

Transnational Religious Spaces: Religious Organizations and their Interaction in Africa, East Asia and Beyond

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This international workshop explored how religious organizations create new spatial configurations through transnational activities. Organized within the Collaborative Research Centre 1199 „Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition,“ the workshop analysed how mobile religious actors, institutions, artefacts, and ideas challenge and transform existing spaces of interaction, thereby helping to create new spatial formats, such as missionary spaces, diasporas, temple networks, or transnational organizations.

By focusing on East Asia and Africa, as well as interactions between and beyond these two world regions, the workshop brought together expertise from different area studies, aimed at discussing findings, frameworks, and theories about spatial configurations of transnationally mobile religions. The first part of the workshop was separated into a section focusing on Africa and one dealing with East Asia. The joint sessions of the second part integrated regional expertise and theoretical reasoning into a comparative perspective. Additionally, the workshop was framed by two more conceptual keynote lectures.

In the first keynote lecture, BRIAN LARKIN (Columbia) made a case for the symbiosis of colonialism and Islam in the West-African area of northern Nigeria and Niger. Whereas colonial infrastructure, so he pointed out, was primarily aimed at territorialisation and at connecting the inner empire rather than building inter-colony connections, Sufi networks thrived in the margins of colonial projects. Inter-imperial, especially British-French, rivalry led to spatial strategies which mobilized Muslim movements in the

regions. Thus, so Larkin concluded, Islam profited from European colonialism, as local Muslim cultures were combined with global Islam via networks and soft infrastructures like the Arabic language and „people as infrastructure“.

In the second keynote, THOMAS TWEED (Notre Dame, IN) discussed a variety of theoretical approaches towards religious mobility and transnationalism, such as flows, confluences, travelling, movement, and networks. Being a distinguished author in the field of religion, space, and transculturalization, Tweed assessed the usefulness of such figurative terms and tropes in conceptualizing transnational – or, as he preferred to say: „translocative“¹ – religious movements, networks, and practices.

The opening Africa-section dealt with the spatial dimension of the interplay between religion and globalization from a particularly African perspective, starting with the spaces themselves in the first panel. KLAUS HOCK (Rostock) introduced three examples of transient spaces that are located at the interface of physical and imaginary spatiality: First, shifting spatial arrangements in Zongo urban settlements (Ghana) that reflect and instigate changing imaginations; Second, permanent pilgrims in the Sudan, who, having given up the Mecca-pilgrimage since generations, yet continue to identify as pilgrims; Third, a spatial reading of *Ifá* divination practices that are related to spatial imaginary. The examples indicate, so Hock argued, how space may become an agent of change, shaping new structures for transnational communities in transition. ADAM JONES (Leipzig) investigated the relevance of space to Christian missionaries in early colonial East Africa. Colonial spatial order itself, so he argued, developed as a palimpsest of coexisting African, missionary, ethnographers', and colonial spatial perceptions and practices. Highlighting divisions and being dynamic by nature, so he concluded, missionary space differs according to colonial, ecological or cultural contexts.

The second panel was dedicated to the circulation of religious ideas across time and space. AFE ADOGAME (Princeton) took the

¹ Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*, Cambridge MA 2006.

sixtieth convention of the *Redeemed Christian Church of God* as a starting point to reflect on African spiritualities and religious transnationalism. This meeting, so he showed, was both a local and a global event, as it was performed at a colossal convention terrain in Nigeria and broadcasted live across the globe. Intertwined with international migration experiences transnational spiritual experiences provide, according to him, the basis for connectedness, redemption, as well as economic and political aspirations. In MAGNUS ECHTLER's (Bayreuth) presentation, the attention shifted to the seemingly more locally entrenched *Nazareth Baptist Church* in South Africa. Deeply intertwined historically with waves of contestation and legitimation of Zulu chieftaincy and ethnicity, this church, so he showed, reproduces Zulu spatial formats of habitation into sacred spaces of Zulu salvation. Furthermore, Echter addressed the hereditary charisma of the founding father and of his descendants, the schisms and duplication of central sacred places, and the imbrications with Zulu and South African national politics during and after apartheid.

In the third panel, attention shifted to religious transnationality in urban settings. JOHARA BERRIANE (Berlin) zoomed in on religious spaces of African transit migrants in Moroccan cities, showing that, although many of them eventually stay in Morocco, they remain transient communities – also in a spiritual sense. His research shows that charismatic and Pentecostal movements predominate in lieu of mainline churches, as they fulfil functions not only of connection and communication, but also of cash transfer and travel agency. GEERT CASTRYCK (Leipzig) presented a historical analysis of Muslims in the East Central African town of Bujumbura (Burundi), covering the decades from 1900 to 1960. Shifting scales of analysis between town, colonial or national territory, urban quarter, Islamic world, and East or Central Africa, he explained how the evolution in the practicing of Islam reflected religious evolutions on larger scales and provided a response to increasing discrimination, marginalization and exclusion on local and national scales.

