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## EDITORIAL

We are glad to present the second issue of *QUEST*.

It is exceedingly difficult to define *Asia* with any precision. There is no such thing as Asian religion, or Asian culture; there are only Asian religions and cultures in the plural. Whatever the words may refer to, they are highly heterogenous. In this issue of the journal, we are pleased to see that six articles have made it through the rigorous peer-review process. This collection of articles, as we expected, varies in subject matter and research methodology, and the authors are from very different backgrounds, re-presenting the plurality of Asia. In terms of nationality, the authors are from six regions—Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, South Korea, and the USA. They are from five research fields—art history, systematic theology, social sciences, feminist studies, and comparative religion—writing on cultural and religious phenomena in four countries. The differences are huge, but their common concern is apparent. All their researches engage with the social and/or cultural impact that religions are having in Asia. Moreover, three out of the six authors are boundary-crossing. Their articles discuss religions in cultures not their own, which might help the advancement of a community as proposed by Graham Ward, that is, a community, in our case an Asian one, found in a space that transcends places, walls, and boundaries. We are particularly grateful for their contributions.

The first article, written by Andrea Chen, sets out to ask a very fundamental question that problematizes a long-held belief in the field of *Jing Jiao* study of the Nestorian Crosses. It asks, “Are these so-called Nestorian Crosses part of the Mongolian Nestorian heritage?” Hers is an art historical approach, which is quite innovative in the field concerned, and could well lead to a paradigm shift. From a Catholic perspective, Bernardus Agus Rukiyanto proposes some models of faith formation he sees as an integral part of evangelization. He attempts a proposal that is on the one hand faithful to the Catholic tradition, and on the other relevant to the highly pluralistic context of Indonesia. He contends that faith formation must be ecumenical, dialogical, inculturated, articulate a solidarity with the poor, and be ecological. The third article is written by Chih-yu Shih, a distinguished professor in Taiwan, and a social scientist specializing in China studies, political psychology, and cultural studies. His paper attempts an exploration of, and comparison between, the political-philosophical foundations of a particular contradiction in United States’ interventionist policy and Chinese non-interventionist policy, and argues that religions have a crucial role to play in the differences. Ngoc Bich Ly Le’s paper is boundary-crossing—a Vietnamese studying women’s struggles for leadership in religious institutions in Indonesia. To offer a sociological explanation of the way women have achieved a good level of advancement in leadership in Toraja Church, she launches an empirical study into the relationship between agency and structure. William H. Sewell’s theory of structural transformation and Sherry B. Ortner’s theory of agency are adopted. Guydeuk Yeon’s paper is also boundary-crossing. Yeon is a south Korean, now serving as director of the Innovation Centre at Christ University in India. His paper is on the spirituality of young people. His method is empirical, and his findings reveal the validity of an idea proposed by Nicholas Cook: “Through a combination of pitches, rhythms, timbres, durations, and dynamics, music can unlock the most hidden contents of one’s spiritual and emotional being.” The author of the sixth article is a white American from Texas. His name is David Bell, although he prefers a Chinese-looking name, Bei Dawei. Fascinated by the mysticism of Asia in general and buddhism in particular, Bei has been teaching and doing research in Taiwan for many years. Comparative religion and philosophy are among his research interests, and Bei’s paper is an examination of the interreligious encounter between two religious groups in Japan in the early twentieth century.

Here in this issue, we miss another brotherly name—Dr. Glenn Shive, the founding co-editor of *QUEST*—who has recently retired from the post of Vice President for Programs, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UB). Without him, *QUEST* would not have appeared. This issue of the journal welcomes a new co-editor, Dr. Angela Wong. Wong is a world renowned Asian feminist theologian. She retired as a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and now serves as Vice President for Programs, UB.

*QUEST* welcome submissions—research papers and book reviews—that span the full spectrum of religious, cultural, theological, and interdisciplinary studies on the cultures and religions of Asia. We wish to receive your manuscripts in 2018. As we said in the editorial of the inaugural issue, “may we all learn as we share our views and our experiences with each other.”

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# INVESTIGATION OF THE IDEA OF NESTORIAN CROSSES— BASED ON F. A. NIXON'S COLLECTION

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## ABSTRACT

It is generally agreed that the study of the Nestorian Cross (a kind of bronze piece believed to be an early Chinese Christian relic), has great significance both for the developing study of Jingjiao and for ethnographic studies of the Nestorian Mongol people. The most important question that we should ask, however, is, “Are these so-called Nestorian Crosses part of the Mongolian Nestorian heritage?” In other words, before starting to interpret the pieces in question, we need to ask if the identification, made at the first step of examination, is convincing enough as a basis upon which to build the interpretation. This paper focuses on issues concerning all aspects of the concept of Nestorian Crosses, looking first into the history of such an idea, then investigating its inner logic, and finally challenging its hard evidence. It is hoped that the conclusions of this paper will initiate a paradigm shift in the current study of this topic.

## Introduction to the Study

### The Jingjiao and the Yelikewen

The name “Nestorian Crosses” clearly reveals that the religious dimension has been the primary consideration in the existing identification of these items, an identification which subsumes them as relics of Chinese Nestorianism, or more accurately, of the Jingjiao and the Yelikewen.

Although controversies surround the identity of Nestorianism, the most commonly accepted description is as follows: At the Ephesus Council of 431 A.D., the Patriarch Nestorius was deemed heretical and his teaching anathematized due to his insistence that Mary should be called “Christotokos (Christ-bearer)” instead of “Theotokos (God-bearer).” This insistence is thought to emphasize a distinction between Christ’s divine and human natures instead of their unity. Later, the followers of the Patriarch Nestorius were given the name Nestorians and their theological practice was called Nestorianism.<sup>1</sup>

“Jingjiao” and “Yelikewen” are the indigenized names for Nestorianism after it was accepted and disseminated in ancient China. According to the famous Xi’an Stele, which is believed to be inscribed with the earliest doctrine and missionary record of Nestorianism in

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<sup>1</sup> Glen L. Thompson mentions that in an East Syriac theological book the author comments that the Church of the East “never changed their faith and preserved it as they had received it from the apostles, and they are called Nestorians unjustly, especially since Nestorius was not their Patriarch, and they did not understand his language” (Thompson 2009, 417). The discussion on the origin of Nestorianism is not the major concern of this article, however.

China, “Jingjiao (景教)” is the name Persian missionaries gave to Nestorianism in Chinese, because the word connotes with the meaning of “light,” and literally means “The Luminous Religion.”

In A.D. 845, the fifth year of Huichang in the Tang dynasty, Emperor Wuzong issued an edict banning all foreign religions in China in order to protect the local religion of Daoism. After that, Jingjiao seemed to fall into a long-term silence in China, until a hundred years later when the Nomadic Mongolian entered the terror of China and set up the Yuan dynasty, under the name of Yelikewen (a term denoting both the name of the religion and the followers of that religion).<sup>2</sup> The ancient religion, originating from the Church of the East, showed its vitality again in the region of modern-day Inner Mongolian Province (or, to give it another less political name: Southern Mongolia).<sup>3</sup>

Concerning other names for the Yelikewen during the Yuan dynasty, Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang comment as follows:

[O]ther names such as the “Daqin Religion,” “Persian Religion” were also found in Chinese sources. During the Mongol-Yuan period, Christians were called either Diexie (迭屑) in pre-Kublai time or Yelikewen during the Yuan period. Diexie is a phonetic translation of Persian word Tarsā; and Yelikewen is a Chinese phonetic translation of the Turco-Mongolic word *ärkägün* whose etymology is still debated. (Winkler and Tang 2009, 6)

The study of Christianity in China is well-developed and well-informed, but within its field, the study of the history of the Jingjiao/Yelikewen started quite late with the hallmark publication in 1993 of Qianzhi Zhu’s *The Nestorianism of China* (1993). Qianzhi Zhu, along with many scholars of this subject, adopts a traditional historical methodology which focuses on reading and applying the textual materials to the historical hypotheses.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary scholars realize, however, that interdisciplinary methodologies need to be employed in this study, as Halbertsma has advocated:

The complex nature of the Nestorian remains requires a broad and interdisciplinary cooperation from scholars of several disciplines, including History, Art History, Theology, Turkology, Syriac Studies and other fields to further understand this heritage. Only this cooperation of interdisciplinary research can reveal the different aspects of the intercultural encounter of the Church of the East with Chinese and Mongol cultures and the theological value of this material. (Halbertsma 2008, 236)

Halbertsma has his reasons for saying this, because for 12 years he studied Inner Mongolian relics that are believed to be of Nestorian origin, including grave sites, mural paintings, reliefs on tombstones, etc.. These relics are not limited to textual materials, and textual study cannot be sufficient for the study of Jingjiao. The situation which Halbertsma and other scholars in this field are facing is the relative deficiency of historical materials of Jingjiao, or as Pierre Marsone puts it:

<sup>2</sup> Although there is controversy around whether Yelikewen at that time refers to the Mongolian Nestorians alone, or if it also refers to the Catholic Christians or Christians from other Orders, that argument is not the main concern of this article. I will adopt the most simple and clear way of referring to the Mongolian Nestorians with the name “Yelikewen,” and to Chinese Nestorianism before the Yuan dynasty with the name “Jingjiao.” See Zhu (1995, 57) and Yin (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars argue that the Jingjiao of Yuen dynasty did show some sort of succession from that of the Tang dynasty. For example, Jiang (1982, 98); Li (1998, 360); Tang (1993, 421); Chen (2007, 59-60); Bao (2007, 130-132); Yang (2001, 167-173).

<sup>4</sup> In the discipline of Art History, the traditional historical study focusing on textual evidences alone is criticized by scholars such as Paul Corby Finney as being biased. As Finney comments: “An anthology is not a history” And “Life and literature are not the same thing” (Finney 1994, 9, 103).

“the silence of the historical and literary sources” (Marsone 2013, 231),<sup>5</sup> although here the textual resources are considered better organized than the non-textual.

### The F. A. Nixon collection

There are more than one thousand so-called Nestorian Crosses, which, as a confluence, include the cross-shaped pieces, the geometrical pieces, the seal-shape pieces, and the bird-shape pieces, possessed by different museums and institutions around the world. These artefacts attract global attention due to the uniqueness endowed by their identity as Nestorian relics from the Chinese Yuan dynasty.

Among them, the F. A. Nixon collection is the largest, with 979 pieces in its original paraphernalia (according to James M. Menzies), and 935 pieces presently in storage and on exhibition in the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong (UMAG). Studies have been made of them; and conferences and other activities have been held to promulgate their significance, since Silk Road studies have been promoted to new levels during recent years. The Nestorian Crosses are perceived as significant materials not only for Silk Road studies but also for the study of Chinese Christianity, especially in light of the current poor availability of historical data of Jingjiao as mentioned above.

## **The Idea of Nestorian Crosses**

### Literature Review: the study of the so-called Nestorian Crosses

As the name of the F. A. Nixon collection suggests, all these pieces were collected and later donated<sup>6</sup> by a Mr. F. A. Nixon, who used to work as a postman in the northern region of China before he moved to Shanghai. According to his article—a record of the talk that he delivered at the University of Hong Kong to accompany his donation—his interest in these small bronze artefacts “was aroused by an article by Rev. P. M. Scott in the February 1930 issue of the *Chinese Recorder*. Rev. Scott, while on famine relief work at Paotow in 1929, had come across a few specimens in a curio shop and designs that he collected a number and made an intensive study of them” (Nixon 1952, 31-34). Mr. Nixon followed Rev. Scott in calling these bronze pieces Nestorian Crosses, although sometimes the name “Yuan Ya (元押)” was added to the name (Nixon 1952, 32). This is very important since it represents the traditional identification of these bronze pieces based on several elements that are regarded as critical: the region of Ordos (the sedentary area of the legendary Mongolian Nestorians), the Christian background (Nestorianism), the function as seals (referencing Yuanya), and most fundamentally, the presumption that these diverse pieces bear a unitary identity: Nestorian Seals with the Cross design, hence the Nestorian Crosses.

After a month of intensive recording, printing, sketching and investigating, James M. Menzies (1934) published a comprehensive and unprecedented survey entitled “979 Ink Impressions of F. A. Nixon’s Collection of Nestorian Bronze Crosses” in the Cheeloo (Shantung) University Journal. In the article, Menzies divided the 979 pieces of Nixon’s Collection into four major groups: crosses with identical arms and flat ends, crosses with leaf-shape arms and round ends, bird-shape crosses, and geometrical crosses (Menzies 1934, 165-167). His categorization of the crosses following the mainstream concept of Nestorian Crosses became a classic. Some other similar collections of this kind, such as the Mark Brown Collection, the British Museum

<sup>5</sup> Similar views can be found also in for example Zhao (2010).

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the donation of the so-called Nestorian Crosses to UMAG by F. A. Nixon is just part of his massive collection. His original possession might have exceeded 979 pieces. Some other institutions claim that they received or purchased Nestorian Crosses from F. A. Nixon directly or indirectly. An informative investigation of Nixon’s curation will be part of my future study, since such work may have great significance for the study of the archive.

Collection, the Columbia University Collection, and the Toronto Royal Ontario Museum Collection, all share the characteristics of the F. A. Nixon Collection. For instance, they all represent the four Menzies categories, although unusual additional pieces are also found in the respective collections.

The scholars holding this mainstream concept of Nestorian Crosses include P. M. Scott (1930), A. C. Moule (1931), Paul Pelliot (1931-32), Zoltán de Takács (1931-32), Mark Brown (1933), James M. Menzies (1934), P. Y. Saeki (1937), and W. R. Taylor (1938). These can be considered the first group of scholars to have dealt with the identification of the bronzes in question.

Falling into this mainstream category from a relatively late date—from the 1970s to the present—are S. Drake (1962), Chuntang Yang (1978), Boqin Jiang (2004), Weimin Gu (2003), and Kim-Kwong Chan (2010).

Certainly not all the scholars from the above two periods agree on the concept of Nestorian Crosses. Some scholars in past decades have questioned this mainstream concept with diverse reasons, and that is where the argument of this article begins.

### *The Debate*

For example, in his article dealing with what he calls the “Nestorian Seal-Amulets,” Louis Hambis parallels the bronze pieces with Steppe Art rather than with Christian iconography:

Unless we find these bronzes with a much older origin from the sedentary civilisations that were flourished between the Indus and Mesopotamia, that is, several thousand years before the Christian era, it seems that Steppe Art had shown two great influences to the forms and techniques of both ends of Eurasia. (Hambis 1956, 286)

Similar to Louis Hambis, Raffaele Biscione doubts the validity of the classical concept of Nestorian Crosses. Moreover, he proceeds beyond where Louis Hambis stops, and compares these bronze pieces with artefacts from the civilization of Central Asia in general. In an article published in 1985, he parallels the 17 pieces of so-called Nestorian Crosses with the Bactria seals found in present-day Afghanistan, presented by Countess de Bylandt to the IsMEO, and then points out convincing similarities between these two groups. For better understanding, he draws in the archaeological record of the Chinese Yinshang (殷商) culture to highlight the historical condition between the two cultures, namely the ancient Chinese and the Central Asian one. Supporting his hypothesis, the historical evidence shows that at the time of the second Millennium B.C., the commercial route between Bactria (大宛) and ancient China was already well established and flourishing (Biscione 1985).

