CHAPTER TWELVE

RELIGIONS IN INDIA AND CHINA TODAY

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Introduction

When politicians in India or China say that they want to bring Hindu identity or Confucian harmony back into social life one can be certain that they want in fact to bring about change instead of returning to the past. When American politicians want to spread religious freedom all over the world one may at first see this as part of a global expansion of human rights, but also assume that it is connected to the expansion of evangelical networks that find their political and financial support in the US. At the most general level one may assert that there is a religious revival in many parts of the world, but not without wondering where religion has been all the time when it was not yet "revived". At the same time one needs to be very cautious with the notion of the politicization of religion, since religion is always political, always concerns power, including the defintion of power. When Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka, Burma, Tibet come on the streets to resist the state they are doing politics and I would suggest that it is wrong to see that as something that does not fit their renunciation, that is against their religion brought about by extreme circumstance. Rather, I would argue that Buddhism has always been just as political as all the other religions.

Departing from this cautionary note about religion and politics I want to focus on two elements of the current situation in Asia and their historical genesis, the nation-state and religious movements. The first deals with the governance of religious difference and the nature of state intervention in society. Its main theme will be the violent production of national identity in the religious field. The second deals with the development of religious movements within a political field that stretches beyond the nation-state. Its main theme will be the spread of spiritual movements within and beyond the nation-state. I will limit my discussion by focusing on India and China within a comparative

framework without developing a systematic comparison. Let me first introduce this framework before I discuss the two elements that I mentioned above.

To understand the connections between religion, power, and identity one needs a comparative framework. In my view comparison is at the heart of cultural analysis. I should make clear at the outset that I see comparison not primarily in terms of comparing societies or events, or institutional arrangements across societies, but as a reflection on our conceptual framework as well as on a history of interactions that have constituted our object of study. One can, for instance, say that one wants to study church-state relations in India and China, but one has to bring to that a critical reflection on the fact that that kind of study already presupposes the centrality of church-like organizations as well as the centrality of Western secular state formation in our analysis of developments in India and China. That critical reflection often leads to the argument that India and China (and other societies outside the West) should be understood in their own terms, and cannot be understood in Western terms. However, Indian and Chinese terms have to be interpreted and translated in relation to Western scholarship. Moreover, such translation and interpretation are part of a long history of interactions with the West. In the Indian case it is good to realize that English is also an Indian vernacular and in the case of China it is good to realize that communism is not originating from the Song dynasty. Today this field of comparison has been widely democratized by modern media, so that everyone is in a mediated touch with everyone else and has views on everyone else, mostly in a comparative sense. Comparison, as I understand it, is thus not a relatively simple juxtaposition and comparison of two or more different societies, but a complex reflection on the network of concepts that both underlie our study of society as well as the formation of those societies themselves. So, it is always a double act of reflection.

Religion is central to the analysis of civilizations, like those of India and China and everything that belongs to the cultural sphere of these great civilizations, like Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, and Japan, to mention a few. And, at the same time it is central to the analysis of their modernity. But it is very hard to understand exactly how the generic term 'religion' can be applied in the analysis of civilization and modern societies.

It is precisely the emergence and application of the generic term 'religion' as purportedly describing, but in fact producing a distinc-

tive social field that shows the value of comparison or, perhaps better, the need for comparative reflection. It shows the central importance of the interactions between Europe and its civilizational Others in understanding the emergence of this social field. This is not an argument for the centrality of Europe in world history, but one for the centrality of the interactions between the West and its Others despite the obvious marginality of Westerners in Asia in terms of numbers and otherwise. What I have been arguing for in previous work is an interactional approach in which the interactions between Europe and Asia are seen as central to the emergence of modernity in both Asian and European societies (van der Veer 2001). To understand religious and political developments in Asia today one has to start with the nineteenth-century imperial formation. This is a phase of globalization that continues to be absolutely fundamental to the reformulations of religion in global arenas today. While it is undoubtedly true that the current phase of globalization has enhanced virtual communication in a global network society, the global system of nation-states that has been developed in the nineteenth century is still very much in place. Moreover, many of the debates about secularism and religion are carried on from this period.

