. Walk 1 minutes to Mangrove Sinseol.

Where to board: Bus stop outside Terminal 1 (1F 5B-4) or Terminal 2 (B1 Platform 30)
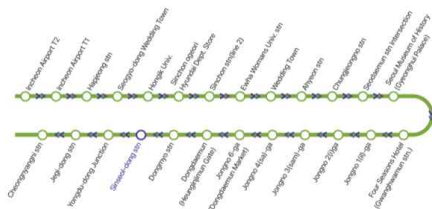
▣ Restaurants recommended near the Campus (Google Maps)

Korean
-Keutmeoreojip
-Hanbando
-Dongwoo
   Seolleongtang
-Mosim
-Jeongdong
   Pork soup&rice

Japanese
-Kuidoraku

Western
-Fromaqi
-Youngchul Burger
-Eoheung Restaurant
-Murmur de Gusto
-The table

Chinese
-Yongchosu
-Deossi
-Number85

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Weather & Safety Notice

During the conference period, hot and humid summer weather is expected in Seoul.

▣ Daily high temperatures may reach <u>above 35℃ (95℉).</u>
▣ <u>Heavy rain or thunderstorms</u> may occur due to the monsoon season.
▣ We recommend bringing an <u>umbrella or sunshade,</u> and staying hydrated at all times.
▣ Indoor venues will be air-conditioned, but please take care to avoid heat-related illness.

Emergency Medical Assistance

In case of a medical emergency, please contact the organizing staff immediately.

The nearest major hospital is:
▣ Korea University Anam Hospital
73, Goryeodae-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul
☎ +82-2-1577-0083
https://anam.kumc.or.kr

This hospital is located within walking distance from the conference venue.
The Emergency Room is open 24/7.

Address 73 goryeodae-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul 02841, Republic of korea   **Location** 🔍

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