As to more recent studies, Ian Gillman and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit adopt an anthropological view in stating that these motifs might just be charms used by Turkish and Mongol tribes (Gillman and Klimkeit 2006, 230). The more distinctive voice is from Tjalling H. F. Halbertsma. After 12 years’ study of the Mongolian Nestorian relics in Southern Mongolia, he suggests that, first of all, no clear archaeological record has been found yet concerning these “Ordos Bronzes.” Secondly, there could be a merely coincidental resemblance between the design of the so-called Nestorian Crosses and those of other assemblages, for example, the decorative patterns found as early as the Han dynasty. Lastly, the “problems regarding a Nestorian identification of customs and objects” (Halbertsma 2008, 299) should be dealt with more rigorously than simply being subordinated to missionary passion (Halbertsma 2008, 297-299).

It worth noting that Halbertsma points to an intense “Christian appropriation” in earlier studies of the Nestorian relics in China, and he believes, taking Nicolini-Zani’s observation that the Xi’an Stele is a “mirror interpreting its interpreter” (Halbertsma 2008, 299) as an illustration, that “the identification of objects as Nestorian has, in other words, at times proved to be problematic and highlights the importance of understanding the author’s background and, indeed,

motivations” (Halbertsma 2008, 299). I will talk more on what Halbertsma has called the “Christian appropriation” by digging into the curation process and some other relevant factors later in this article.

Regarding the identity of the bronzes in question, and following Louis Hambis, Raffaele Biscione, and Tjalling H. F. Halbertsma, I also hesitate to subsume them under the elusive Mongolian Nestorian category. Moreover, in my next research articles, new evidence and new comparisons will be invoked to show that at least some of the so-called Nestorian Crosses, that is to say, some pieces with cross shapes, bird shapes, and flower and star shapes, might have been closely related to Central Asian cultural relics. Others, from the same collection, bear the distinguishable Jingjiao/Yelikewen iconographical characteristics that might grant them a more decisive identification as Mongolian Nestorian artefacts.

In that direction, Hambis opens up a new horizon; Biscione stops after the cross pieces are compared to their possible counterparts in general; and Halbertsma, in his informative survey of the Mongolian Nestorian relics in Southern Mongolia, leaves the study of the Ordos Bronzes out of his scope. It is obvious that further study is desired, so that a more comprehensive understanding of the artefacts and their cultural, theological, and ethnographical meaning might be procured.

#### *The Christian appropriation and the missionaries' accounts*

First-hand information about these bronzes has for a long time come mainly from dealers and intermediaries. As Biscione observed in 1985, the existing dating information, except for that drawn by scholars from the problematic syllogism, is mainly from dealers' attributions (Biscione 1985). This can make things really complicated, because dealers' information about the treasures might be nothing more than a mixture of legend, pragmatic knowledge, and ingratiation towards customers. As for the “syllogism” that Biscione mentioned, he puts it thus:

They [those scholars' arguments] were made on the basis of what, according to classical and medieval logic, was a barbara syllogism, that could be enunciated in this way: 1. Major premise: Christian often uses the symbol of cross. 2. Minor premise: inhabitant of Ordos often uses the symbol of cross. 3. Consequence: the inhabitants of Ordos were Christians. (Biscione 1985, 96)

Biscione here presciently points to a critical element which had influenced the forming of the idea of Nestorian Crosses, and that is what Halbertsma calls “the Christian appropriation,” which I will elaborate a little here.

Schuyler Cammann, a contemporary scholar of F. A. Nixon and Mark Brown, in answering the inquiry of Robert J. Bull about the Nestorian Crosses, commented: “Missionaries were trying to prove the previous extent of Christianity by the presence of these un-Christian relics, speaking of eagles as ‘doves’, and ‘pagan’ symbols of the universe as ‘crosses’.”<sup>7</sup> What Schuyler describes is true. As F. S. Drake asserts: “...but Pelliot among others came out strongly in favour of their Christian origin, expressing a view which now predominates” (Drake 1962, 11).

Halbertsma, as already noted, lists evidences of such a Christian appropriation in the discoveries of the Christian relics in the region of Southern Mongolia. For example, he raises the case of “a curious Chinese document” which was believed by the C.I.C.M. missionaries to be teachings that “expressed Nestorian origins and thus represented a connection between the twentieth-century sect and the Nestorian Christians under Mongol rule some seven centuries earlier” (Halbertsma 2008, 296). He comments on this case that “these conclusions, and their

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<sup>7</sup> Schuyler Cammann to Robert J. Bull, 19 October 1962. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University.



presentation as relevant to a missionary's cause, can perhaps be best understood as a 'Christian appropriation' of the Nestorian past" (Halbertsma 2008, 296).

The curation process of the so-called Nestorian Crosses was also intimately entangled with such a Christian appropriation, and eventually influenced the very idea of Nestorian Crosses. This process will be discussed later in this article.

Some other historical records given by merchants and missionaries may not be directly related to the bronze pieces, but were believed to have provided the historical context for constructing such a Nestorian identity. F. S. Drake has made a survey of these. For example, he mentions Odoric of Pordenone and John of Montecorvino who had given records of the Christian Öngüt, and the famous Marco Polo who "found Nestorian Christians, usually in the service of the Court" and who also "confirms the existence of a Nestorian Christian tribe with their Christian King George" (Drake 1962, 201-21). But usually the missionaries' records are full of contradictions and one should deal with the contradictions before adopting the records as clear evidence. For example, F. S. Drake considered Friar William of Rubruck's dairy about the existence of the Mongolian Nestorians as important evidence in justifying the idea of Nestorian Crosses (Drake 1962, 18-20). Mongolian Nestorians, whose existence is proved by the diary, must have been fully Christianized, he argued, since they showed great understanding of their Christian identity by employing the Christian symbols widely in their iconography, e.g. a cruciform for a Christian cross, a bird for the Holy Spirit, etc.. Yet others may get a different picture from Rubruck's record, which is that the Mongolian rulers of that time did not know the doctrine of Christianity, nor did they care about the prayer. What they were really concerned about Christianity is that they believed that prayer made by the clergy could grant them good fortune (Li 2013, 17).

#### *Conclusion: the significance of the study*

The literature review shows that, in the study of Nestorian Crosses, the logic underlying the mainstream idea of Nestorian Crosses goes like this:

1) Since the seal-like pieces in the collections are confirmed to be Yuanya, having been affirmed thus by dealers and missionaries, 2) then the rest of the pieces, namely the cross-shaped and zoomorphic ones, should be in accordance with the seals, both in terms of dating—so as to be the Yuan dynasty—and function, 3) which means that the cross-shaped and zoomorphic pieces should be a kind of Yuanya too, although a broad spectrum of diversities of the shape, design, plastic style and usage exists across all the pieces in the collection. And finally, 4) with the foregoing argumentation/logic, the idea of Nestorian Crosses, as a relic from Nestorianism and as a kind of seal, came into being.

In this article I argue that a correlation is to be found between a) the cursoriness of the construction and justification of the idea of Nestorian Crosses, and b) the readiness to apply this heedless idea as a legitimized authority to the data analyses to come, and eventually to the interpretation of the cultural/religious meaning of the data, in this case, of the artefacts. Since the ultimate purpose of the data analysis in this study is to configure a comprehensive picture of the Mongolian Nestorians so that their religiosity, cultural environment and all other aspects of their life might be accessible, thus the correlation, occurring in the traditional study, inevitably leads to conclusions which are problematic and hence may undermine the whole research. Simple examples can be raised here for the sake of better understanding:

In interpreting the bird-shape pieces among the Nixon collection, scholars such as Peliot, WeiminGu, and Chuntang Yang, have all concluded that the bird shape is the dove motif, and hence should be referred to as the Holy Spirit (Gu and Li 2011, 43; Moule 1930, 106; Yang 1978, 65). This assertion generates many appurtenances, among which is the saying that the Mongolian

Nestorians had already embraced Western Church's iconographic tradition,<sup>8</sup> and hence there was a strong liturgical, if not theological, connection between them and the center of the Church of the East in faraway Eastern Europe. This assertion not only contradicts the fact that the tradition of the Church of the East, was itself for quite a long time unfamiliar with the dove-representing-the-Holy Spirit iconography pattern,<sup>9</sup> but also falters for lack of supporting evidence. For instance, the book: *Zhishun Zhenjiang Zhi* (The Annals of Zhenjiang of the Zhishun Period) contains a survey about the Mongolian Nestorians' iconographic practices during the Yuan dynasty, but no other symbol besides the cross is mentioned (Yu 1279-1368). According to this book, it seems that the pattern of the dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit was not as well perceived as what the scholars conclude from the amplitude of bird-shape pieces in Nixon collection. As to the second part of the inference, the relationship between the Mongolian Nestorians and the Central Church is still a matter for debate.

Because of its importance, I remain focused on the foregoing correlation, and inquire further about the logical ground for the idea of Nestorian Crosses, examining some of the hard evidence and also some investigations from the discipline of Art History. I leave the material, archaeological and art historical identification of these pieces as Nestorian Crosses for my next research paper. Hopefully this article will serve as the starting point for future Jingjiao/Yelikewen art history study, while keeping an open attitude to some possibly diverse results from the identification of the bronzes in question. In consequence, the idea of Nestorian Crosses, in spite of its problematic logic ground, might find approval from an entirely different direction.

For the logical ground of the idea of Nestorian Crosses, we should start with the collectors' background, although here the relevant information is very sparse.

### The collectors' background

We have learnt from scholars such as Biscione, Cammann and Halbertsma that the earlier figures entangling with the bronzes in question held to a Christian appropriation in their interpretation. The collectors' background, as a kind of indirect context for the bronzes, will further reinforce this opinion.

First of all, Christian interest in the curation process is worth noting. As a pioneer of the connoisseurship of the so-called Nestorian Crosses, Mark Brown taught systematic theology in Beijing and saw himself as a devoted Christian—a missionary. Not only this, he also shared his understanding of and interest in the so-called Nestorian Crosses with his peers, according to his sister's recollections,<sup>10</sup> although the reliability of the memory is debatable. For example, she might have said this to attract the curator's attention to her brother's treasure. But there is one thing that is clear from that account, and that is that Mark Brown's theological identity, starting with his training at Drew University and thereafter the chair in Beijing, no doubt granted him superiority of theological knowledge among his peers. His article, published on the subject of the

<sup>8</sup> On the pattern of the dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit, Western Christianity holds very different traditions from Eastern Christianity (Didron, Millington, and Stokes 1886, 459).

<sup>9</sup> Thomas F. Mathews, Avedis Krikor Sanjian, scholars who studied an Armenian manuscript called Gladzor Gospel from the thirteenth to fourteenth century, give an explanation of the pattern of dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit seen in this manuscript. This is an example that has no precedent and has been followed by none among the Byzantine and Armenian art history. It could have been influenced by the idea of "Adoptionism," but that does not mean the artisans were necessarily followers of that idea (Mathews and Sanjian 1991, 96-97). Since Armenia is considered to be the junction between the Central Church and the region of Mongolian Nestorians, their opinion is also relevant to the Mongolian Nestorian iconographical tradition because they probably inherited the tradition of the Central Church, namely the Church of the East, through Armenia's transition to that tradition.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Brown's sister stated he "was the pioneer in collecting these crosses, among his coterie of friends. What they know about their origin is probably what they learnt from him." See: Mabel B. Lerrigo to Robert J. Bull, 22 October 1962. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University. This idea also has been supported by Mark's friend, Mr. Aeschiman's wife, Myrle Patterson Aeschiman. See Myrle Patterson Aeschiman to Robert J. Bull, 17 November 1962. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University.

so-called Nestorian Crosses, is a result and also an evidence of such a position (Brown 1933). Thus his infatuation with the Christian identity of the bronzes won taken-for-granted support from early collectors and even scholars.

Secondly, both F. A. Nixon and Mark Brown learnt the idea of Yuanya mainly from dealers, and the idea of Nestorian Crosses mainly from existing Nestorian studies, e.g. Scott's article, while more importantly, the scholars themselves from that study were mostly missionaries and Christians. In other words, the collectors and the scholars of the same subject were all from a Christian background, which makes the circular argument of the Nestorian identity inevitable.

Thirdly, neither F. A. Nixon nor Mark Brown participated in excavations or collected the objects directly from the Mongol people. Furthermore, according to F. A. Nixon's narrative, he had a "rival" competition with Mark Brown in collecting these objects,<sup>11</sup> which casts doubt on the motivation for their collecting and hence leads to the possibility that their collecting was an arbitrary action. As to the question why they collected those seals without Christian symbols, that is to say, those which did not fall into their criteria for collection, along with the cross and bird pieces that are fervently believed to be Christian relics, the answer is quite simple and reasonable. The seal pieces were confidently recommended as Yuanya by those self-same dealers, and hence served well as dating materials and an indirect archaeological context for the idea of Nestorian Crosses.

All the abovementioned factors imply that there has been poor records management since the very beginning of the collection, and because of this, the endogenic diversity of this eclectic package of bronzes, which has been ignored for so long in past studies, should have been considered as the rallying point for future investigations. This article elaborates on that notion.

#### The cross and the bird: further questions

The passion of collectors and scholars for the Christian religion could be perceived as the catalyst in the composition of the idea of Nestorian Crosses, while the symbols, in this case the cross and the bird, enthusiastically believed to have derived directly from, or been related to, Christianity, are the diagnostic features.

Many aspects must be taken into consideration in the identification process, for instance, an understanding of the possible post-deposition factors, along with an examination of the original curation or excavation.

F. A. Nixon, and some other major figures adopting the idea of Nestorian Crosses, mainly lived in the 1930s to 1960s, which is the period of the dominance of what Trigger calls the "Midwestern Taxonomic Method" (Trigger 2003, 4)<sup>12</sup> and of the emergence of the later so-called Processual Archaeology. Thus in this case, the oversimplified identification, namely the idea of Nestorian Crosses applying to the whole package of bronzes, implies an epistemology driven not only by personal reading of the archaeological data, but also influenced by archaeological trends of that time.

#### *The cross—from the cross-shaped (十字) to The Cross (十字架)*

The most distinguished diagnostic feature for the idea of Nestorian Crosses is the cross-shaped piece. This is understandable. After all, the symbol of the cross is the most important icon in Christianity, for it represents, commonly speaking, the salvation work of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising that collectors and earlier scholars were so overwhelmingly impressed by the abundant

<sup>11</sup> F. A. Nixon to Robert Bull, 20 November 1963. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University.

<sup>12</sup> Trigger gives the term "Midwestern Taxonomic Method" the following definition: "The main task of archaeologists was to define artifacts types and use these types to distinguish archaeological cultures, which they equated to prehistorical peoples. Culture change attributes to diffusion and migration. There was no awareness of significant changes coming about as a result of processes occurring with cultures" (Trigger 2003, 4).

and distinct cross-shapes found among these bronze pieces, although their reading of the cross-shaped as unmistakably Christian is problematic.