It is in the period of empire-building that the interactions between Europe and Asia are most significant and that the concept of religion comes to play such a central role in the understanding of modernity. In the nineteenth century Asian religions like Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism are manufactured, constructed, invented in interactions between China and Europe as well as between India and Europe, while at the same time Christianity and Islam are being reimagined in their image. It is of course not the case that these civilizational traditions did not exist before, but that they are inserted in emerging global understandings and thereby fundamentally changed. In that sense religion both in Europe and in Asia is a modern phenomenon, despite the long existence of the Catholic Church in Christianity and the authority of the scriptural tradition and its interpreters in all the other religions mentioned. All these religions are gradually nationalized and become part of national identity as well as globalized and part of world culture. This is a crucial part of becoming modern. Nationalism is an important social and political force everywhere that transforms the traditions that are found in the nation. As both a cultural and political force nationalism is the most important connection between religion and politics. Nationalism itself is never self-sufficient,

but always relates to an emerging world order of nation-states, even in the imperial phase.

The transformation of traditions in the construction of national identity is such a radical rupture in history that it justifies my suggestion that we have to understand religion today as a modern phenomenon. Religion and secularity are simultaneously produced as connected aspects of modernity. Previous scholarship has often opposed the secular and the religious as modern against traditional, but this perspective should be recognized as secularist ideology, as an ideological claim within a particular historical configuration. In that sense it may have quite real and significant effects, not from the unfolding of a Rational World Spirit but as produced by historical movements and institutions like the state. The secularization-thesis, a progressive history of the decline of religion and the gradual secularization of society, does not pay attention to the deep connectedness of secularity and religion and thus cannot account for the contradictions in that progressive history and its lack of empirical evidence in most parts of the world. Still, like other elements of modernization theory, it is still part of the worldview of modernizing elites everywhere.

The encounter of Western power with Asian religions in the modern period is one that has been preceded by pre-colonial missionary and political encounters, but also by a long history of the expansion and spread of religious formations within the Asian region. The presence of Christianity, Islam and Judaism in Asia long precedes European expansion. Moreover, there is a long history of expansion and spread of Asian religions, like Buddhism and Hinduism. One could, of course, mention that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all originate in West-Asia and that they are also Asian religions, but then we would also have to ask from which period "Asia" is a meaningful category. Obviously, the encounter of Christianity with Islam is of very long standing, as Pope Benedict XVI has recently reminded us when he referred to hostile comments made by a 14th century Byzantine Emperor about Islam, but the encounter of Hinduism and Buddhism with Islam is just as old.[1] There is no objective reason to see Islam and Christianity as not indigenous in Asian societies as against Buddhism and Hinduism, although there is a strong nationalist urge in India, for example, to

[1] Lecture given by Pope Benedict XVI at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006.

argue for such a fundamental difference. These ideological claims are far from harmless, as we know from the history of communalism in India as well as from the history of anti-Semitism in Europe.

However long and important the history of religious encounters in Asia may have been the modern period of imperialism and nationalism provides a specific rupture with the past, because of the externality of imperial power and the ideological emphasis on the difference of modern society from both its own past and from other, so-called backward societies. Comparison and an evolutionary perspective on difference became crucial in the high days of the empire. As Edward Said (1978) has rightly argued, the new scientific knowledge of Orientalism also provided the colonized with a new understanding of their traditions. Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism were discovered and evaluated by philologists, archeologists and other historians while traders, missionaries and colonial officers tried to deal with the contemporary forms of these traditions. It is this apparatus of imperial knowledge that has created an archive that is still crucial for any understanding of Asian traditions. It is this archive that needs to be understood if one wants to understand the nature of the modern transformation of religion, both in Asia and in the West.

Buddhism is a good example. It came to be recognized in nineteenth-century scholarship as existing in various parts of Asia and thus as transnational. In contrast to the old enemy Islam it was also regarded as an ethically high religion with universal pretensions like Christianity. Besides such discussions on the essence of religion, whatever their importance, there were also crucial developments in Asia. Above all, there were archeological attempts to find ancient Buddhism under layers of Hinduism in India in the same period. Major General Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893), the founder of the Indian Archeological Survey, found Buddhist sites in India, such as the famous Sarnath. These findings were an important element in establishing ancient Indian history in which Buddhism was portrayed as the enemy of Brahmanism, came to be destroyed by Islam and ultimately supplanted by Hinduism. This was essential to the grand narrative of Indian history in which Buddhism was also seen as an alternative to caste-ridden Hinduism and taken up as such by egalitarian reformists like the Untouchable leader Ambedkar. It is this simultaneous production of Buddhism as native to India and as a world religion that could be universally respected for its modern, egalitarian message that becomes so important in the Indian location.

