



SOCIETES PLURIELLES

Programme interdisciplinaire
Université Sorbonne-Paris-Cité

Workshop

Religious Mobilities in Asia: New networks for New Religious Spaces ?

11 12 September 2017, Inalco, rue des Grands Moulins

Convenors:

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The concept of mobility has emerged as a new framework that challenges the sedentary and territorial precepts of twentieth century social sciences (Urry 2006; Sheller 2011; Chu 2010; Basu & Coleman 2008). From a traditional social scientific perspective, travel has largely operated as a black box, a neutral set of technologies and processes predominantly permitting forms of economic, social and political life that are seen as explicable in terms of other, more causally powerful processes (Urry 2006, 4). The emerging literature in Mobilities challenges this model by focusing on how material and human circulation interact with the technologies that make it possible. A focus on mobility problematizes models that see stability and place as the 'natural', anchored state of things and mobility as the exception. Moreover, movement and flux cannot be exclusively related to globalization and postmodernity, they need to account for other dynamics that shape the material world.

The growing body of academic work emerging from the Mobilities paradigm has mainly concentrated on labor and financial flows, and to a lesser extent on the circulation of entertainment, consumer products and social remittances. Through this workshop, we aim to bring the methodological insights and conceptual developments proposed from the Mobilities literature, to shed light on the embodied and material aspects of religious circulation.

Research focused on circulation in the context of pilgrimage, missionary work and scriptural texts has acknowledged the material, financial and cultural aspects of these movements, yet they have mainly approached them as byproducts of what is considered 'religious circulation' proper. Our initiative challenges the hierarchical subordination of material religion to the preeminence of scriptures and pilgrimage, and aims to look at religious objects and the world they create when circulating across Asia.

Our workshop also emphasizes the importance of exploring the material dynamics of religious networks in the region, stressing the interplay between the technological, economic and political dimensions of circulation and the changing shapes of religious networks (Vasquez 2011). Intersecting mobilities produce new patterns of interaction where networks redefine arrangements of economic,

social and religious life. As Urry remarks, there is no increase in mobility without extensive systems of immobility. Airports, roads and factories are preeminent examples of this, but so are temples, seminaries and monasteries.

Furthermore, immobility is not only a technical requirement of contemporary networks, but also a consequence of global political dynamics. While certain religious denominations capitalize on their ideological alignment with neo-liberalism and market capitalism to enhance their reach and flexibility, others are rendered immobile and increasingly restricted for not embracing specific notions of gender equality, democracy or political liberalism.

We also suggest the importance of thinking about religious circulation between Asia and the West in a postcolonial context. While until half a century ago, flows of religious tradition and practice were mostly a product of Christian missionary projects and their quest to bring Christianity to Asia, contemporary flows are not limited to Christianity and are no longer unidirectional. For example, the circulation of lay Asian Christians and the new networks that they build between Asia and the West need to be considered as a response to political and economic challenges of globalization and transnational migration; likewise, the mobile regimes that connect Chinese Protestant pastors, knowledge, norms and capital at an international level, provide a fundamental assemblage for the creation of new networks of Chinese Protestants in France.

Our objective is to focus on different types of movements that are constitutive of diasporic religions and transnational religious traditions: e.g. the circulation of ritual specialists, ritual objects, deities, foods, medicine, educators, literature, missionaries, activists, finance/informal economies. Likewise, we examine the role played by immobile 'nodes' in channeling flows of people, distributing goods and services, and concentrating intellectual resources arriving from diverse points of origin.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore different types of mobility within the region and in/out the region. We propose that the material aspects of how religious mobility happens have been overlooked, and that a recalibration of our research lens towards materiality can offer new insights into how diasporic religion is formed, as well as undermine the perception of stability in the relationship between religious centers and their (formerly) fixed points of destination.

Some important questions that this initiative will address include:

- How do patterns of religious travel (missionary, educational, pilgrimage, activist, etc.) and the circulation of religious symbols and objects connect diasporic/transnational networks?
- What is the impact of new media on religious circulation and how do technological developments transform conceptions of space?
- How do religious networks help actors negotiate tensions between multiple moral responsibilities?
- In the context of increased mobility (for some), what are the consequences of immobility in its restrictive dimensions?
- What is the importance of immobile religious nodes as key to distribute flows of people, information and objects?
- How do notions of nostalgia figure in projects of religious imaginaries?
- How are contemporary 'anti-global' concerns manifested in material aspects of religious circulation?
- How are national religious elites in Asia integrated with transnational networks of scholars and religious specialists?

Monday, September 11 (4.07, INALCO)

9.30 am : Registration

9.45 am : Welcoming Speech

Hui-yeon KIM (Institut National de Langues et de Civilisations, INALCO)

10 am-11 am: keynote lecture – Kenneth DEAN (National University of Singapore, NUS)

Gods in Business Class: religious mobilities in the Southeast Asian Chinese temple network

11 am-11.15am Coffee break

11.15 am-12.30 am Panel 1 - Discussant: Claire TRAN (IRASEC)

Yongjia LIANG (NUS)

“Keep the Debts Flow”: Networking of The Society of Disciples

Alexandra DE MERSAN (INALCO)

Motion and Devotion: the migratory flow via Buddhist monasteries from Burma to Singapore

12.30 pm-2 pm Lunch (Buffon Restaurant)

2 pm-3.15 pm Panel 2– Discussant: Zhe JI (INALCO)

Shanthini PILLAI (National University of Malaysia)

Nineteenth Century French and Tamil mobilities and its impact on Malaysian Tamil Catholics

Claire TRAN (IRASEC)

The building of Vietnamese Catholic Elites: internal mobilities and transnational networks (Rome, Paris, Brussels) (1900'-1930')

3.15 pm-3.30 pm Coffee break

3.30 pm -4.45 pm Panel 3 - Discussant: Florence GALMICHE (Univ. Paris-Diderot)

Hui-yeon KIM (INALCO)

Impact of migrations on Korean Protestantism

Jin Y. PARK (American University)

Modern Buddhism and religious mobility

7.30 Dinner (Mabillon restaurant)

Tuesday, September 12 (5.18, INALCO)

9.30 am – 11 am Panel 4 Discussant – Delphine ALLES (SciencesPo)

Zhe JI (INALCO)

The invention of classics: Jingkong and its transnational textual network

Florence GALMICHE (Univ. Paris-Diderot)

"Contestation and alternative rites about the Koreans listed at the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo"

Jérémy JAMMES (Univ. Brunei Darussalam)

Beyond the Missionary Subject: Anchoring Mobility, Minimalizing Conversion

11 am-11.15 am Coffee break

11.15 am -12.15 pm General discussion

12.30 Lunch (Norouz restaurant)