Take F. A. Nixon as an example. I believe that F. A. Nixon has employed, although not necessarily consciously, an insufficiently executed formal-typological method which shows a subjective use of analogy in this case.<sup>13</sup> In his article, Nixon firstly tried to categorize the symbols seen among the bronze pieces according to their frequency: “The most frequent recurring symbols on the crosses” (Nixon 1952, 32) (see fig. 1).

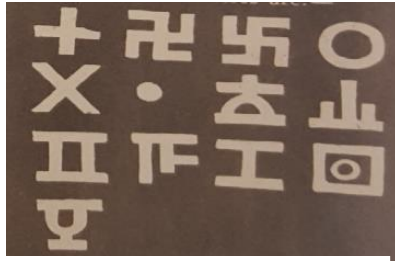


Fig. 1 The symbols highlighted by Nixon in his article. Photo © Chinese Recorder.

Secondly, he quoted P. M. Scott, a scholar who stimulated Nixon’s interest in collecting these crosses. In drawing the analogy between Christian symbols and those from the bronze pieces: “[Rev. P. M. Scott] interpreted some of the frequently occurring symbols as definitely Christian, e.g., representing the (Trinity, a chalice, and a cross on a hill)” (Nixon 1952, 33) (see fig. 2).

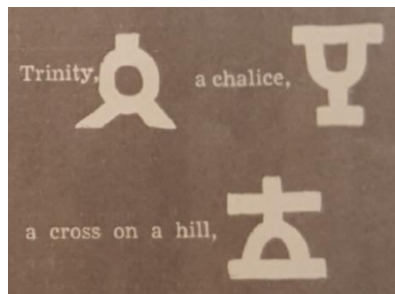


Fig. 2 The symbols highlighted by Nixon in his article. Photo © Chinese Recorder

The mainstream scholars who confirmed these bronze pieces as Nestorian Crosses based on the belief that the cross-shaped must be a Christian symbol,<sup>14</sup> relied on a similar method in their identification. When they mentioned the cross-shaped pieces in their works, they called it a

<sup>13</sup> As to the definition of “formal-typological method,” see Kleiñ (1982, 153).

<sup>14</sup> Although the scholarly voices on the origin of the so-called Nestorian Crosses remained diverse all through the study, the preference for a Christian origin has been dominant (Drake 1962, 11).

“Christian Cross” and even a “Maltese Cross”<sup>15</sup> without hesitation, and then they continued to develop this belief into a retrieval of the history of the Mongolian Nestorians.

Taking Chuntang Yang’s article as an example, since he used to be the director of UMAG where the collection is held, when he talks about the cross-shaped pieces of the Nixon collection, we find:

Thus from the evidences of the historical texts and excavated relics, the “Nestorian Crosses” found in Ordos must be strongly connected to the Jingjiao of its time. Its shape has many similarities with those crosses inscribed in the tombstones and religious steles that are found. (Yang 1978, 63; my translation)

Notice that Yang has quoted a book in support of his hypothesis of the perceived homogeneity of the Nestorian Crosses with those Quanzhou religious relics (although he does not indicate the exact page of the relevant content of that book). However, the fact is that the book he quotes does not parallel the Nestorian Crosses with the Christian relics discovered in Quanzhou, nor does it compare the cross-shaped from the two categories. In other words, the book does not draw the analogy so readily between the two categories. On the contrary, the author of that book strongly advocates a more comprehensive study of the inter-influencing schools of arts in the Christian art history of China,<sup>16</sup> which is exactly what is missing from Chuntang Yang’s article.

Wu’s work demonstrates well how a data record and an elementary data analysis should be carried out in archaeological historical study. His prudent attitude toward the identification of the data is a consequence of a well-functioning methodology. By contrast, in the current study, lack of a well-defined methodology is widely apparent, especially in the way in which the idea of Nestorian Crosses is born.

When employing a Formal-typology data analysis of the crosses, there existed a belief that was rooted in missionary passion, which served as the rational, if not the theoretical, ground. When the analogy was drawn between Christian cross shapes in the field of Christian iconography, and the cross shape that was observed among the mysterious bronze pieces, early scholars legitimized this analogy by taking for granted that all cross shapes must have had a Christian background. By so doing, they neglected the fact that cruciform shapes do not belong exclusively to Christian culture.

In fact, the cruciform shape has been observed in other cultures far from the place where Christianity originated.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, long before Christianity was born and carried along the Silk Road to eastern Asia, the people who used to dominate the vast area from the region of the Black Sea to the Altai Mountain, had already a pervasive propensity for the cross-shaped in their symbolic and semiotic system, for which, and based on different cultural heritages and archaeological contexts, I will provide a comprehensive study in articles to come. Emphasizing the cross shape as a cultural phenomenon, its popularity is found to belong to a grander culture scope. In this way I will argue that the cross-shaped pieces in F. A. Nixon collection should have been considered more thoroughly in terms of their origin and genre, and hence their identification should have rendered plural rather than singular results.

<sup>15</sup> The “Maltese Cross” is believed to belong exclusively to the Church of the East (Ge 2013, 169).

<sup>16</sup> Addressing the cross shape of the Quanzhou religious relics, the book includes this statement: “We have to ask that among all these crosses that this book collected, which are from the Western Christianity (St. Francis) and which are from the Eastern Christianity (Jingjiao)? It is not an easy job to differentiate them only by their sculpture characteristic, because they are inter-influenced ... As to the Tombstone sculptured with both the cross and the lotus, it is very hard to decide what sect, the west or the east, they belong to, due to the inseparable style characteristics of the west and east sculpture art. Thus, it requires further study” (Wu 1957, 38; my translation).

<sup>17</sup> Hope B. Werness mentions “Although in Western culture, the primary association of the cross is with Christianity, it has been a universal archetypal symbol from the most ancient times. Some cultures attach specific significance to the cross, but generally speaking it is a symbol of the CENTER and of the FOUR/SIX DIRECTIONS” (Werness 2003, 72).

It is not surprising that the scholars who executed their studies based on the abovementioned data analysis pattern applied the same rational/theoretical pattern to another important diagnostic feature—the bird-shape pieces. After all, from their viewpoint, the more Christian symbols there were in the collection, the more supportable became the idea of Nestorian Crosses. It is interesting to note that in its logic, the reading of the bird-shape as a Christian symbol always follows the cross-shaped reading in a way that seems to imply that the two logically endorse each other. This, as will be demonstrated next, is a circular argument.

*The bird—from the shape to the interpretation*

Weimin Gu, quoting from Pelliot, states that the bird-shape pieces are most likely the representations of the Holy Spirit (Gu 2003, 43). This is the dominant interpretation of the bird-shaped pieces in the collections, and is followed by many because of its attribution of the theological connotation. For this reason, study of the bird-shaped pieces concerns Jingjiao/Yelikewen studies probably even more intensely than that of the cross-shaped pieces.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity can be read from the famous Xi'an Stele inscription and other classical Jingjiao manuscripts found in China. It seems that the Jingjiao followers were well informed in their knowledge of the Holy Spirit, according to these textual evidences.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, a liturgical book discovered in the Khara-Khoto (黑水城) shows that the Yelikewen, the Jingjiao followers of the Yuan dynasty in north of China,<sup>19</sup> also highlighted the knowledge of the Holy Spirit in their daily religious practice (Tang and Winkler 2013, 382-386). In this theological context, the popularity of the idea of the bird-as-dove-representing-the-Holy Spirit among scholars is understandable. Given the above theological context is well studied, and the understanding thereof reliable, several fundamental questions underlying the argument of the bird-as-the-dove and hence representing the Holy-Spirit, can be seen in the following gradual steps.<sup>20</sup>

Firstly, what is Jingjiao/Yelikewen's iconographical tradition?<sup>21</sup> Does it, as has been assumed by scholars such as Weimin Gu (2003, 43), have the same appropriation of dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit as can be found in Western Christian iconography?<sup>22</sup> I discuss the answer to the latter briefly in one of my previous works (Chen 2015), and will consider it further in my future research. Suffice here to say that the above two traditions are very different with regard to the pattern of dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit, since in this case, a difference already exists between the traditionally-defined Western and Eastern Christianity. The divergence is also supported by the fact that the Christian image of crucifixion, ample in the Western tradition, remains scarce in Jingjiao/Yelikewen's iconography (Malek, Hofrichter, and Monumenta Serica Institute 2006, 36-37).

Secondly, given the Yelikewen community shared the iconographic tradition with the Latin Church, we still need to ask if these bird-shaped pieces are exclusively and prevalingly manufactured, although in smaller quantities than the cross-shaped pieces, for such a purpose that

<sup>18</sup> For example, according to A. C. Moule's analysis, the "Three Majestics" of the three scrolls: *Daqin Jingjiao Sanwei Mengdu Zan* (Praise of the Pāramitā of the Three Majestics of the Illustrious Teaching) refers to the Holy Trinity. This view has been broadly accepted in the study (Moule 1930).

<sup>19</sup> Some other scholars allege that the term "Yelikewen" could have applied to ethnic groups other than the Mongolians. See, e.g., Gu and Li (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Due to the focus of the current article, I will elaborate later on the last question which functions as the ground for the others. Detailed discussion of the other questions will appear in future articles.

<sup>21</sup> Because the intrinsic difference between the Jingjiao and the Yelikewen is not the major concern of the current article, whenever the two terms are paralleled in this article, what is referred to is just the general sense of the so-called Chinese Nestorian phenomenon, rather than specific sects of that religion.

<sup>22</sup> As to the dove-representing-the-Holy-Spirit tradition found in Western Christianity, see Didron, Millington, and Stokes (1886, 459).

the bird symbol might be elevated above all other theological symbols, even the most popular lotus-plus-cross pattern? A positive answer to the above question has been at least partially refuted by the curation process, since the process, being highly tendentious and poorly managed, proves that the present paraphernalia, although called a collection, do not have a singular identity. Thus, before any conclusive evidence appears—for example, the discovery of the original archaeological assemblage in which a decisive quantity of the bird or cross pieces are unearthed—one cannot guarantee that the presently-observed prominence of the bird-motif in the relevant collection reflects a Christian iconographical reference.

Thirdly, given that it is possible that the bird motifs/shapes is dominant in Jingjiao/Yelikewen's iconography, can we find its parallel or counterpart in other Jingjiao/Yelikewen relics? Some would say that plenty of the steles, tombstones and one or two frescos excavated from Quanzhou, the Southern Mongolia, and Dunhuang respectively, might have provided glimpses into this question. But that surely leads to the next question from the Art History point of view, i.e., do the bird-motifs/shapes found in the collection belong to the same category as the ones mentioned above? This question is also applicable to the cross-motif situation. Nevertheless, there is a deeper question underlying this one, and one which should be regarded as the ground of the whole argument: does the fact that all the bird-shaped pieces in the relevant collection have the same artistic style, plastic characteristic, symbolic connotation, function, etc., mean they belong to the same category—i.e., the Jingjiao/Yelikewen iconography? By asking that, we come back to the starting point of this investigation, and after the above discussion, the answer to this fundamental question is now quite clear: they are not homogenous. I will elaborate on this further with more archaeological evidence, but for now it is worth noting that there are diverse bird-shaped pieces, different in all these aspects.

Such diversity can set a challenge to the existing scholarly interpretation of the bird-shape pieces. For example: if the single-headed bird-shaped piece is meant to represent the Holy Spirit, then what about the double-headed bird-shaped piece? And if the double-headed bird-shaped piece is meant to convey the idea of the two natures of Jesus Christ, as suggested by scholars such as Weimin Gu, Chuangtang Yang, and Peilliot, then how do we understand this conflict in their argument that two disparate symbolic meanings conveyed by the same pattern in one iconographical system could be so divergent?

This is not to mention the derivatives of the foregoing single or double-headed bird-shape group. For example, there is the single-headed-bird (fig. 3<sup>23</sup>), which may find counterparts in Central Asia art, the unmistakable Chinese phoenix (fig. 4), the typical Ordos Bronze style (fig. 5), the peculiar figure with birds' wings and fire-shaped head that might suggest the Zoroastrian tradition (fig. 6), etc.. The diversity is not limited to the preferred Christian symbols, but can also be observed in other pieces in the collection, for example, in those which are considered less Christian, and in those unmistakable Yuanya pieces as well. In this respect, the collection itself is diverse.

<sup>23</sup> It is noted that without further solid evidence, and for the sake of communication, the location of the artefacts shown in this article will follow the label currently issued by the host museum and institution, and that the location here does not refer to the original or authentic excavation site of the artifacts.



Fig. 3 Bird-shape piece with swastika on front, bronze, Ordos region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.



Fig. 4 Mysterious bird with long cloud-like tail resembling to Chinese phoenix motif, bronze, Ordos region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.



Fig. 5 Paired-bird motif decorated object with one bird missing, bronze, Ordos region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

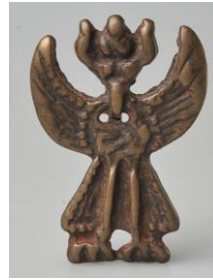


Fig. 6 Standing bird with spreading wings, little dots on each wing and with a fire-shaped head, bronze, Ordos region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

### Yuanya and their inscriptions

Chinese seals went through several artistic stages which span over 3,000 years, although the basics of the seals remain largely unchanged (Sun 2004, 3). In a most general sense, Chinese seals are usually categorized per their functions: private or official (私印, 官印); the presentation of the script: positive or negative (朱文, 白文); the technique of making: curving, casting, etc. (雕刻, 鑄造等); and the styles, including formal, exquisite, or romantic, etc. (Sun 2004, 3-4).

Yuanya, as the name reveals, is a seal or a group of seals prevalent in the Yuan dynasty, although the naming of such seals is considered “unscientific” by some since the “Ya” (押) is not restricted to the Yuan dynasty (Zhou 2001, 7). Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the Yuanya evolved from the function of “Ya” (押), which welcomes pictorial forms of signature, and that is why the earlier format of the Yuanya is called “flower-ya” (花押).<sup>24</sup> As to why the

<sup>24</sup> As to the evolutionary trend of “Ya” to “Flower-ya” and finally to “Yuanya,” Zhou has an informative introduction in his book (Zhou 2001, 7-9). As for the “Flower-ya,” Ye Mengde commented that “there was no ‘Ya’ in the early period of the



pictorial seals were embraced in the Yuan dynasty, the generally accepted idea is from the book *Nancun Chuogeng Lu* (南村輟耕錄) that Yuanya is a kind of seal invented for/by the “illiterate” Mongolian Semuren.<sup>25</sup> The discussion about the origin of Yuanya falls outside of the scope of the current article, however, and the commonly accepted description of Yuanya mentioned above highlights a few of its characteristics relevant for present concerns: the encrypted script, the pictorial decoration, the function as seals, and their possible privileged existence in the Mongolian community.<sup>26</sup>

As discussed previously, the circular argument of the so-called Nestorian Crosses being Yuanya, or vice versa, has been carried through or embedded as the postulation for over a century by scholars such as Yang Chuntang, Jame Menizes, Xiaojing Yan,<sup>27</sup> etc.. This article has

challenged the logic underlying this circular argument. In future efforts, more evidence from Yuanya studies, for example the art historical approach to the style, technique, function, aesthetic ideal, possible lineage and the evolutionary trend of the Yuanya,<sup>28</sup> should also be included.