In Sri Lanka something else happens. Here Buddhism comes to be reframed first by the Pali text Society of Rhys Davids, then by Theosophists like Colonel Olcott who designs the Sri Lankan Flag and creates a Buddhist catechism, and most importantly by the reformist monk Anagarika Dharmapala. It is precisely because of the reconfiguration of Buddhism in Western scholarship as a world religion within the imperial framework that enables it to become such an important element of religious nationalism among the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. The dialectics of orientalism and nationalism is of great importance on both sides of the imperial imagination. On the side of the metropole it is the development of a universal spirituality, of which Buddhism is seen as a prime example that fits the marginalization of institutional religion in a secularizing society.

The modern idea that we can characterize a society or set of societies by its civilization in order to make it available to universal understanding is exemplified by calling Sri Lanka a Buddhist society, India a Hindu society and China a Confucian society, as well as Europe a Christian or Enlightened Modern Society. To analyze the relation between religion and the state as well as the development of religious movements in Asia one needs a comparative framework that highlights the historical transformation of discursive traditions into the modern category of "religion".

The State and National Religion

The notion of civilization, as Norbert Elias (1978) has argued for Europe, is directly related to the emergence of national consciousness, but, I would add, also to seeing the nation as part of larger regional and global configurations. To illustrate this let us look briefly at the idea that China is a Confucian society. In the context of an assumed worldwide religious revival we seem witness to what many observers call 'the revival of Confucianism'. President Hu Jintao and other Chinese leaders have reevaluated the Confucius tradition. They now concede that harmony as the central value of Confucian teachings is something to be cherished. Worrying about growing economic disparities amid rapid economic growth, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) focuses on Confucian harmony as a form of societal consensus and solidarity. For the first time in 66 years the Party organized a lavish worship ceremony at Tianjin's Confucius Temple in November

2004. In the town of Qufu, the birth place of Confucius, the official ceremony of commemorating his birthday has since 2004 become an important public ritual, broadcast live on state television. The Ministry of Education is encouraging numerous courses in Confucian culture by establishing Confucius Institutes all over the world following the model of the Goethe Institute or the British Council.

But what is being revived and whether it is secular or religious remains very unclear. Political attempts to make Confucianism the secular morality of Chinese civilization today are historically similar to debates at the end of Qing to make Confucianism a national religion (guojiao). Both state officials and major intellectuals were involved in this project, but it is precisely the intellectualism and distance from popular belief that has prevented to make Confucianism into something akin to Japanese State Shintoism before World War II. The attempts to transform Confucian traditions into a civil, national religion were extremely interesting as a form of social engineering, but ultimately failed, largely because Confucian teachings could encompass Daoist and Buddhist teachings but not the social energy that local Daoist and Buddhist cults could mobilize. Although Confucianism can provide a legitimating ideology for state authoritarianism that enforces social harmony, as one sees for example in Singapore, its proponents will face great difficulties in making it into a national religion.

The current position of the Communist Party towards Confucianism is quite a departure from its long-term secularist project. Not so long ago to be accused to be a Confucianist was to be branded a reactionary feudalist. But Confucianism with its civilizational morality is much more palatable for atheists than Buddhism, Daoism, or the wide-ranging category of popular religion. Long before the Communist Party came to power in China there had been a number of secularist campaigns attacking religion, supported by both intellectuals and state officials. Already in the last phase of the Qing period such campaigns were initiated. "Smash temples, build schools" *(huimiao, banxue)* is a particularly telling slogan that was used in a campaign against temple cults and religious specialists during reforms in late Ching at the end of the 19th century. According to the reformists, led by Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and supported by the emperor, China had to modernize quickly and this had to be done by promoting education and by getting rid of religious superstition. These two elements belonged together, since education should train people in modern, rational thought while superstition and magical thought should

be discouraged. Before the Communist victory in 1949 a number of campaigns, first in late imperial China and afterwards in the Republic, destroyed or "secularized", according to one estimate, half of a million existing temples (Goossaert 2006). What the Communists did after 1949 was, to a very great extent, a continuation of these campaigns. While one might have expected that the nationalists in Taiwan with their Confucian nationalism would have had a fundamentally different policy towards religion than the Communists, the opposite is in fact the case. Till the late 1960s the nationalists kept religious activities under a very tight control. All these campaigns against religion should have produced a secular China, but the contrary is true. In Taiwan religious activities are all over the place and with the loosening of the tight controls over religion in the PRC we see religious activity flourishing in large parts of the country.