In the following East Asia section, the papers dealt with a variety of transnational re-

ligious entanglements, ranging from highly centralized religious organizations to more loosely organized religious groups of migrants, spiritual seekers and the highly individualized actor-temple-networks of Chinese migrants. Some papers emphasized the translocative traffic moving along the lines (in the sense of Thomas Tweed's „movements across spaces and places“)², while others highlighted local nodes and their internal dynamics. A row of talks focused on examples from Buddhism based in Taiwan and China.

JENS REINKE (Leipzig) described how the Taiwanese Buddhist order *Foguangshan* draws on its social engagements in California and in South Africa in order to extend its religious spaces beyond the temples themselves. CHENG WEI-YI (Yilan, Taiwan) reflected the rather loose „translocative networks“ of Vietnamese Buddhists in Taiwan, which nevertheless helps the practitioners to foster senses of cultural and religious belonging in the migrant community. Situated in a similar field of analysis, NIKOLAS BROY (Leipzig) then explored how the online enterprises of a group of non-Chinese spiritual seekers and practitioners belonging to the Taiwanese religious movement *Yiguan-dao* facilitate transregional outreach and open new geographies of circulation. In the final paper of the morning sessions, LAI RONG-DAO (Los Angeles) questioned the scholarly paradigms for the transnational transmission of modern Chinese Buddhism that usually focus on highly centralized corporate organizations, but often leave looser and traditionally arranged master-disciple networks aside. In discussing *Tiantai* Buddhist networks between Hong Kong, Taiwan, and North America, Lai argued that kinship networks are employed as organizational strategies.

The afternoon panel addressed how migrants, tourists, and local government initiatives help to transnationalize the religious spaces of popular religious temples in China and Taiwan. In an intriguing case of a Buddhist site in rural *Fujian* Province in the Peo-

²Thomas A. Tweed, On Moving Across: Translocative Religion and the Interpreter's Position, in: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002), S. 253–277.

ple's Republic of China, JACK CHIA (Singapore) showed how a local government initiative acts as the driving force behind expansion of a formerly local religious phenomenon beyond boundaries. His paper particularly highlighted the impact of infrastructure in channelling transnational flows of people, money, and artefacts. JONATHAN LEE's (San Francisco) contribution examined „mother“ and „daughter“ relationships between one authorized *Mazu* temple in Taiwan and its San Francisco chapter. Finally, IRENE MASDEU TORRUELLA's (Barcelona) paper addressed the particularly fascinating case of Chinese migrants in Spain who retain strong religious links to their native local temple in Southeastern China by interacting through both invisible links (long-distance divination practices) and materialized links (donation of large candles).

The joint sessions on the third day were intended to bring the discussions of the two regional sections together. While some of the papers explored transregional religious interactions, most talks presented case studies to address important topics for scholars of transnational religion, including issues of power, the directionality of flows, diasporas, and patterns of how religions respond to challenges posed by globalizing ideas.

By selecting the case of a new religion of Japanese origin in Congo, PETER LAMBERTZ (Paris/Dakar) examined how immobile actors both think of and enact „globalization“ on the spot. Drawing on the concept of „repertoires of resonance,“ he showed how Congolese practitioners employ a culturally different practice to come closer to their ancestors. CRISTINA ROCHA (Sidney) devoted her presentation to a comparison of two Pentecostal churches in and from Brazil: One that specifically speaks to spiritual seekers from the Global North, and another that struggles with decreasing numbers of practitioners amongst Brazilian migrants in Australia. She then discussed how imaginations both channel and restrain „global flows“.

MARIAN BURCHARDT (Leipzig) moved on to explore missionary Protestant groups in Southern and Eastern Africa as carriers of transregional institutional innovation. He argued that these religious groups established

congregational religion in Africa beyond kinship, lineage, and ethnic forms of solidarity. FRÉDÉRIQUE LOUVEAU (Saint-Louis, Senegal) examined how the transnational practices and organizational structures of *Sukyō Mahikari*, another Japanese new religion, enable Africans to imagine themselves to be of similar or the same value as someone in Japan or elsewhere. In the afternoon panel, UGO DESSI (Cardiff) applied a systemic approach to religion and globalization in order to propose a comprehensive and integrated model of how to conceptualize interaction between religions on the one hand, and between religions and non-religious ideas on the other. Finally, JANET HOSKINS (Los Angeles) demonstrated how different migration/refuge experiences and cold war polarities channelled Vietnamese religious engagements into „Little Hanoi“ and „Little Saigons“ that aim at replicating original settings in the respective socialist or Southern Vietnamese diasporas.