Most of the Yuanya in Nixon’s collection, namely, the pieces with identifiable characteristic



Fig. 7 Bronze seal with loop on the top, inscribed Chinese character “Wu” (五) which could be the family name or a military officer title, bronze, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

Fig. 8 Bronze seal with loop on the back, inscribed Chinese character “Fu” (福) refers to “the blessing” along with a deer motif which phonetically means “Lu” (祿), so this combination is a typical Chinese auspicious pattern “Fulu” (福祿) which means all the blessings and successes, bronze, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.



seals, are typically Yuanya style, and hence they fit well in the Chinese seals categories and also with the four characteristics of Yuanya as listed above. Some of them have only one character inscribed (fig. 7), or have one character combined with a pictorial cipher or zoomorphic motif (fig. 8).<sup>29</sup> A very small number of the seals are executed in typical

Tang dynasty, but only cursory writing of the names as personal signature. That is why it was called ‘Flower-ya’ at that time. (唐人初未有押字，但草書其名，以為私記，故號花書)” (Ye and Yuwen 1983, 109).

<sup>25</sup> Tao commented in his book that “Nowadays Mongolian and Semuren who serve in the court are mostly illiterate thus they cannot write signature with characters, and hence they carve the seals with ivory or wood to print. Only those who serve as high officers reaching the first class, after received the imperial edict of permission, they are able to use the jade to make the seals. No exception exists. (今蒙古色目人之為官者，多不能執筆畫押，例以象牙或木刻而印之。宰輔及近侍官至一品者，得旨，則用玉圖書押字，非特賜不敢用)” (Tao 1998, 30-31). Although Tao’s linking of the usage of the seals among Mongolian Semuren with their “illiteracy” has a lack of historical support, at least his description gives evidence of the existence of the seals with non-character signatures among the Mongolian Semuren during the Yuan dynasty.

<sup>26</sup> See studies of Yuanya, such as Zhou (2001).

<sup>27</sup> In his article presented in *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters*, he adopts the common idea of the Nestorian seals (Yuanya) and thus describes these bronze pieces as follows: “Such bronze crosses were often used as seals” (Yan 2009, 388).

<sup>28</sup> According to James S. Ackerman, in *Art History*, a more appropriate term which should be used to replace the term “evolutionary trend” is the “context of creating.” I agree that the excessive concern of art historians with the so-called “historical development” of the artworks might have muffled both the artists and the works. Thus more attention to the context of the works and the artists should be more revealing. But in this case, the research object is not a single artwork reflecting an artist’s autonomy and an approachable context of creation. Instead, the context of the artworks in question refers more to a collective preference from a historical perspective, namely, the Chinese art history perspective (Ackerman 1960, 258-259).

<sup>29</sup> This is an interesting piece. The inscription “Fu” (福) might have led to the preferred Christian connotation since “Yelikewen” in Mongolian means “the blessing” or “the blessed one,” but when the “Fu” is combined with the phonetical

four-square composition (fig. 9), while some of the seals are designed freely without restrictions (fig. 10). Bronze is the main material, although some other copper alloys exist as well. Zinc alloy can be seen only in several pieces, with a bright yellow color which might lead to a relatively late dating, such as the Ming dynasty.

The inscriptions on these pieces are quite consistent with the well-studied pieces of Yuanya. For instance, there is the most common pattern of a family name decorated with a pictorial sign, indicating a private use of “Ya”—the private signature. Another popular pattern consists of two or four characters in Phags-pa inscribed on the pieces, sometimes in positive form, with the shape of a musical instrument such as Pi-pa or Bell (fig. 11), or of an animal, in this case, hares and possibly also birds, but the latter needs further study.



Fig. 9 Bronze seal with loop on the back, in four-square composition inscribed one lotus motif, one swastika, and two unidentifiable characters, bronze, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.



Fig. 10 Bronze seal with loop on the back, two Chinese characters “Jiu” (九) and “Ri” (日) inscribed, which means nine days in combination, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

model of the seals, but they are very commonly seen on the cross-shaped pieces, where the incision on the casting model is so deep that the depth of the engraving can reach 4mm and only leaves 0.5mm thickness for the backboard.

Furthermore, compared with the abovementioned Yuanya pieces, the cross-shaped ones, if they are really seals, are of a genre that is extremely rare in Chinese seal history. Some may explain the unusualness as a debt to the printing medium, since some believe that the cross-shaped “seals” are



Fig. 11 Bronze seal with loop on the back, Phags-pa character “Ji” (記) indicating to a private seal function on the lower part of the inscription with the phonetic Phags-pa family name on the above, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

designed to be printed on mud instead of paper, and they may find themselves supported by evidence such as Fr.

“Lu” as seen in this case, the “Fulu” should be interpreted as the traditional Chinese pattern, which is seen abundantly in Chinese fine art history, and that history should be retrieved to the Western Zhou period in its literary form, and the Warriors States period in seals (Gao 2004; Ma 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Gratitude here to professor Bao Xiang (包祥) from the Inner Mongolia University who has given generous help in identifying the Phags-pa inscriptions and has also confirmed the overt seal pieces to be Yuanya.

<sup>31</sup> Some further studies could be made in the future as a microstudy of the interpretation of these Yuanya. For example, some of the inscriptions seem to be related to the Western Xia and Jin dynasty, while some seem to have similarities with ancient Sanskrit or ancient Tibetan, and some of the Chinese characters indicating Chinese first names such as: 伍 and 呂 might have been echoed in historical records, and the other Chinese characters such as: 神 (god), 天 (day), 日 (sun), and 月 (moon) might have religious connotations if they are tested in the field of the history of folk religion. For example, a peculiar piece inscribed with the character for the sun and the moon, seems in its Daoist composition to have been influenced by Zoroastrian iconography.

Mostaert's witness, which will be mentioned later in this article. But this hypothesis still cannot give a satisfactory answer to the redundancy of the worked-out design, since the deeply-curved one has already facilitated the printing on hard mediums such as mud. And not only so, the distinctive reprocessing traces, especially with those worked-out pieces, on the surface of the backboard where the loop/loops were attached, and in some cases, the lack of harmony caused by the sullied worked-out design where the attached loop/loops stick out of the purposed hole (fig. 12), drives us to query the originality of the loop/loops, or of the worked-out design. Therefore, before more evidence is interrogated, we should not jump so readily from the hypothesis of the medium to an overall interpretation.



Fig. 12 Cross shape piece with loop on the back which sticking out of the hollowed area, Ordos Region, China. Collection of the University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong. Photo © The University Museum and Art Gallery, Hong Kong.

Having discussed the feeble logic behind the idea of Nestorian Crosses, I will now introduce more hard evidence to further challenge its rationale.

#### Inadequate archaeological context: an original assemblage?

It must be highlighted here that scholars such as P. M. Scott and A. C. Moule make the identification of these bronze pieces greatly dependent on the presumption that most, if not all, of the artefacts were excavated/picked up in the region of Ordos. In their understanding, the Ordos region used to be occupied by the Nestorian tribe, Öngüt, as Moule stated: "These bronze Crosses are said to be quite common in the district (Ordos), which was it will be remembered the home of the Christian tribe of the Öngüt in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries ..." Thus, in terms of their logic, the abundance of pieces discovered in that region makes the attribution of a Nestorian origin necessary.

An examination of the foregoing presumption must therefore be made here. The archaeological context for this collection, and for other collections of this kind around the world, is inevitably lost. Some indirectly-related information can be gleaned from informal records, for example, from the letters exchanged between the involved scholar and the collectors or the collectors' contemporaries. In one letter, Mark Brown's friend, Arthur B. Cool, who had greatly helped F. A. Nixon in collecting these bronze pieces and who was himself a numismatic expert, gives some information about the archaeological context, saying that "most of these Nestorian crosses were taken from excavations in Shansi province,<sup>32</sup> often there were coins, bronze flower vases, etc. dug up at the same time."<sup>33</sup>

Another more direct archaeological record shows that some of the so-called Nestorian Crosses were excavated in the region of present-day "Shaanxi" (Wang 1990, 109-112). But as usual, this record does not provide any precise information besides the name of the excavation site: Suide (綏德). More investigation of this record will be carried out in my future research.

<sup>32</sup> It is noteworthy that the "Shanxi" province in Cool's statement refers to present-day "Shanxi" province, which means it is not in any danger of being confused with the "Shaanxi" province of his time as well as of today, because at the time of the letter and in the earlier period when Cool befriended Nixon, the "Shanxi" remained "Shanxi," while nowadays "Shaanxi" has changed from its old name "Shenxi." This clarification is important for the further investigation of the excavation location.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Becool to Robert J. Bull, 16 October 1962. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University.

For now, it is sufficient to conclude that the generally accepted account that most, if not all, of these pieces were found in Ordos region, is problematic. Halbertsma is generally right when he comments that “to my knowledge, no ‘bronze Ordos Crosses’ have been excavated in Nestorian graves north of the Daqingshan mountains”(Halbertsma 2008, 298). Indeed, very few of the currently available excavation records of the relevant bronzes mention the Ordos region, except a contemporary missionary’s biographical narrative, which mentions very fleetingly that during one excursion to an “old city of Mongolia plains,” where “crosses were engraved on the corner stones of the foundations of their once big buildings,” he found a “Nestorian Crosses in bronze” which later became his personal possession (Mielke 2011, 86). He also comments that “the Nestorian cross in bronze has been found in many places there in Mongolia” (Mielke 2011, 86). Unfortunately, he does not provide more information about the treasure trove or how he found it. Furthermore, he does not mention where he got the idea of the “Nestorian cross in bronze” which would have been important information. For example, if he had read Fr. Mostaert’s testimony of contemporary Mongolians picking up the pieces from the desert and using them as seals on their doors with mud, his own narrative of picking up that piece should be questioned about whether or not it is a shaped narrative.

It is more likely that he might have got the idea from his good friend and companion, Dr Erickson, the Duke of Mongolia, who was commonly regarded as the expert on Mongolian history and hence on Mongolian religions and arts.

Given this missionary’s account is reliable and accurate, only one inference should be drawn, which is that the discovery of so-called Nestorian Crosses occurring in the region of Southern Mongolia is just one, and a very scarce one, of the records concerning this kind of discovery, thus it cannot be referenced as the necessary and sufficient condition for the heuristic link between the identity of the artefacts and the Ordos region.

As to why the so-called Nestorian Crosses were said to be found abundantly in the region of Ordos, there is a possibility that they were mostly found in the market or as possessions of local people, which has nothing to do with their excavation condition. Furthermore, one must notice that perhaps it was the demand for the bronze crosses among collectors and interested figures which expedited the maturity of the market in the Ordos region. In that sense, F. A. Nixon’s mention of his first stage of collecting in one of the letters should be taken into consideration. According to his recollection, after being inspired by Scott’s article, he went to the Ordos region for the treasure but found none. Later he ran across some of the pieces in Beijing’s market and curio shops.<sup>34</sup> This is also consistent with the fact that the earliest piece Menzies bought was in Peking in 1927 rather than in Ordos, long before Moule’s record (Menzies 1934, 5). On this, Menzies comments that before the year 1929, the so-called Nestorian Crosses phenomenon had already attracted the Chinese archaeologists’ attention (Menzies 1934, 5). From the above we know that the Ordos market of the so-called Nestorian Crosses became increasingly profitable all of sudden, probably due to its appeal to the buyers; and there is no decisive evidence to prove that it was the original market.

Interesting information provided by W. R. Taylor talks about “the natives who hand them down from father to son as heirlooms or bury them piously with their dead are ignorant of their origin and call them ‘arrows of Heaven’” (Taylor 1938, 58). But Taylor does not attribute this piece of information to any oral or written resource, which puts its credibility at stake.

Another piece of information considered as being directly related to the archaeological context, and one that is absorbed by many scholars, such as Yang Chuntang,<sup>35</sup> in their

<sup>34</sup> F. A. Nixon to Robert Bull, 20 November 1963. The university archive, the Methodist Historical Center, Drew University.

<sup>35</sup> In his article, he jumps from Fr. A. Mostaert’s description to his hypothesis of the original function of the so-called Nestorian Crosses, which is that the ancient Nestorian Mongolians sealed their doors with these bronze seals and for this purpose they created them. Obviously he has adopted Fr. A. Mostaert’s description as direct archaeological evidence, and by doing so, has reached the anachronistic conclusion. See Yang (1978, 66).

argumentation, is the frequently-quoted missionary's description from Fr. A. Mostaert. According to A. C. Moule, Fr. Mostaert gave the following information:

The Mongols constantly dig them up from old graves and elsewhere; they know nothing about their history, but wear them on their girdles, especially the women. When they leave home to take their sheep to graze, they close their doors, and seal them with mud or clay, in the same way as other people use ordinary seals. (Moule 1930, 92)

However, to employ archaeological thinking, I argue that it is more appropriate to take Fr. Mostaert's witness to be to one of the post-depositional processes which have affected the distribution pattern, along with some other disturbances, e.g., the authentic excavation information has been destroyed by dealers and by their circulation of the bronze pieces as discussed above. Furthermore, one should be sceptical about taking Fr. Mostaert's information as evidence for an anthropological analogy to approach to the possible original function of these bronze pieces, because there is no necessary cultural and liturgical link between the Mongolians of Fr. Mostaert's time and the original creators of these bronze pieces.

Furthermore, if these bronze pieces are really crosses and indeed belong to Mongolian Nestorianism of the Yuan dynasty, one can still look to two resources: firstly, the record of how Mongolian Nestorians<sup>36</sup> were using the cross icon during the Yuan dynasty, as preserved in the *Zhishun Zhenjiang Zhi* (The Annals of Zhenjiang of the Zhishun Period), as mentioned previously. This work gives a very different picture from the one witnessed by Fr. Mostaert, and most importantly, it does not mention the "cross-shaped seals" at all.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, one can look at the developing study of the gravesites of the Mongolian Nestorians, which testifies that the iconography of Mongolian Nestorians is quite different from that of the bronze pieces in question. I will elaborate on the second point in future articles.

Another case perceived by many as side-evidence for the archaeological context of F. A. Nixon's bronze pieces, and which hence could be used as an indirect analogy, is the cross-shaped bronze item excavated from the north grotto of Dunhuang. Dunhuang is not far from Ordos and was once the most important town on the silk route and hence brought together both western and eastern cultural influences in its religious art. According to Peng Jinzhang and Jiang Boqin, the Dunhuang bronze cross should belong to the Nestorian heritage possessed by and then buried with the owner, who was probably one of the Dunhuang artisans. The dating of this Dunhuang Nestorian Cross is of the Western-Xia period, using relative dating by the funeral coins.

In identifying this piece to be a Nestorian Cross, Peng and Jiang's rationale is problematic. Firstly, they took for granted that the cross-shaped exclusively belongs to Christianity, the erroneous presupposition previously mentioned. Secondly, they paid insufficient attention to the assemblage, such as bronze bracelets, which was discovered along with the Nestorian Cross in the

<sup>36</sup> The idea of Mongolian Nestorian comes because the book mentions belief in a "long-live-heaven (長生天)" in the relevant community and also names the community as "Yelikewen (也里可溫)." All these points refer to a Mongolian Nestorian identity. See Yu (1279-1368, 367).