While secularization has not really happened secularism in China has been and continues to be a very significant project, buttressed by state power. Chinese secularism is, ideologically, a form of scientism and rationalism. From a 19th century enlightened and evolutionary perspective it pitches scientific rationality against magical superstition. Secularism is thus a battle against the misconceptions of natural processes that keeps the illiterate masses in the dark and in the clutches of feudal rulers and clerics. The term for superstition (mixin) comes from Japanese as many other terms that are employed in the discourse of modernity, like indeed the term "religion" (zongjiao) itself. In using these neologisms it makes a distinction between religion that contributes to the morality of the state and superstition that is detrimental to modern progress. These views are shared by intellectuals of all persuasions, including the nationalists and the communists, but also by many reformist religious thinkers. This is both a discursive and an institutional shift as an aspect of the transition from the ancient regime of the Qing empire to the modern Republic. The traditional system of three teachings (sanjiao), Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist, in which Confucian state ritual defined the framework for the other two was transformed in the Republic by the notion that there were five acceptable world religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. Confucianism was kept outside of this arrangement, because it was considered to be both national instead of global and in essence secular rather than religious. These religions that are officially recognized till today are being organized along the models of Christianity in nation-wide associations that are ultimately controlled by the state.

What remains outside of this is what is often called popular religion (minjian xinyang), namely all those cults that are in fact closely connected to Buddhist, and Taoist ideas and practices but are not part of these associations. Moreover, many of the Buddhist and Taoist local cults are hard to transform into nation-wide associations. Especially Taoism had been deeply intertwined with local cults. The opposition between officially approved religion and local forms of superstition gives authorities a great space for controlling and repressing all kinds of religious expressions.

Anticlericalism and scientism together were deeply connected to Western, enlightened ideas about progress, in which magic had to be replaced by scientific rationality and by moral religion as basis of national identity. Major currents of western thought, like social Darwinism, neo-Kantianism, and Marxism were absorbed in China. Not only prescriptive thought about society came to stand in the light of rationality, but also descriptive social science, such as sociology and anthropology lost their ability to describe the effects of these ideologies on society since they could not distance themselves from them. Intellectuals played an important role in the secularist projects of nationalizing and rationalizing religion and, crucially, they were part and parcel of large-scale state interventions to produce a modern, national identity.

I do not want to detail the sordid history of state persecution of clerics and destruction of temples both before and during Communist rule. I only want to draw attention to the fact that under communism the anti-superstition and anti-clerical campaigns were combined with anti-feudalism campaigns. The 1950s not only saw the brutal elimination of millenarian movements like Yiguandao, but also the destruction of feudalism and thus the redistribution of temple land and temple property, secularization in its original sense. Mao, as a good Marxist, predicted the decline of religion as part of the creation of a socialist China in the following words:

> *The gods were erected by peasants. When the right time comes, the peasants themselves will throw away these gods with their own hands.*

However, as matter of fact, Mao and the Party did everything to destroy the gods but the peasants did everything to rescue them.

In Communist China atheism or a form of historical materialism became the official ideology of the country and religion came either under outright attack or was brought under the tight control of the

Party. The liberalization of China from 1978 onwards has also brought a liberalization of the religious field. It is very hard to assess the direction of developments today, since a century of persecution has severed the chains of oral and ritual transmission in many parts of the country, destroyed the lives and livelihood of clergy and therefore much of the infrastructure of religion. Building this up requires economic support that is mainly coming from tourism, since many of the shrines are in places of touristic interest. The rebuilding of religious infrastructure is thus related to new forms of consumption and will be closely dependent on them.

In India we find quite a different development of the religion-nation-state relation, revolving mainly around the majority-minority issue. Hinduism in India, on the one hand, has both been as difficult to define as Confucianism in China, but nevertheless has proved a suitable candidate for national religion since the late nineteenth century. Religion in India has been harnessed to anti-colonial nationalism in the struggle for Independence and both Hindu and Muslim communities have been mobilized along these lines. This has led to India's Partition in 1947 in which Pakistan, a homeland for Muslims, has been separated from India, a secular state with a Hindu majority and a considerably diminished Muslim minority. This historical rupture has been followed by the separation of East-Pakistan or Bangladesh from West Pakistan in 1971. Furthermore, it has led to regular confrontations between Pakistan and India about the contested area of Kashmir.