Altogether, the workshop enabled area specialists and scholars of religion and globalization to engage in the rare opportunity of a discussion across regional and disciplinary divides. The papers demonstrated a great variety of transnational religious interactions, ranging from locally entrenched transnational connectivity to highly mobile actors, and from loosely arranged networks to centralized corporate organizations. Summed up, the talks and discussions made several core themes identifiable that may help us to further our understanding of transnational religious spaces, including both facilitating and hampering factors of global flows, the visibility and invisibility of religious spaces, issues of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and the individualization of religious practices.

Selected papers of the workshop will be put together into an edited volume tentatively entitled *Transnational Religious Spaces: Religious Interactions in Africa, East Asia, and Beyond* and to be published with DeGruyter Press in 2019.

Conference overview:

Keynote Lecture

Brian Larkin (Columbia University): Para-

sites, Infrastructures, and Islamic Networks

Section 1: Transnational Religious Spaces in Africa

Panel 1/1: Religious Spatial Formats between Africa and the World

Klaus Hock (Universität Rostock): Transforming Spatial Formats: Imagined Commonalities, Imaginary Spaces, and Spaces of Imagination

Adam Jones (Universität Leipzig): Mission Spaces in German East Africa and Tanganyika

Discussant: Katja Werthmann (Universität Leipzig)

Panel 1/2: Circulation and Establishment of Religious Ideas

Afe Adogame (Princeton University): Out of Africa, Back to Africa: African Spiritualities and Religious Transnationalism from Below

Magnus Echter (Universität Bayreuth): Zulu Salvation: Sacred Places in the Nazareth Baptist Church, South Africa

Discussant: Marian Burchardt (Universität Leipzig)

Panel 1/3: Religious Aspects of Urban Transnationality

Johara Berriane (Centre Marc Bloch Berlin): Transnational Evangelical Spaces in Muslim Urban Settings: The Presence and Mediation of African Christian Migrants in Morocco

Geert Castryck (Universität Leipzig): Living Islam in Colonial Bujumbura: The Historical Trans-locality of Muslim Life between East and Central Africa

Discussant: Brian Larkin (Columbia University)

Section 2: Religious Organizations and their Interaction in East Asia and Beyond

Panel 2/1: Negotiating Ritual, Religion and Civic Engagement in Diasporic Religious Space

Jens Reinke (Universität Leipzig): Civic engagement in a Global Buddhist China

Cheng Wei-yi (Foguang University): Transitioning the Vietnamese Ullabama Festival to

Taiwan

Panel 2/2: Transnational Networks and Engagements in North America

Nikolas Broy (Universität Leipzig): American Dao: Diasporic and Transcultural Engagements of Yiguandao in Urban California

Lai Rongdao (UCLA): Tiantai Transnationalism: Mobility, Identity, and Lineage Networks in Modern Chinese Buddhism

Panel 2/3: Temple Networks between Asia, Europe and North America

Jack Chia (Universität Singapore): From Chan Master to Translocal Deity: The Patriarch of Sanping's Cult in Contemporary China

Jonathan Lee (University of San Francisco): A Tale of Three Temples, Three Cities, and Three Goddesses? Historicity and Sacred Space in the Cult of Tianhou/Mazu at Meizhou, Beigang, and San Francisco

Irene Masdeu Torruella (Universität Barcelona): Local Temples in a Transnational Space: Invisible and Embodied Mobilities between China and Spain

Keynote Lecture

Thomas Tweed (University of Notre Dame): Flows and Dams: Brains, Technologies, and Institutions in the Making of Transregional Religious Spaces

Section 3: Religious Spaces und the Global Condition

Panel 3/1: Matter and Media

Peter Lambertz (DHI Paris / CREPOS Dakar): Of Ancestors and Others: Reverse Orientalism „from Japan“ among Spiritualists in Kinshasa

Cristina Rocha (Western Sidney University): How Religions Travel or Get Stuck: Imagination and Power Asymmetries

Panel 3/2: Vernacularization of Transnational Religion

Marian Burchardt (Universität Leipzig): Institutional Innovation and Religious Organizations in Transregional Encounters: Missionary Protestantism in Southern and Eastern Africa

Frédérique Louveau (Gaston Berger University, Saint-Louis): Japanese Spiritualities in Africa: From a Transnational Space to the Creation of a Local Lifestyle

Discussant: Geert Castryck (University Leipzig)

Panel 3/3: Comparing Global Spaces of Religion

Ugo Dessì (Cardiff University): Religion and Globalization: Toward an Integrated and Comparative Approach

Janet Hoskins (University of Southern California): Vietnamese Transnational Religions: The Cold War Polarities of Temples in „Little Hanoi“ and „Little Saigons“

Concluding Reflections and Discussion

Philip Clart (Universität Leipzig) & Adam Jones (Universität Leipzig)

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