<sup>37</sup> The book mentions that "the cross-shaped, resembling the human body, is decorated on architecture and painted in the hall; worn on the hat, or worn as breastplate. It sets the standard (center) for the four directions (or for the whole universe). (十字者, 取像人身, 揭於屋, 繪於殿, 冠於首, 佩於胸, 四方上下, 以是為準)" (Yu 1279-1368, 367). My translation "四方上下, 以是為準" into "It sets the standard (center) for the four directions (or for the whole universe)" is based on verses found on the well-known Daqin Jingjiao Stele inscription which is in harmony with the former one: "Set out the cross as the center for the four directions (or the universe) (判十字以定四方)" and "testify the cross as the center to unite without limitation the four lights from four directions (印持十字融四照以合無拘)." Some scholars have compared the above two inscriptions already (Zhu 2002, 630). The second sentence has been translated by A. C. Moule as "The figure of ten which is held as a seal lightens the four quarters to unite all without exception" (Moule 1931, 79). But in ancient Chinese, "印持" does not mean "held as a seal." This needs to be formally discussed in an article about the relations between the different texts, including written and visual texts, concerning the "cross" icon in Nestorianism.

same pit, and which could have reinforced or undermined the Christian identity of the so-called cross. Thirdly, they did not appeal to the famous Nestorian Crosses collections around the world for comparison, such as the well-studied Mongolian Nestorian relics in Southern Mongolia, and the Nestorian relics in Quanzhou. The comparative approach is usually regarded as one of the useful methods in the Art History, especially in a case with such a poor original context. Fourthly, they did not find enough evidence for suggesting a seriation of the material culture or art history of the Western-Xia or Nestorian Nomads, thus the relative dating they adopted depending wholly on the coin is weak in evidence. And lastly, on the data analysis level, they did not sufficiently conduct the micro-analysis, for example, examine the back surface of the cross, or the crack on the edge, etc..<sup>38</sup> Based on all the unfinished work listed above, before more solid conclusions about the identity of the so-called Dunhuang Nestorian Cross is made, the Dunhuang Cross, no matter whether an authentic Nestorian relic or not, cannot be taken as the reference point for other Nestorian relic study at the current stage, nor can its archaeological record, although it is relatively clear so far.

## Conclusion

It is worth mentioning that although the discussion about the diversity of the cross-shaped pieces has been relatively brief in this article, this does not imply that the cross-shaped pieces in the relevant collection are not diverse, nor does it suggest that this discussion is less important in the cross-shaped topic. The current arrangement of the argumentation is because, compared to the other two groups, namely the bird-shaped pieces and the Yuanya, the prevailing interpretation of the cross-shaped pieces relies heavily on the unwarranted presupposition that “all cross-shapes refer to Christianity.” Analysis of the innate characteristics of the cross-shaped pieces in the relevant collection, (diversity is one of them), will receive full treatment in my next article.

In the above discussion I have scrutinized the logic of the idea of Nestorian Crosses and its application to the identification of the bronze pieces in question, the influences co-working on the forming of such an idea, and the fundamental question about its legitimacy from the point of view of hard evidence. During the discussion, the methodology issue has been raised only slightly, but it certainly deserves full consideration, since, as briefly suggested, the major challenge to the mainstream practice of the study of the Jingjiao artefacts results from inadequate methodology. To this end, I have suggested in another article that the iconographical methodology, the interdisciplinary art historical methodology, and other methodologies commonly adopted in the study of religious art should be taken seriously in relation to the present study (Chen 2015). Only with systematic and rigorous interrogation and with abstinence from the permeating propensity, can one pay the appropriate respect to the idea of Nestorian Crosses. By eliminating unwarranted assertions, one can envisage not only the challenge, but also those elements which might eventually serve as supporting evidence for the idea.

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<sup>38</sup> For more detailed discussion on this topic, see Chen (2015, 15-17).

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# FAITH FORMATION IN PLURALISTIC INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

Faith formation is an integral part of evangelization, since it provides the foundation for a Christian's faith. The mission of the Church is to build the Kingdom of God in our society, and relevant faith formation supports and helps in the realization of this mission. Indonesia is marked by a diversity of religions, faiths and cultures, as well as mass poverty. For this reason, the church needs to develop a variety of faith formation strategies suitable for such a pluralistic situation. Faith formation should be ecumenical, dialogical and inculturated. It should be social, through cultivating an attitude of solidarity towards the poor, and it should also be responsive to ecological problems. In following these ways, faith formation can have the transformative power to realize the Kingdom of God anywhere in society.

## Introduction

The Church needs to pay attention to faith formation, because it is so important in providing the foundation for faith. In this study, I explore the dynamics of faith formation in the pluralistic society of Indonesia. Before explaining faith formation in the Indonesian context, I clarify the meaning and importance of faith formation through the lens of the documents of the Catholic Church. I provide background on the situation in Indonesia and explore the views of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, before finally proposing some models of faith formation for Indonesia.

## Faith Formation

Faith formation in the Catholic Church is known as "catechesis," which is derived from the Greek word *κατήχησις*, meaning "instruction by word of mouth." The word was later used by Christians as a special term in the field of evangelization. In Scripture, catechesis is understood as teaching, deepening and educating in faith so that people will become more mature in their faith (see Luke 1:4; Acts 18:25; Acts 21:21; Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:19; and Gal. 6:6). All the efforts of proclaiming the Gospel and Church teaching are called catechesis (Rukiyanto 2012, 59).

In his 1979 Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II defines catechesis as "an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (John Paul II 1979, 18).

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic Church has paid more attention to faith formation (Rukiyanto 2012, 57-58) and has produced several documents on the subject.

First is the *General Catechetical Directory*, prepared by the Congregation for the Clergy, approved by Pope Paul VI on March 18, 1971, and promulgated on April 11, 1971 (Congregation for the Clergy 1971). This document is the response of Paul VI to the mandate of the Second Vatican Council in *Christus Dominus* (the Decree on the Bishops) to develop practical guidelines for faith formation, in terms of both the content and the method used when witnessing to the Catholic faith.

Then, in 1975, Pope Paul VI promulgated the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, which is a *magna carta* for evangelization. Regarding faith formation, Paul VI notes that through “catechetical instruction” people learn “the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history. No one will deny that this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional” (Paul VI 1975, 44).

In 1979, Pope John Paul II issued the Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, in which he develops Paul VI’s teaching on faith formation, acknowledging faith formation as a “stage” of evangelization. The aim of faith formation is “the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know His ‘mystery,’ the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him” (John Paul II 1979, 20).

One important contribution of *Catechesi Tradendae* is its recommendation that faith formation be joined with the Church’s work for ecumenical unity. The document urges that faith formation give “a correct and fair presentation of the other churches and ecclesial communities that the Spirit of Christ does not refrain from using as means of salvation” (John Paul II 1979, 32). More significantly, it suggests that in situations of religious plurality, it is necessary to have certain @rt5texperiences of collaboration in the field of faith formation between Catholics and other Christians, complementing the normal faith formation that must in any case be given to Catholics (John Paul II 1979, 33).

In 1985, the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops called for the issuing of a general catechism. In response to this call, Pope John Paul II published the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992. It is the lasting legacy of his pontificate that John Paul II urges the Church’s pastors and the Christian faithful to “receive this catechism assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life” (Catholic Church 1993).

To revise the *General Catechetical Directory*, the Congregation for the Clergy issued the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) on August 15, 1997, as a guide and means for the Church to fulfill the basic responsibility of teaching the faith. GDC is intended for the bishops, the Conference of Bishops, and all those involved in the work of faith formation. The *General Directory* is also useful for priests and catechists (Congregation for the Clergy 1998, 11). The instructions within provide directions on how to teach the faith and how to understand the truth and virtues as matters of teaching the faith. Finally, the GDC can help prepare catechisms and catechetical instructions at the level of particular churches (Conference of Bishops).

The present Pope Francis also pays attention to faith formation. First of all, the Pope recognizes the importance of faith. *Lumen Fidei*—the “Light of Faith” is the first encyclical signed by Pope Francis in 2013. Pope Francis explains that this encyclical supplements Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI’s encyclicals on charity and hope (Francis 2013b, 7). Pope Francis adds “few contributions” to the “first draft” of the encyclical on faith, which was written by Benedict XVI (Francis 2013b, 7). Pope Francis issued *Lumen Fidei* during the Year of Faith (2013) in order to inform people of an urgent need to understand the value and importance of faith in today’s world.

Faith has the characteristic of light, and is able to illuminate human existence and assist us in distinguishing good from evil. This is especially true in this modern age, in which belief is opposed to searching, and faith is regarded as an illusion impeding human freedom. In the Year of Faith,

fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, which was a “Council on faith,” we need to broaden the horizons of faith, so that it might be confessed in unity and with integrity.

Faith in Jesus and love for others in Him gives us a new vision of the world. *Lumen Fidei* shows how faith should become the foundation of our societies, marriages and families. Faith also provides strength in suffering. Faith does not answer every question, but it provides a lamp to help us navigate through the darkness, in the presence of God who is personally with us in our suffering. Finally, faith is not a condition to be taken for granted, but rather is a gift from God, to be nurtured and reinforced (Francis 2013b, 6). Faith formation is thus very important as a means of nurturing and reinforcing faith.

The first teaching document, mainly authored by Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, is a reminder to Catholics about their task of mission. Pope Francis begins this 2013 apostolic exhortation with a challenge to all Christians, saying, “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (Francis 2013a).

Pope Francis criticizes the “spiritual worldliness” of his fellow Catholics, and emphasizes the need for reform in the Church. He invites people to engage in mission and embark on a journey of transformation and reform. He calls for renewal and a rethinking of the way every person and every institution lives their faith. Pope Francis sees the Christian life as based on knowing and experiencing God’s love, mercy and salvation, offered to all through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Evangelization programs and faith formation must therefore be designed to help people return to that basic knowledge and experience and also help them to understand Church teaching in light of God revealing Himself as loving and merciful.

Pope Francis reminds us that the foundation of Christianity is the love of Christ. He writes, “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (Francis 2013a, 164). In every program, every inspirational conference, in politics or in personal matters, we do what we do because Jesus Christ loves us, because he gave his life to save us. This is a reality that happens every day: Jesus is living at our side every day—made present mysteriously through the sacraments and made personal through our prayer (O’Shea 2015). There may be struggle, and there will be personal transformation in our lives, for Christ stands by us to enlighten, strengthen and free us. This is a call that we should live our faith out ourselves and give witness to others. Faith formation therefore consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma*. The centrality of the *kerygma* is what we need today:

It has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental (Francis 2013a, 165).

Pope Francis also pays attention to the moral component of faith formation, which “promotes growth in fidelity to the Gospel way of life...the attractiveness and the ideal of a life of wisdom, self-fulfillment and enrichment” (Francis 2013a, 168). The one who follows Christ needs to change his or her behavior. This is the motive for rejecting the evils and sins that endanger our life with Christ, as the Gospel of John says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15) (O’Shea 2015).

Pope Francis affirms that in proclaiming Christ, we are not only concerned with what is right and good, but also with the beautiful. He notes that “every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus” (Francis 2013a, 167). Expressions of beauty are a means by which catechists can attract the attention of their students, by appealing to their senses with visual images, works of art, signs and symbols. Students who cannot be reached by words can often be touched by beautiful images or art works. Pope Francis therefore advises that a journey along the *via pulchritudinis* (the way of beauty) ought to be part of faith formation.

Finally, Pope Francis offers a methodology for faith formation, which he calls mystagogical renewal. “This basically has to do with two things: a progressive experience of formation involving the entire community, and a renewed appreciation of the liturgical signs of Christian initiation” (Francis 2013a, 166). Mystagogical renewal aims to emphasize the link between the Scriptures and the liturgy: to understand the Word of God, we need to appreciate and experience the essential meaning and value of the liturgy (O’Shea 2015).

In 2015, Pope Francis issued an encyclical on the environment, entitled *Laudato Si*, or more formally, “On Care for Our Common Home.” *Laudato Si* means “Praise be to you” which is the first line of a canticle by St. Francis of Assisi that praises God with all of his creation. In this document, Pope Francis addresses his message, not only to the bishops of the Church or the lay faithful, as with other papal documents, but to all people: “In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (Francis 2015b, 3). The reason is clear—environmental challenges affect all people: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (Francis 2015b, 14).

In this document, Pope Francis calls all people to conversion, including those in the Church:

The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience (Francis 2015b, 217).

Pope Francis sees that responsibility within creation and duty towards nature and the Creator, are essential aspects of the faith. Pope Francis recalls that from the beginning, “other Churches and Christian communities—and other religions as well—have also expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections” on the theme of ecology (Francis 2015b, 7). This encyclical provides a foundation of faith and morals that can be brought into action to save the environment for the sake of humanity’s future. Pope Francis reminds us to stop treating the earth as an inheritance that can be exploited for the sake of the moment, and instead bequeath the earth to the next generation. Pope Francis refers to the message of the Scriptures that we need to take care of the earth (Gn. 2:15). We are not only responsible for tending the earth for the sake of our own generation, but also maintaining it for the next generation. Faith formation thus also needs to address our responsibility within creation and our duty towards nature.

Pope Francis set the year 2016 as the Year of Mercy, by issuing the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* (Francis. 2015a). Notwithstanding experiences of suffering such as the Shoah and Hiroshima; mass starvation while the rich want for nothing; and wars, terrorism and all manner of other horrors, Pope Francis nevertheless invites us to look to the “wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace” that is God’s mercy, not just as individuals but as a Church.

In the Holy Year of 2016, Pope Francis invited us to open our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: those who live in uncertain and painful situations; those who are wounded; and those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich. Pope Francis called the Church to heal these wounds during the Jubilee, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. We were called to open our eyes and to see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and to recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help (The Divine Mercy 2015).

The Church is always called to make herself a servant of this love and mediate it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of self. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy. Mercy should be part of our existence as Christians. Pope Francis raised mercy up during the Holy year of 2016, in order to remind us of the centrality of mercy to the Gospel message of Jesus, and the need that it also be central to our lives as Christians (Reese 2015). This is how Pope Francis invites us to live out our faith according to the Gospel.

Faith formation is thus found in acts of mercy. Having explored the meaning of faith formation in the Catholic tradition in some depth, I now turn to the situation in Indonesia, the context where this faith formation is to take place.

## **The Situation in Indonesia**

With a population of more than 260 million (2016 estimation), Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation after China, India and the United States. More than 63 percent of the population is concentrated on the islands of Java and Madura. Approximately 87 percent are Muslim, about 9 percent are Christian (6.42 percent Protestant and 2.58 percent Roman Catholic), while approximately 2 percent are Hindu, 1 percent Buddhist, and the final percent is made up of indigenous religions (Rukiyanto 2007a, 109-110).