Relations between Hindus and Muslims and especially attempts to make Hinduism the established religion of India determine our understanding of religions in India today. The dangerous mix of religious nationalism led by Hindu religious leaders, organized in the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) or World Hindu Congress, with anti-Muslim (as well as anti-Christian) politics, organized by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or National Volunteers Corps and its political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or Indian People's Party, has led to a very volatile political situation in India. It seems that the Gandhian project to use religious discourse for fostering communal harmony has lost much of its influence, while the secular state cannot be counted upon to be the guarantor of that harmony. In fact, it is precisely the political process that leads to the disturbance of that harmony. The political scientist Paul Brass has convincingly argued that some cities

in India that are prone to communal rioting have 'institutionalized riot systems'. In the city are organized networks of activists in the service of political parties who stage riots aimed at ethnic and religious minorities. Brass calls these activists "riot specialists" (Brass 2003). Of special interest here is the nefarious relation between politicians, riot specialists, and law enforcement. Since the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards the state at local, regional, and central levels has become increasingly involved in communal violence. Although the processes involved here are primarily political they are intimately intertwined with religion, since religious issues are often used to mobilize people along communal lines. Analytically, a sharp distinction between secular politics and religious worldviews cannot be easily made, since political boundaries overlap with ethnic and religious ones. One of the major issues today in India is the declining socio-economic prospects of the Muslim population due to discrimination in all sectors of public life. This is not a religious issue per se, but the discrimination of Muslims is often legitimized in terms of their 'not belonging' because of the 'foreignness' of their religion, to their 'hyper-masculinity' as a result of the fact that their religion allows them to have four wives, and so on.

A paradigmatic case for the understanding of religion and the state in India today is Gujarat where a major pogrom on Muslim citizens in 2002, killing around 2,000, has been supported by the state. Ahmedabad, the scene of the worst violence, had witnessed communal riots before in which the police had abated the violence, for example in 1969, but conditions changed dramatically in the 1980s with the emergence of the BJP as a major political player and the decline of the Congress Party. In this period a normative secularism gave way to an empirical Hindu majoritarianism. At the central level politicians, such as R.K. Advani (Home Minister from 1998–2004), launched a number of campaigns to promote Hindu nationalism, focusing on the issue of removing a sixteenth-century mosque from the site of the alleged birthplace of the Hindu God Rama in the North Indian pilgrimage centre Ayodhya. This sort of campaigns led to pogroms on Muslims in 1992 and 2002. It is this intensification of communal politics in India that has changed periodic communal violence, related to elections, into a more structural and permanent antagonism between Hindu and Muslim communities. In this climate non-state actors can still refer to the normative secularism that is enshrined in India's constitution

and fight for a better treatment of Muslims but the institutions of the state respond to these justified claims mostly by selective action and inaction.

The worsening of the relations between Hindus and Muslims over the last decades has certainly influenced religious experience and religious organization in India. Islam is an arena of great debate and conflict among Indian Muslims who have to formulate their attitudes towards a secular state that fails to protect them and is inefficient in delivering welfare to them in a context in which powerful Hindu political groups want to culturally marginalize them. This comes at a moment that Islam-inspired terrorism is an object of international concerns and politics. The volatile development of foreign relations between India and Pakistan (with Afghanistan looming large in the background) undoubtedly affects the position of the Muslim community in India deeply, since they are constantly summoned to "choose" between their nation and their religion. Alternatively, outsiders distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims depending on their religious orientation within Islam. This often concerns so-called syncretistic Sufi practices that are seen to cater for both Muslim and Hindu communities and are thus seen to be part of "good Islam" as against "bad, fundamentalist Islam". These external views are related to internal debates about correct practice which are much more complex than the external views allow. Islam is a discursive tradition in which there are a great number of different viewpoints and debates that are not so easily reducible to Indian Islamic syncretism versus Wahhabi (foreign) fundamentalism.

Similarly Hinduism as a discursive tradition can also not be reduced to the political ideology of Hindutva (Hindu-ness) that equates Hindu with Indian and thus places everyone who is not a Hindu beyond the pale. Nor can it be made into the orientalist myth of all-embracing tolerance, exemplified by the notion of the manifold paths to salvation. Again, we see a much more complex picture in which Muslim saints are important for many Hindus, in which the rise of backward castes undermines the hegemony of Brahman castes, complicating the unity sought after by Hindu nationalists, in which untouchables and tribals are targeted by Hindu missionization and come to play an important role in communal violence. Hindu culture is not only open to straightforward Sufi saint worship, but also to popular expressions, such as Bombay film lyrics dependent on Urdu love poetry. Some of

the greatest Bombay movie stars in the era of Hindutva mobilization were Muslims: Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, and Shahrukh Khan, suggesting a rejection of this mobilization of communal sentiments in Mumbai, a city terribly hit by anti-Muslim pogroms and later revenges and retaliations by Muslims.