It is important to note that in Indonesia, Islam has several distinct branches and sects. In this regard, it differs significantly from Arab nations in the Middle East. Based on demographic statistics, 99 percent of Indonesian Muslims mainly follow the Shafi'i school of Sunni jurisprudence, although when asked, 56 percent say they do not adhere to any specific denomination. There are around one million Shias (0.5 percent), concentrated around Jakarta, and about 400,000 Ahmadi Muslims (0.2 percent). The remaining 0.3 percent are adherents of other branches, including Wahhabism/Salafism. In general, Muslims in Indonesia can be categorized in terms of two orientations: "modernists," who closely adhere to orthodox theology while embracing modern learning (Muhamadiyah), and "traditionalists," who tend to follow the interpretations of local religious leaders and religious teachers at Islamic boarding schools (Nahdlatul Ulama) (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. s.v. "Islam in Indonesia.").

Claiming approximately forty million followers, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is the country's largest organization, and perhaps the world's largest Islamic group. Founded in 1926, NU has a nationwide presence, but remains strongest in rural Java. It follows the ideology of Ahle Sunnahwal Jamaah, with the Sufism of Imam Ghazali and Junaid Bagdadi. Many NU followers defer greatly to the views, interpretations, and instructions of senior NU religious figures, alternately called "Kyaïs" or "Ulama." The organization has long advocated religious moderation and communal harmony.

Muhammadiyah has branches throughout the country and approximately twenty-nine million followers. Founded in 1912, Muhammadiyah runs mosques, prayer houses, clinics, orphanages, poorhouses, schools, public libraries, and universities.

Indonesia thrives on its cultural diversity, which is systematically preserved through a policy of multiculturalism. This commitment to multiculturalism is expressed in Indonesia's national motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*, which means "Unity in Diversity." (Rukiyanto 2007a, 110)

The state ideology is known as *Pancasila* (pronounced as *Panchaseelah*) and includes five inseparable and mutually qualifying fundamental principles: belief in (1) one supreme God; (2) a just and civilized humanity; (3) the unity of Indonesia; (4) democracy through deliberation and consensus among representatives; and (5) social justice for all people of Indonesia. *Pancasila* is thus the foundation for social life.

Since 2001, a stable government has enabled GDP per capita growth to increase to \$1300 in 2004/05 from just \$650 in 1998. On an international scale, Indonesia remains a poor country, however. Much of the country's infrastructure is still inferior compared to the developed world and is in need of major improvement. The country also suffers from wide regional disparities, with great divergences in gross regional domestic product per person and in other welfare measures, such as health and education (Hadi Soesastro 1997, 7; Hill 1996, 214-216). Lacking political power, the poor are sometimes treated unjustly, such as in the relocation of urban squatters, or the eviction of tenant farmers from their land (Hill 1996, 198). The incidence of malnutrition, both mild and severe, is widespread, especially in poor rural communities and in some regions outside Java (Hill 1996, 200). In June 2005, all media in Indonesia (*Kompas*, June 9-10, 14-16, 2005; *The Jakarta Post*, June 20, 2005) reported the widespread incidence of cases of acute malnutrition in West Nusa Tenggara, east of Bali. As of May 31, 487 children under five in the province were recorded as suffering from acute malnutrition, with 41 already dead. This breaking news was followed by news of similar cases in other provinces: Central Java, Lampung, Jakarta, South and West Sumatra, South Sulawesi, and Riau. In East Nusa Tenggara, of the 6,502 health centers in the province, only 40 percent are still functioning—60 percent have long been inactive. The still-active health centers in the wider Nusa Tenggara region recorded 66,833 children under five as suffering from malnutrition in various degrees. Including the probable 50-60 percent of children with no access to health centers, the number was estimated to be at least double that. Even in Jakarta, the Jakarta City Health Agency reports that 8,455 children under five are suffering from malnutrition. The hundreds of children suffering from chronic malnutrition in those provinces should be considered just the tip of the iceberg. There are many other children in remote rural areas or in urban slums in Indonesia who are likely to be ill with symptoms of malnutrition that go unreported, because their parents lack access to adequate treatment and prevention programs. Sri Palupi of the Jakarta-based Institute for Eco-social Rights, who has long documented malnutrition cases, noted that as early as 1988 there were 1.2 million children under four in Indonesia suffering from malnutrition. The utilization of health services is also low by international standards: Indonesia has only 0.6 hospital beds per 1,000 people (Hill 1996, 213).

The monetary and economic crisis that has plagued Indonesia since July 1997 has caused many more problems, not only economic, but also social, cultural, and political, including human rights abuses. Thus, since the fall of Soeharto, Indonesia has inherited a multi-dimensional crisis from thirty years of military dictatorship under Soeharto's government (Magnis-Suseno 2004, 41, 86-87, 97-102). Economically, the Indonesian currency of the *Rupiah* has lost 75 percent of its value. When it comes to politics, democracy in Indonesia remains fragile. The military is also still searching for its form in a democratic era. Military personnel continue involvement in criminal and human rights abuses, especially in Aceh and West Papua. Corruption remains widespread at all levels of society. There is no certainty in law. In big cities, violence and crime continue to increase.

The situation in Aceh is better now. After being hit by the December 2004 tsunami, there was a peace agreement between the government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), mediated by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on August 15, 2005. The peace has held in Aceh since December 2006. On February 8, 2007, Irwandi Yusuf, the former GAM leader, became the first governor of Aceh in the first direct election (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. s.v. "Aceh.").

The greatest challenge for Indonesia is communal conflicts, which happen everywhere—clashes between rival villages, clashes between ethnic groups, and clashes between religious groups (especially between Christians and Muslims)—known as SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar-golongan*, ethnic groups, religions, race, and classes). During the religious conflicts in 1998, many churches were burned or closed (Tahalele 1998, 1). Since November of that year, many more houses, churches, mosques, and schools were burned during clashes between Christians and Muslims in Jakarta, Kupang, Ujungpandang, Poso, and Bekasi (*Asiaweek*, December 18, 1998). According to the Indonesian Christian Communication Forum (FKKI), under Soekarno's government there were only two churches destroyed, while during Soeharto's regime there were 456 churches destroyed or burned, and during the one year of Habibie's government, 153 churches were destroyed or burned. These tragedies continued under Presidents Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati.

The most tragic incident was the clash between Christians and Muslims in Ambon and other parts of the Maluku archipelago, where previously the people had lived peacefully for a long time, making the area a symbol of peace and harmony between the two religious groups. More than 700 people were reported killed during clashes during the holy season for both Christians (Christmas) and Muslims (Ramadhan) between the end of December 1999 and January 2000. It was the latest communal bloodshed in a conflict that rocked the Maluku for more than a year, killing more than 2,000 people. These incidents prompted Muslim protest movements in many parts of the country. In Mataram, the capital of the West Nusa Tenggara island of Lombok, this movement led to twelve churches being burned and vandalized, and many houses and shops looted and burned. Thousands of Christian residents fled their homes to seek refuge in Bali or at the local military and naval bases (*Kompas*, January 19, 2000; *The Jakarta Post*, January 23, 2000).

Terrorism is thus still a fatal threat in Indonesia. Almost every year since 2000 there have been bomb attacks: at eleven churches across the country on Christmas Eve (December 25, 2000); in Bali (October 12, 2002); in front of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta (August 5, 2003); outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (September 9, 2004); in Tentena, Central Sulawesi (May 28, 2005); in Bali again (October 1, 2005); suicide bombings in the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton Hotels in Jakarta (July 17, 2009); a suicide bomb in the Full Gospel Bethel Church in Kepunton, Solo, Central Java (September 25, 2011); and bombs near a Starbucks cafe in central Jakarta (January 14, 2016). The attacks have been blamed on *Jemaah Islamiyah*, a regional *al Qaeda*-linked terror group (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. s.v. "List of Terrorist Incidents in Indonesia").

Related to this conflict is another most fundamental challenge to restoring the rule of law (Ricklefs 2001, 421). The police and legal institutions were corrupted during the Soekarno and Suharto years. Almost the entire legal system needs rebuilding. Corruption, military excesses, mob violence, vigilante law, communal conflict, and general insecurity of persons and property will not be alleviated without thorough-going reforms to restore the rule of law. The barriers to such change are great however, including tainted judges and police, and large amounts of money in the hands of corruptors.

Social and political conflicts sometimes have religious overtones and turn into bloody inter-religious violence (Ricklefs 2001, 415-420). Riots in Jakarta in November 1998 caused the destruction of a mosque, eleven churches, two Christian schools, vehicles and other property, and the burning of more than a dozen Christians (mainly Ambonese). From early 1999 there was major Christian-Muslim conflict in Ambon and surrounding areas. By March 1999, large-scale demonstrations in Jakarta were calling for a *jihad* (holy war) to defend the Muslims in Ambon against Christian attacks. One of Islam's more radical bodies, KISDI (*Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam* or the Indonesian Committee for the Solidarity of the Islamic World), decreed in August 1999 that the conflict in Ambon was already a true holy war for Muslims. An organization called *Laskar Jihad* (Holy War Soldiers) sprang up in 2000 to implement that war.



Islamic radicalism emerged after the fall of Suharto, because of the government's failure to enforce the law and resolve social ills such as ethno-religious conflicts, increased crime, rampant corruption (including the police), widespread drug abuse, and the decline of central government authority. Many are new groups. Some observers assert that these groups have been sponsored, or at least helped by, certain circles of the Indonesian military. They are led by people of Arab, particularly Yemeni origin, such as Habib Rizq Shihab, leader of the FPI (Islamic Defense Group); Jafar Umar Thalib, leader of Laskar Jihad; Abu Bakar Baasir of the MMI (Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters); and HabibHusen al-Habsyi, leader of the JAMI (Jamaah al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia). These groups share a literal interpretation of Islam and claim that Muslims should embrace only *pure* Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, or Salaf. They can thus be included among the Salafi activist movements that attack discotheques and brothels. They also take a militant view of *jihad* as holy war against perceived enemies of Islam, rather than the mainstream view of *jihad* as "exerting oneself to the utmost" in Muslim activities, with war as a last resort. The minority groups, like Ahmadis, Protestants, Catholics and Chinese, have become the target of the extremists or the fundamentalists.

## Environmental Challenges

Another challenge for Indonesia is the frequent occurrence of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, flood and volcanic eruptions, which can happen at any time. This situation is worsening, because people are unable to protect the environment, which in turn can lead to human-induced disasters. As a consequence, Indonesia has become a land of tragedy. For example, in 2010, just after the tragedy of flooding in Wasior, West Papua, an earthquake-triggered tsunami hit Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra. While we were still shocked by those disasters, Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta erupted. Hundreds of people have been killed in these calamities. Natural disasters have become a great challenge for Indonesians. Environmentalists insist that the fatal flash floods were caused by environmental degradation in the area (*The Jakarta Post*, October 15, 2010).

In December 2014, floods in Indonesia's Aceh province in the northern tip of Sumatra Island displaced more than 120,966 people. The waters submerged land by up to 400 cm in the districts of North Aceh and East Aceh. The floods mainly affected the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, the districts of Aceh Tamiang, South Aceh, Pidie, and Lhoksemawe (Recent Natural Disasters 2014).

In June 2016, parts of Indonesia were plagued by successive earthquakes with a 6.5 magnitude earthquake shaking the region of West Sumatra and Bengkulu on June 2, 2016. Then on June 8, 2016, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake hit North Maluku and Manado. The third earthquake, with a magnitude of 6.0, occurred on June 9, 2016 in the Indian Ocean, crashing outside the subduction zone of south Lombok and with tremors felt in Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa and part of East Java. As a result of these calamities, dozens of houses were damaged and a number of people injured (Muhammad Ali 2016).

Natural catastrophes damage property and halt economic activity, which results in significant financial loss for the people. Furthermore, these series of natural disasters create burdens for the national budget in terms of financing post-disaster rehabilitation. On a macro scale, the increase in natural disasters in this country directly affects the number of people living in poverty. If deforestation is the cause, it is understandable that the government should be criticized for its incompetence in preventing deforestation through activities such as illegal logging. Yet when natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions occur, the government frequently reacts by arguing that there is nothing that can be done to prevent the disasters. This may not be completely inaccurate; nevertheless, there may well be a lack of preparedness in dealing with such crises before they occur.

What happened in Mentawai reveals a real lack of disaster management. The tsunami warning was canceled, ostensibly because there was no report of a potential tsunami in Mentawai Islands.

In fact, the problem was that tsunami early detection warning systems had not been established in Mentawai, one of the islands most vulnerable to tsunamis. Consequently, hundreds of people were killed by the high waves that swept villages. We need to question the government's commitment to providing disaster evacuation procedures and infrastructure (*The Jakarta Post*, November 2, 2010).

In light of the foregoing, the Indonesian Church needs to develop an open and multicultural faith formation program to educate young people in openness and inclusiveness towards diversity and pluralism. The church needs to develop a faith formation model that is based in such attitudes, as well as being rooted in faith. This kind of faith formation will help each Indonesian citizen develop the sort of openness and inclusiveness that can facilitate people living together in harmony and peace, and working together to build the Indonesian nation. Before explaining how such faith formation in Indonesia should be developed, I explore the view of faith formation found in documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

### **Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Documents on Faith Formation**

In this section I refer to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) because of their important role in the Asian Church. The Federation is a "voluntary association of episcopal conferences in South, Southeast, East and Central Asia...[aiming] to foster among its members solidarity and co-responsibility for the welfare of Church and society in Asia, and to promote and defend whatever is for the greater good" (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences 2004, art. 1A). At present, there are fourteen full member conferences: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam; and eleven associate members that are not full episcopal conferences: Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and East Timor (Chia 2003, 155). As an association, the FABC is characterized by flexibility and dynamism (Quatra 2000, 10-11). Its decisions therefore do not assume a "juridical binding force," but their acceptance is an "expression of collegial responsibility" (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences 2004, art. 1B). The autonomy of each bishop is safeguarded and respected (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences 2004, art. 3). The first goal of the FABC is to develop and strengthen the sense of collegiality among the bishops for the benefit of both intra-ecclesial relationships in Asia and societal relationships at large. The Asian bishops have uniquely developed their collegiality as both *diffusive* and *open* (Quatra 2000, 11). It is *diffusive*, because it includes all the components of the people of God in making decisions (participatory style of intra-ecclesial) and goes beyond the borders of the continent, as stated in Final Reflections of the Seventh Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA VII) no. 21 (Rosales and Arevalo 1992, 233). It is also *open* to ecumenical and interreligious dimensions. Ecumenical efforts have been developing since 1987, when the FABC and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) organized the Sixth Bishops' Institute for Inter-Religious Affairs (BIRA IV/6) (Rosales and Arevalo 1992, 303-305). In 1993, the Asian Ecumenical Committee was created at a joint meeting of the FABC and CCA to coordinate ecumenical cooperation. This collegiality is always at the service of human development and justice.

The FABC and its statements have deeply influenced Catholicism in Asia, in terms of both theological reflection and praxis (Chia 2003, 162-163). The FABC's activities have motivated the Churches in Asia towards "a new way of being Church, a Church that is committed to becoming a community of communities and a credible sign of salvation and liberation" (Final Statement of the Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly, art. 3) (Eilers 1997, 3). The FABC statements have a compelling power for transforming the Church as well as Asian society. Their focus is mainly pastoral, not doctrinal, and deals with missionary themes and concerns (Putranta 1992, 268). These pronouncements help churches live out the message of the Gospel in Asian contexts and realities.