Important for the future development of Hindu and Muslim discursive traditions is obviously how people are educated. According to the economist Amartya Sen (1999) education and especially literacy is perhaps the most important resource for creating equal opportunities and enhancing human potentiality and freedom. Education, however, also furthers class distinctions, as Bourdieu argues, as well as ethnic and religious antagonism (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Since state education fails to service large sections of the population the field is wide open for religious organization. On the Hindu side it is the VHP with its Vidya Bharati subsidiary that promotes at the end of higher education Hindu astrology and Vedic knowledge (supported by the government during the reign of the BJP) and at the end of primary and middle schools Hindu textbooks that especially in their portrayal of the history of Muslims and Christians in India are decidedly fostering a communalist worldview (Froerer 2007). On the Muslim side it is the proliferation of madrasas with primarily religious education that produce generations of religious students (Taliban) who can hardly be used for secular jobs and may be prone to radicalization, although there is considerable debate about the latter suggestion (Vicziany 2007). Middle Class Hindus and Muslims often choose secular schools and universities for their offspring, but even there the prospects especially for Muslims to gain appropriate employment are not bright. It is for these reasons that education is so much a battleground today between secular and different religious forces. Christianity is very much part of this struggle, especially in tribal areas and among untouchables where it is often one of the very few channels of social mobility. The attacks on Christians and Christian missionaries in various parts of India form an indication of the seriousness of this battle for the mind of the future generation. Especially the inroads of the RSS and VHP in tribal areas and among untouchables have made these parts of the populations susceptible to the ideas that they have a possible future as respectable Hindus if they take part in the pogroms against Muslims and Christians. At the same time radicals reject religion altogether and strive for recognition as racially oppressed dalits. Interesting is that all

these demands and struggles are couched in a fully modern, and in fact secular idiom of national heritage, freedom of ideas and expression, as well as sovereignty. It is also important to note that the global discourse of human rights that is employed not only by the United Nations but also by the USA is an important element in the violent and non-violent negotiations of conversion and education, unwittingly reinforcing the idea of foreignness and national defense.

Religious Movements, National and Transnational

If we would limit our view of religion to the relation with the state and the attempts to create a national religion we may miss a widely varying panorama of competing Buddhist, Christian, and Daoist groups with all their own transnational networks supported by resources that cannot be controlled by the nation-state. It is possibly rewarding to compare this expansion of religious movements with the creation of a pop culture that is helped by television and the creation of consuming audiences over a wide variety of societies. Whatever the state's ambitions of total control it is the transnational character of these movements that will put a limit to the state's abilities. That is not to say that these movements are anti-state, since in most cases they are not. They can even be seen as constructive in developing civil society, as Richard Madsen has been arguing for Taiwanese Buddhism (Madsen 1998). However, in my view, they should not be understood merely in terms of their relation to the state, but rather in their own terms, with their own objectives that may or may not clash with the state.

Most scholarship here is, rightly, focused on the expansion of Christianity in the region. The missionary expansion of Christianity all over the world in the nineteenth century brought with it a completely new, modern relation between existing religious tradition on the one hand and education, social welfare, and health on the other. This missionary expansion of Christianity transformed Christianity but also all the religions it encountered. Scripturalism, church-like associations, the rise of the laity and so on are all part of what I have called "conversion to modernity" (van der Veer 1996). Christianity, however important, is only one of the religions that are part of the conversion to modernity. It is instructive to look at the transformation of Hindu, Buddhist and Daoist movements in the context of nationalism and transnationalism. Instead of giving an overview of the entire range of religious move-

ments in India and China I want to focus on two particularly interesting instances of what is often called 'Asian Spiritualiy', namely Chinese Qi Gong and Indian Yoga.

Although in 1917 Mao had written negatively about qi exercises as promoting tranquility and passivity, while he himself wanted to promote activity as essential for the survival of China, qi exercises did survive the attacks on traditionalism and feudalism by being aligned to science (Jian Xu 1999: 972). In the 1950s qi exercises were more and more part of a state-sanctioned medical science. In this way qi exercises came to be practiced by acknowledged physicians rather than by spiritual masters. Qigong therapy was thus taken out of the realm of superstition into the realm of scientific clinics. Not only medical science but also physics and biology produced experiments focusing on the existence of qi. However, this scientific sanctification and purification of qigong did not result in total state control. This is partly inherent in the fact that traditional Chinese medicine, while claiming to be 'scientific', simultaneously claims to transcend the limitations of 'Western' science. At the same time it is a nationalist claim of a superiority of "Chineseness" that is difficult to attack by a state that promotes socialism with Chinese characteristics, as Deng Xiaopeng called it. Outside of the control of the state was the spontaneous qigong craze of the 1980s in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. People started to do qi exercises everywhere and to some extent this can be read as setting the body free from the constraints imposed by the state and signifying a transition to greater individual freedom and interaction (Chen 2003). The state tried to channel this spontaneous outburst of qigong activities into qigong institutions and movements, but some of them, most notably the Falun Gong or Falun Dafa, as it is called later, turned out to be a real challenge for state control (Palmer 2007).

On 25 April 1999, more than ten thousand Falun Gong adherents from all over China gathered around Zhongnanhai, the capital's political heart, setting the stage for the most serious political case since the pro-democracy demonstrations of 1989. The reason for this gathering was to request from the government the official recognition of the Falun Dafa Research Association, the lifting of the ban on Li Hongzhi's latest publications and the release of Falun Gong practitioners detained during previous demonstrations. According to the People's Daily (June 15, 2000) the government never had forbidden the practice of normal exercises:

> *People have the freedom to believe in and practice any kind of qigong method, unless when people use the banner of exercises to spread superstition, create chaos and organize large scale gatherings which disturb the social order and influence social stability.*

Three months after the demonstration in Beijing, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a circular that forbade members of the Communist Party to practice the Falun Dafa. Three days later, on July 22, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the decision to outlaw the Falun Dafa Research Association (Chang 2004).

What is the Falun Gong? It was founded by a man with the name Li Hongzhi who was born according to the authorities on 7 July 1952, but according to his own autobiography on 13 May 1951 which would be the date of birth of Sakyamuni, the Buddha and allow him to claim that he is a reincarnation of the Buddha. In 1991 he joined qigong activities. In 1992 he started giving lectures to a growing audience and in the following years he registered his Falun Gong association with the official China Society for Research on Qigong Science. This association is quite typical in its claim to be scientific, connected to health, but it seems to go further in its moral teachings and connection to Buddhist and Daoist cosmology. It connects to the ancient idea that through physical qi exercises one also cultivates one's moral character. There is a messianic streak in the teachings of Li Hongzhi with an emphasis on all kinds of evils that threaten the world (now including the Communist party) and the position of li Hongzhi as saviour. When the state cracked down on the Falun Gong it claimed that it had outnumbered the 55 million-strong Communist Party in April but this was revised down to a mere 2 million in November of 1999. It is impossible to say how many followers have gone underground, but it is probably substantial. Moreover, the Falun Gong has become very active transnationally among the diasporic Chinese communities, especially since its founder has fled China and lives in New York. However, again, it is hard to say how important the Falun Gong has become since it is only one movement in a global spread of taiji, qigong, and forms of martial arts under the rubric of Wu Shu, like Qiaolin and Kungfu. Although the practitioners emphasize the differences between these practices and traditions, from a historical and sociological viewpoint they form one tradition with a number of variations.

In India one direction is the same as taken by the Chinese, namely yoga mainly as a physical exercise (hatha-yoga) and a health practice that can be experimented with by medical science. Yoga is seen to

be extremely healthy for the body and for the mind. Another clear direction is the creation of the healthy, strong masculinity for the Hindu nation. This is primarily the field of martial arts to which yoga practices can be linked. Like the Falun Gong in China the religious organization of bodily disciplines in India can gain a political meaning. This is true for organizations like the RSS and the related Vishwa Hindu Parishad that is organizing the various spiritual leaders and their movements under a common nationalist platform. These organizations are anti-secular and, since India is a democracy unlike China, they are allowed to be both cultural and political. A particularly interesting development in yoga is its alignment with the development of global capital. Since yoga was never seen as subversive by the powers that be it became a recognized element in middle class religiosity. As such it followed the trajectories of this class that became more and more transnational in its orientation during the 1960s. Its older connection with nationalism was not thereby forgotten or marginalized but utilized in identity politics in the countries of immigration, especially the USA. Indian spirituality is something to be proud of since many non-Indians are also attracted to it. The global reach of yoga was stimulated by groups, such as the Divine Life Society, founded by Sivananda, but can be best understood by the fact that its origins lie in an imperial modernity, mediated by the English language. From the English speaking world yoga, however, has spread to the rest, making for 4 million yoga practitioners in Germany and 13 million in the USA (Strauss 2005). In the 1960s yoga became part of the youth revolution that shook Western culture. Promoted by popular music-groups like the Beatles Indian spirituality became a lifestyle element that could be commodified and marketed in a variety of ways. In the West it became part of a complex of alternative therapies based on lifestyle and bodily exercise. In light of the therapeutic worldview that is part of global capitalism it has now also come back to India in the new perceptions of the urban middle class of Indian tradition. Due to the opening up of the market for Eastern spirituality not only yoga has benefited, but a variety of Chinese spiritual exercises such as taiji quan and qigong have also gained a transnational market.