Their message and orientation undoubtedly have value and inspirational power, which comes from below, from experiences and learning processes, and is never imposed from above. Therefore, even though the FABC statements and decisions have no juridical binding force, over the years most episcopal conferences throughout Asia have affirmed FABC teachings and messages, and have put them into practice in their local churches. Bishop Oswald Gomis (Sri Lanka), who was elected secretary general of the FABC at the 2000 FABC VII Plenary Assembly, confirms that over thirty years the FABC has attempted to respond to “specific regional socio-pastoral and spiritual needs as Asian Church,” and has made progress in helping local churches become rooted in their local cultures, by continuing to provide “the effective interpretation of Jesus’ message and the Church’s teaching in response to the problems and realities of Asia” (UCA News 2000).

For the Asian Church, the *missio Dei* is carried out in the form of dialogue: the dialogue of life lived together, of common action, of shared religious experience, and of theological exchange. This fourfold dialogue is performed in three areas: dialogue with Asian peoples, especially the poor (liberation); with Asian religions (interreligious dialogue); and with Asian cultures (inculturation) (Phan 2003, 10).

The FABC affirms that the primary task of evangelization in Asia is to build a truly local church, to make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of the people (Rosales and Arevalo 1992, 14). Its aim is to transform the churches *in* Asia into the churches *of* Asia. Inculturation is the way to achieve this goal of churches becoming local churches.

Inculturation is an integral and constitutive dimension of the Church’s evangelizing mission (Phan 2003, 5-10). Inculturation is a double process comprising (a) the insertion of the Gospel into a particular culture, and (b) the introduction of that culture into the Gospel. The result of inculturation is both the transformation of the culture from within the Gospel, and the enrichment of the Gospel by the culture leading to new ways of understanding and living the Christian faith. The result is something new that goes beyond the current culture and the previous ways of understanding and living the Gospel.

Since the Gospel is always enfleshed in a particular culture, inculturation is *necessary* and must abide by the laws and dynamics of *intercultural dialogue*. The task of inculturation is therefore to discern the Gospel apart from the cultural forms in which it is clothed and to relate to or express it in new cultural forms. Since religion is a constitutive dimension of culture, inculturation necessarily involves *interreligious dialogue*. It must therefore deal with some theological issues, such as the universality and uniqueness of Christ as the savior; the status of non-Christian religions as ways of salvation; the inspired character of their sacred scriptures; and the salvific values of their rituals and religious practices. Inculturation must also include *liberation*, because often it is the culture of poor, colonized, and marginalized people that has been suppressed and needs to be retrieved and promoted.

The principle agent of inculturation is the local church, and not the experts and the central authorities. By *local church* I mean both the diocesan community and the parish community. To the extent that inculturation involves the whole people of God, it must be an expression of the community’s life (Schineller 1990, 50-51). Furthermore, as noted by Pope John Paul II in his discourse to the bishops of Zaire on April 12, 1983, inculturation must be carried out in all areas of Church life: in language, in faith formation, in theological reflection, in prayer, in liturgy, in art, and in the institutions.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) affirms the societal realities affecting the catechetical ministry in Asia, on Scriptures, youth and adult catechesis (Cajilig 1996, 283). Christian faith formation therefore needs to be open to the situation of the particular society.

Each particular church in Asia needs to have its own local catechism. The history of catechisms written both in and for Asia is rich as well as varied. Those who have developed local catechisms are Francis Xavier, Roberto de Nobili, Alessandro Valignano, Michele Ruggieri, Matteo Ricci, and Alexandre de Rhodes. It is our task now to have local catechisms which are suited to the particular local situation today.

## Models of Faith Formation in Indonesia

The Bishops of Asia affirm that the Church in Asia needs to enhance a triple dialogue: dialogue with other cultures, dialogue with other religions and beliefs, and dialogue with the poor. Dialogue is the way the Church evangelizes Asia. The goal of triple dialogue is the creation of harmony, justice, and peace in the society with emphasis on sister-brotherhood and solidarity with one another (Rukiyanto 2007b, 170-172).

The appeal by the Asian Bishops is also the call of the Indonesian Church, given the situation of Indonesian society, with its diversity of cultures, religions and beliefs, as well as its poverty. The Church is called to participate in solving those problems. The model of the Church which is to be developed is that of a community devoted to the Kingdom of God, with the church Called to bring the values of that Kingdom into society (Komisi Kateketik KWI 1997, 54-55).

In a Church that is Kingdom of God oriented, Jesus Christ becomes the obvious sign of the fullness of the Kingdom, as well as a good example of unity with and reliance on God. Sister-brotherhood and equality among members of the Church can be built. From this point it is expected the individual church will form a communion of communities open to all races, cultures, and beliefs. In a situation of openness, the Church is called to speak the truth in society and defend human values, which are often abused. The involvement of the Church in the problems in society is a manifestation of God's presence in the world. To realize this goal, we need the witness of life and professionalism in the ministry of the Church. The Church must always be open to the guidance of the Spirit, and also to dialogue and cooperation with all people of good will. Such communities are most likely to appear among the basic ecclesial communities (Komisi Kateketik 1997, 55-58).

At its annual meeting in 2011, the Indonesian Bishops Conference also paid attention to faith formation, with the meeting theme of "Proclaiming the Gospel is a grace and a distinctive call of the Church: it is her deepest identity" (Paul VI 1975, 14). In Indonesia, faith formation is implemented in two ways: the parish-based People's Catechesis (PC) and a national curriculum for teaching Catholic religion in schools. Here I will focus on the People's Catechesis or people's faith formation.

The PC, initiated by an inter-diocesan catechetical conference (Pertemuan Kateketik antar Keuskupan se-Indonesia I – PKKI I) in 1977 and developed by PKKI II in 1980, is the basis of all catechesis in Indonesia (Lalu 2007, 9-13). It is meant to be a sharing of faith experiences among people of the same level of faith, in an open situation marked by mutual respect. The people catechize one another and the catechist only guides the process. Geared to helping people grasp the meaning of day-to-day experiences in light of the Gospel, PC faith-sharing should deepen awareness of God's presence. Through the PC, people become more united in Christ, more active as community members, and more committed to carrying out the mission of the Church. They bear witness to Christ in their lives in the midst of society. Above all, the PC is based on the concept of Church as the People of God.

In 1988, PKKI IV evaluated ten years of PC implementation. The evaluation continued with PKKI V in 1992. The PKKI concluded that the PC was too "Church-centered" and lacked development of the social dimension of faith. A more concrete social analysis was added to the PC after 1992.

In order to build a Church that is oriented to the Kingdom of God, open to the guidance of the Spirit, committed to dialogue and cooperation with all people of good will, and realized in the basic ecclesial communities, people's faith formation is very important. Such formation has the transformative power to realize the Kingdom of God anywhere in society.

There are five models of faith formation that we can develop here:

1. Faith formation for maturing the faith
2. Social faith formation
3. Dialogical faith formation

4. Inculturated faith formation
5. Eco-feminist faith formation

I will explain these in turn:

#### Faith Formation for Maturing the Faith

Thomas Groome suggests the task of faith formation is communicating the faith, and forming and changing persons and Christian communities into disciples of Jesus for the realization of the Kingdom of God in this world (Groome 2002, 7). In faith formation, we educate people in the wisdom of the Christian faith by explaining the Scriptures, the tradition, the Creed, Christian morality and the liturgy. The process of faith formation challenges participants to be active and to think critically in seeking to understand the Christian faith, so that they might internalize and live it out. This process is important in order that participants do not fall into religious fundamentalism or any other narrow form of faith (Rukiyanto 2012, 76-77).

The *General Directory for Catechesis* lists six fundamental tasks of faith formation: (1) promotion of knowledge of the faith, (2) liturgical education, (3) moral formation, (4) instruction in prayer, (5) education for community life, and (6) missionary initiation (Congregation for the Clergy 1998, 85-86). It is important that participants are taught to have relationships with people from other churches (ecumenical dimension) and with other believers. There are therefore two major elements to faith formation, namely the internal tasks relating to the Church (tasks 1-5) and the external task relating to other people (task 6). In other words, the task of faith formation is to develop the Church through proclaiming Christ and educating people to have more faith and to be responsible for the mission of the Church (Telaumbanua 1999, 9-10).

Faith is not just one aspect of the Christian life, but is instead an essential element which provides the foundation to all dimensions of Christian life. Faith formation must therefore be formative, strengthening of Christian commitment, and must make people ready to live as disciples of Christ in the midst of their socio-cultural contexts (Groome 2002, 7-8). The GDC formulates this as an integral development in Christian life (Congregation for the Clergy 1998, 29-30). The process of becoming mature in faith is a process of continuous conversion over a lifetime (Congregation for the Clergy 1998, 56, 69). This conversion process directs people to grow personally in the way of life of Jesus, and socially by helping renew the Church and society and realize the Kingdom of God in this world. Since the conversion process takes place continuously over a lifetime, we also need continuous and ongoing faith formation (Congregation for the Clergy 1998, 51).

#### Social Faith Formation

Because of the poverty and suffering in Indonesia, it is important to make people aware of social issues (Rukiyanto 2012, 78-80). Fostering awareness and concern about social issues is a lengthy process. We need to train people to pay attention to, and show concern for, the problems of others—be it family, friends, or even society at large—right from childhood (Adisusanto 2005, 3-4). Children's faith formation programs and the religious education in schools have an important role in this effort to develop social awareness.

Jesus himself proclaims the Kingdom of God, not only through his teachings, but also through his actions, and his entire person. Jesus calls His followers to continue preaching the Kingdom of God (Matt. 28:19). This means that Jesus' followers in Indonesia also have the task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God to Indonesian people, so that the proclamation has meaning and touches people, especially the little ones, the poor and the marginalized (Adisusanto 2005, 5-7). The direction of faith formation in Indonesia is therefore to prepare people to witness to Christ in their lives and in society. In Denpasar, Bali (1988) PKKI IV affirmed the direction of faith formation as immersion in society.

To live the faith in our societal involvement, we need to apply a method of social analysis to faith formation, in order to create a more complete picture of that social situation through an

exploration of its historical relationships and structures (Holland and Henriot 1980). Through social analysis, people are encouraged to engage with social reality with all its problems. Oppression and impoverishment occur because they are created by a system or rules of a game controlled by powerful people. This system infiltrates all areas of life, especially politics and economics, both at micro and macro levels. Faith formation accompanies people in dealing with those social problems (Lalu 2007, 23-25).

### Dialogical Faith Formation

Indonesian society consists of various faiths and religions, as well as different tribes and cultures. In most parts of Indonesia, Christians are in the minority. Harmony among religious believers has not been fully realized. Conflict between religions or ethnicities occurs periodically, even between Protestants and Catholics. Interreligious dialogue and ecumenical dialogue is absolutely necessary in this situation. Besides this issue, religious fundamentalism has emerged, and its proponents often use violence to enforce their ideologies. Several terrorist attacks and suicide bombings have occurred in various places in Indonesia.

In this context, faith formation should build a spirit of dialogue in society. People need to be invited to leave their exclusive attitudes and foster the spirit of dialogue (Rukiyanto 2012, 80-81). We need adequate knowledge about the basic teachings of other religions and faiths so that ecumenical and interreligious dialogue can take place. Once this happens, it can be expected that more and more people will work together with people of other religions and faiths to build environments of sister-brotherhood, and hence a better society (Hardawiryana 1995, 118-119).

Through dialogical faith formation, people are trained in awareness that we are all children of the same God. God is the Father of all people. That is the essence of the Lord's Prayer. Dialogical faith formation can help people become more aware of God's universal plan of salvation (Paul VI 1964, 16). Our God embraces all people, regardless of their religion, faith or ethnicity. Through dialogical faith formation, people accept the reality of religious pluralism and coexistence with people from a variety of religious backgrounds and beliefs.

### Inculturated faith formation

Indonesia is made up of various cultures and ethnic groups. The Church needs to promote inculturation of the Christian faith in order that it become rooted in the cultures of the region. In this context, inculturated faith formation can encourage people to appreciate the traditions and cultures of the region. Inculturated faith formation can help people explore the noble values of local cultures and find Christian values in them. People can thus look for possible disclosures of faith in the cultures of the region (Rukiyanto 2012, 82-83).

The foundation of inculturation is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Word, who has become human being, and God's solidarity with humankind. We find God in human beings. In fact the whole of nature and the reality of society also signify the will of God for salvation. Thus faith needs to be lived in the concrete reality of life with all its cultural, socio-economic, political and spiritual-religious elements (Hardawiryana 1981, 38-41).

### Eco-feminist Faith Formation

Indonesia faces many environmental challenges. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods and volcanic eruptions can happen at any time. Deforestation is occurring in many parts of Indonesia. To face these challenges, we need to form eco-feminist faith (Rukiyanto 2012, 84-85). We need to make people aware of the importance of maintaining the environment. Meanwhile, discrimination against women still happens in Indonesia, and we need to make efforts to promote the dignity of women. Eco-feminist faith formation is thus required to increase awareness of the dependence between living beings, that is, the integral link between human beings and other creatures, and to defend the dignity of women. The diversity of living creatures creates

order and harmony. The natural beauty of creation is a reflection of the infinite beauty of God the Creator. God loves all creatures (Catholic Church 1993, 340-342, 2415-2418). Therefore, every human being needs to love creation. Love of neighbor can be realized through the love of nature, both plants and animals. This kind of love will have further impact, that is, love for future human generations (Binawan 2009, 283-284).

## Conclusion

Faith formation is an integral part of evangelization, since it provides the foundation for Christian faith. Meanwhile, the mission of the Church is to build the Kingdom of God in society. Relevant faith formation supports and helps in building this Kingdom. In a pluralistic society such as Indonesia, we need to develop many different faith formation models, bearing in mind that faith formation has the transformative power to realize the Kingdom of God anywhere in society.

Because of the particular situation in Indonesia, faith formation should be ecumenical, dialogical, inculturated, social (solidarity towards the poor), and ecological. Through such faith formation, the Church will steadily carry out the task of the new evangelization, in order to bring about the Kingdom of God in Indonesia. Hopefully, this paper will inspire those who are in charge of faith formation to develop teaching strategies suitable for other countries and contexts which may be experiencing situations similar to those in Indonesia.

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# FROM NOTHINGNESS TO GREAT SYMPATHY: CHINESE NON-INTERVENTIONISM FROM BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES

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## ABSTRACT

The Chinese government and people's disregard for failing governance in other countries is in contrast with its portrayal of good governance as a triumph of the Chinese Communist Party. In cases where this theory–practice contradiction affects neither policy-makers nor their constituencies, something deeper than functional hypocrisy must be behind the apparent desensitization. To understand the government's seeming apathy toward failed states, this study draws lessons from the history of Buddhist thought, and the notion of suffering as the nature of “this world” as opposed to that of “the afterworld.” China can find ways to lessen the contradictions in its non-interventionism through a dialectical relationship between the transcendental cosmology/ontology that favors inaction, and the transcendental epistemology that favors self-strengthening, as required by the particular situation.