In both India and China movements that propagate religious traditions and especially alternative utopias can have a political impact. While in India such movements became part of an in principle legitimate nationalist project, although some offshoots were quickly de-legitimized as 'extremist', in China such movements were under

constant attack from both the Kuomintang and the Communists. The reason for this significant divergence can perhaps be found both in pre-colonial and colonial histories of the Chinese and Indian polities. The Chinese imperial state constantly fought peasant rebellions that were inspired by a religious cosmology and Chinese intellectuals were brought up in a framework of Confucian distrust of popular religion. The failure and bloodshed of two major religious rebellions against Christianity and imperialism in the 19th century further promoted the idea of secular science as an answer to China's backwardness. In India religious movements seem to become gradually part of a spiritual resistance against imperial power and, as such, a major element in the formulation of anti-colonial nationalism.

In the postcolonial period it is really the liberalization of the Indian and Chinese economies under the impact of global capitalism that frees the energies of spiritual movements to organize civil society. This is very clear in the Chinese case where liberalization first gives space to a spontaneous qigong and later to the rise of movements like Falun Gong that connect qigong to older ideas of a moral and political nature. In India one can see this especially in the rise of a Hindu nationalism that rejects an earlier secular and multicultural project of the state by emphasizing Hindu traditions as the basis of Indian civilization, thereby excluding other contributions by religious minorities. It is especially a new-fangled urban religiosity that is both interested in yoga and in a strong nation that supports this kind of politics.

Indian spirituality has been formulated by Vivekananda during a trip to Chicago and has been further developed in constant interaction with the rest of the world. A political figure like Mahatma Gandhi fits seamlessly in this history. When in the 1970s and 1980s till the present day highly educated members of the Indian middle class migrate to the USA for medical and engineering jobs they are confronted with a quite aggressive marketing of Indian spirituality in a market for health, for exercise, and for management practices. This, in turn, is brought back to India where especially successful new movements like the Bangalore-based Art of Living with Guru Ravi Shankar cater for a mobile, transnational class of business entrepreneurs. China's isolation between 1950 and 1980 has ensured a belated entry of Chinese spirituality on this market, but nevertheless it is quickly catching up with products like taiji quan and qigong. In the Chinese case there is a stronger connection with sports and especially martial arts, which

are also promoted by Hong Kong and mainland movies. In both India and China one finds a similar appropriation of spiritual traditions to cater for the newly emerging middle classes. These newly manufactured spiritualities have a tenuous relationship with textual traditions, guarded by centers of learning and spiritual masters. They are creative in their response to new opportunities and anxieties produced by globalization and are, as such, comparable to Pentecostal and charismatic varieties of Christianity.

Conclusion

An analysis of the nature of the nation-state continues to be of primary importance when one tries to determine how religious formations in Asia develop today. In China the Communist Party, though still atheist in orientation, is developing a more accommodative relation with Chinese religions. Especially at the level of the "moral state" it tries to align itself with a particular form of Confucian morality as an essential part of national identity. In its relation with religious institutions and movements it has opened the field for more religious expressions as long as they further commercial society and do not threaten the status quo. In India the normative secularism of the state has slowly given way to assertions of Hindu majoritarianism. Especially the failure of the state to provide adequate secular education allows for the socialization of communalist attitudes. This has led to a very volatile situation in which both the international (Pakistan) and the regional (Kashmir) political developments contribute to the radicalization of religious identity politics.

The nation-state is part of a global system of nation-states and religious formations are also both national and transnational. While one can study the spread of global spirituality from the second half of the nineteenth century the current phase of globalization does enhance the importance of transnational connections for all world religions as well as for forms of spirituality that are not tied to religious institutions and doctrines. This is immediately obvious when one examines the current spread of Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism across Asia, but it is also striking when one looks at Buddhism and Islam as well as at spiritual movements like Qi Gong and Yoga. To some extent these expansions of religious and spiritual formations are tied to patterns

of migration, but more in general they both connect ethnic groups and transcend them. They are part of an emergent network society in which the state is still the major player but can be challenged from across its borders.