## The Inconsistency Puzzle

Contradictions between theory and practice are noticeable in the foreign policy of any government, whether it be a hegemonic government, such as that of the United States, or the government of a rising power, such as China. In this paper, the political-philosophical foundations of one particular contradiction in United States' interventionist policy and Chinese non-interventionist policy are explored and compared. Examining differences in political philosophies helps explain why the Chinese understanding of intervention, which is influenced by Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions, usually appears apologetic from the Western perspective. This paper argues that American interventionism, which relies on the Western tradition, is *Lockean* in its selection of targets and *Hobbesian* when enforced. By contrast, Chinese non-interventionism is aligned with the idea of “*Dao*” (or “*Tao*”) or “the Way” and can thus justify both transcendental non-action and materialist self-strengthening.

A contradiction between theory and practice is manifested in policies surrounding intervention. This paper focuses specifically on internal contradictions between the principles upon which Washington and Beijing evaluate whether a state should be subjected to intervention. Such principles include very different sets of principles that guide actions toward such states, and the principles that guide how states rule themselves. A realistic view of this kind of contradiction accepts such hypocrisy as easily explained by calculations of national interest (Acharya 2007; Lipson 2007; Krasner 1999). A more complex approach seems justified, however, as foreign policy leaders are typically believed to act with good reason, and at the very least, seek to elicit public

support. In cases where the theory–practice contradiction affects neither policy-makers nor their constituencies, an explanation that is deeper than functional hypocrisy must be behind this apparent desensitization towards failed states.

A loss of sensitivity occurs when individual military interventions, mandated by Washington, do not comply with the human rights norms that the United States purports to adhere to when identifying failed states that require intervention. In fact, United States’ interventions have resulted in massive civilian casualties and have jeopardized the treasures of civilization. This irony has not led to serious self-criticism, however. Similarly, China’s insistence on non-intervention in failed states in order to allow events to unfold spontaneously, contradicts Beijing’s constant appeal for self-strengthening in domestic governance.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese government and people’s disregard for failing governance in other countries is in contrast with the portrayal of good governance as a triumph of the Chinese Communist Party. To understand the apparent apathy toward the failed state, this study relies on the Buddhist notion of suffering as being the nature of “this world,” as opposed to that of “the afterworld.”

If, as is the case, this basic contradiction does not distress those who uphold it politically, or their domestic audience, the contradiction must be perceived as either “natural” or required by the “state of nature.” The subject of humanitarian intervention presents an excellent opportunity to discuss what the “state of nature” is or should be. In other words, intervention appears easily justifiable in cases where such action either restores or improves the state of nature, depending on the theory used. This study argues that the imagined states of nature that desensitize the contradiction in the interventionist policies of the United States are both Lockean and Hobbesian (Ward 2006; Burgess 2002; Hehir 1979; Buchanan 1999). China can also find ways of desensitizing the contradictions in its own non-interventionism through a dialectical relationship between a transcendental cosmology/ontology that favors inaction, and a transcendental epistemology that favors self-strengthening, as required by the individual situation. Dialectics is inspired by Buddhism, which has influenced neo-Confucian ideology in China since the early twentieth century. This last point is the topic of this paper.

## Contradiction and the State of Nature

One significant contradiction in United States humanitarian interventionist policy is its militaristic tendency. Militarism appears to have driven the fabrication of evidence, torture of prisoners of war (POWs), and looting of treasures, in addition to unilateral withdrawal before full restoration of order. The existence of separate principles for the rule of the other and of the self detaches militarist intervention from the humanitarianism that prompts such interventions. Here the treatment of other states echoes the idea of Locke, who attributes the failure of the state to its incapacity for democracy and human rights. In the Lockean state of nature, people should be free, equal, and independent (Jahn 2007; Eriksen 2011; Lucinescu 2010). Failure to conform to this standard merits outside intervention. And yet the norms the United States follows to carry out intervention echo Hobbes’ ideas, because intervention occurs through international relations, and international relations theorists generally adopt Hobbesian anarchy.<sup>2</sup> The double states of nature within and between states as prescribed by Locke and Hobbes are plausibly the mechanisms of thought required to desensitize the contradiction between humanitarianism and militarism.

<sup>1</sup> For a few examples of familiar slogans in the twenty-first century, consider “the view of scientific development” (*kexue fazhan guan*), “do something” (*yousuo zuowei*), “strive for achievement” (*fenfa youwei*), and so on.

<sup>2</sup> The literature on intervention rarely challenges Hobbes on how the use of his notion of inter-state anarchy can justify, or remove responsibility for, false killing in the process of military intervention. Rather, the literature engages Hobbes primarily on the issue of whether sovereignty can be rightly made subject to humanitarian concerns. For a nearly exceptional engagement in the former case, see Young 2003. In the latter regard, see, for example, Charvet 1997, and Ayoob 2002.

Political thought pertaining to the state of nature exists in the Chinese classics as well as in their modern derivatives. Perhaps the most widely-noted version is the symbiosis of *yin* and *yang*, which refers to the opposite and yet combined characteristics of matter that give rise to each other and that evolve dialectically (Yolles, Frieden and Kemp 2008; Fang 2012; Li 2012). In the philosophy of history, this model supports the cyclical view that harmony and chaos take turns. Cycles are intrinsic to Buddhist belief. Classic Confucian and Daoist thought similarly connect mundane affairs and conditions that are chaotic to an amorphous being, which is pervasive and inexpressible, yet retrievable through learning. For Daoism and Buddhism, the ultimate beings are Dao (or the Way), which equalizes all, and emptiness/nothingness, which transcends all meanings, respectively. For Confucianism, the ultimate being is the kingly way that transcends kinship and space and connects all-under-heaven through benevolence. One shared tenet of all three schools of thought is a combination of self-cultivation and “non-action” (*wuwei*), which allows matters to settle into their harmonious nature (Ames 1985; Goulding 2002).

Transcendence may sometimes require actions that are opposed to meditation to stop the expansion of the power of chaos, however (Pittman 2001). For Confucianism, this is the moment when the civilized world encounters the danger of extinction from barbarian invasion. For Buddhism, it is sympathy for the majority of people who are suffering hardship. Neo-Confucianism is particularly keen on a thinking mechanism that will enable a believer in harmony to learn science exploits, rather than respects nature. Neo-Confucianism relies heavily, first on Buddhism, to construct a formless and nameless subjectivity that encompasses everything through non-action, and second, on an enlightened self-understanding that is no longer subject to the material world. This self-understanding includes acting in Great Compassion (*da bei*) through reform, and self-strengthening in a mundane world, in order to ultimately enlighten the unaware commoners and enhance one’s own spiritual life (Kuah-Pearce 2014).

Neo-Confucianism thus adopts modernity as an intellectual challenge as required by the occasion. The challenge of modernity is reduced to a tentative mode of reform that accommodates contemporariness. Learning from Western institutions (e.g., nationalism, liberalism, socialism) and technology, constitutes modern self-strengthening. Learning is essential for the understanding, engagement, and reform of this world. Consequently, the symbiosis of *yin* and *yang* continues to guide this view of the world (Dellios 2011), and subsequently leads to an apparent contradiction between the ontological acceptance of the world as too transient to be worthy of care, and the simultaneous epistemological endeavor to enlighten commoners through self-strengthening. The former sees no need for intervention, because all things share the same characteristics in their ultimate formless existence. The latter views the mundane world as being in need of transcendence and consequently, of learning, for the purpose of enlightenment. Transcendental enlightenment presumably exempts the population from indulgence in materialism when learning from the West.

Traditional Chinese attitudes bifurcate into two strands: one strand stresses patience and non-action while waiting for chaos to settle down naturally, and the other strand emphasizes self-strengthening to enlighten commoners. Both tendencies are familiar to the Chinese. Together, these two strands desensitize the contradiction caused by the movement between them. Belief in the inevitability of the cycle of harmony and chaos reduces anxiety about the suffering of people elsewhere. The coexistence of an ontology of formless subjectivity and an epistemology of learning desensitizes the contradiction caused by a policy of non-intervention that considers both the failure of others and China’s own improvement as necessitated by the state of nature.

The most important contradiction in China’s non-interventionist policy is between the belief that China must strive for good governance and success by means of heavy intervention by the state in society, and the perception that China should not get involved in failed states and societies elsewhere. Official Chinese sources state that local people must determine local values and institutions (Hu 2005; Hu 2012). External intervention weakens and impairs the local mechanisms required to restore order. Such official indifference reflects the long-held philosophy that harmony and chaos are destined to take turns. Hence, any intervention is in vain, however well-intentioned

or heavily invested. Nevertheless, one essential question remains unanswered: why must China remain in order while others are left in chaos? Two contrasting schools of thought provide the answers.

One answer may be obtained from the common belief in Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, that an amorphous nature of being manifests itself in different forms in the mundane world. Whether successful or failed, governance always eventually reverts to its basic nature. Another answer reminds China of its duty as an agent of enlightenment: that it must contribute to the transcendence of human suffering. For Confucianism, this means harmonizing all-under-heaven, and for Buddhism, Great Compassion for the suffering, who in their state are unable to appreciate the fact that their subjectivity lies in nothingness. Secular engagement is adopted in the latter case to reform the mundane world and improve the learning of the suffering population (Tu 1993; Tan 2008). Only through reform, which safeguards the people from suffering and injustice, can the unenlightened population eventually transcend the forms to achieve real universal being.

However, according to Neo-Confucianism, enlightened subjectivity in appreciation of transcendence should be a precondition for engaging in self-strengthening, which no-one can impose through intervention. The American expectation that China would intervene in Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, and elsewhere has been met with self-justified disapproval from China. In a few cases, though, China has either approved or at least abstained from voting and has allowed United Nations sanctions to be passed under United States' leadership. However, Chinese acquiescence in these cases depended heavily on the consent of the extant legal regime in the target state or on requests made by relevant regional organizations (Huang and Shih 2014). China's adherence to the principle of sovereignty appears to violate the rationale behind the institution of sovereignty in the first place: from the fundamentals of the Westphalia Treaty, it has gradually developed into the protection of human rights. Nevertheless, the task for contemporary neo-Confucians is to think of what they should and could do for China in the face of the suffering of the Chinese population.

## **Two Discourses on Buddhist Transcendence**

The role of Buddhism in contemporary Chinese foreign policy has rarely been acknowledged, because Buddhism has never provided clear principles for international relations, and because the influences of Buddhism on Chinese modernity were already incorporated into the country's historical trajectory before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (Hammerstorm 2012; Tao 2002).<sup>3</sup> In actuality, Buddhism has contributed to an understanding and appropriation of modernity in China in ways similar to its approach to Confucianism and Daoism in Vietnam in the latter's encounter with Christianity and modernity (DeVido 2009; McHale 2004; Do 1999). Confucianism and Daoism are conservative with regard to the use of industrial power in the exploitation of nature. Confucianism and Daoism are likewise uncomfortable with the ideas of individualism, rationality, or competition that come with liberal democracy and market capitalism. Modern thinkers in Vietnam and China consulted Buddhists intensively to reorient local intellectuals toward accepting modern technology and institutions. By contrast, Buddhist intervention in the way Japan coped with modernity and the West was extreme, undergirding that country's adoption of imperialism in the 1930s (Sharf 1993; Hesig and Maraldo 1995).

Indigenous access to modernity via Buddhism in East Asia has two aspects. The classic aspect is the shared pursuit of transcendence in Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism over individual mundane concerns about immediate interests. Confucian teachings urge that self-rectification of the learned class serves as a model for people all-under-heaven, so as to harmonize the latter into

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<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Buddhist modernity in China adapts to the context, adopting differing forms and acquiring differing meanings (Borchert 2008).

an orderly state. Daoist teachings deconstruct all immediate interests into meaningless eventuality, with the highest respect for nature already in harmony. Buddhist teachings provide an imagined cycle of life that makes everyday sufferings tolerable and the afterworld a place of emancipation. These three teachings are characteristic of the world view and philosophy of life. Nevertheless, the three teachings were all conceived viewing individuality as a questionable basis for ontological imagination and one that requires transcendence (Fu 1973; Brook 1994). The other aspects of Buddhism, namely, its reformist and critical elements, fit its believers into the mundane world where incessant evolution into varieties is a useful reminder of their actual transient state. This last aspect smoothly connects believers to modernity and its various progressive claims, ideologically, institutionally, and technologically.

Modernity changed the way of life and the rules of political economy. Transcending the dazzling changes in the individual as well as those in national life requires the establishment of an understanding of the principles of modernity. At least two Buddhist approaches are available for the suffering population to rely on, and with which to make sense of their suffering: meditation on experiences and letting go through learning (Watson 2001; Rinpoche 1986; Epstein 1989). The first approach considers suffering the result of false feelings or images induced by materialism. This approach is in line with, although not completely similar to, the Daoist solution of looking beyond, or the Confucian solution of waiting for order to return. The second approach seeks the reason behind modernity, grasps its essence, and even practices its rules, so that modernity is no longer superior, destined, universal, teleological, rational, or Christian. If modernity is reduced to knowledge of this world, the limit of its power breeds the desire for further transcendence. At this transcendent moment, belief in the afterworld becomes appealing once again. Therefore, Buddhism can encourage learning about modernity in a way that Confucianism and Daoism cannot. However, no consensus has been reached among Buddhist thinkers about this approach. The debate of such thinkers reflects the two different states of nature that may have sneaked into the non-interventionist policy of contemporary China.

The debate centers on the state of nature. Chinese Buddhist thinkers believe that the human world is full of suffering, but whether or not this suffering is a violation of the state of nature is debatable. On the one hand, the state of nature is emptiness or nothingness. People of this world should transcend fast-passing attractions to the senses in order to retrieve and return to the enlightened state of nothingness (Kieschnick 2003). On the other hand, the state of nothingness is not the nature of this world. Rather, nothingness is a transcendent place accessible only to those who undergo proper preparation. Accordingly, nothingness can only be reached through hard learning and reform. The latter approach therefore requires epistemological rigor (Wallace 2013). Incidentally, a parallel debate ensued in both Japan and China. The Chinese debate began much earlier, because of China's failure to adopt modernity during its encounter with the West. Neo-Confucianism was desperate for a solution to the inability of Confucianism to acquire modernity without jeopardizing the Confucian sensibility of self-rectification and its concomitant aversion to materialism, which modernity seemed to represent compellingly. In this regard, the Buddhist debate on the attitude toward this world is informative (Ritzinger 2014). Accordingly, the sufferings of the failed state in the twenty-first century appear typical rather than alarming. By comparison, the Japanese debate emerged more recently (Hubbard and Swanson 1997). Ironically, this recent emergence was probably caused by the fact that the seeming success of Japan's modernization project before WWII did not generate sufficient alertness for engaging in critical reflection. The project was also imperialist. Finally, Japan's modernization project incurred criticism from Buddhism in the 1980s, because the philosophy of nothingness was believed to have caused disaster both for Japan and its Asian neighbors during WWII.

The philosophy of nothingness, which legitimized Japan's imperialist pursuit of the World History Standpoint during WWII, argues forcefully that the subjectivity of Japan was nothingness, where all, namely the West and the East, should have co-existed. Although the World History Standpoint dissolved the hierarchy of the West over the East, according to critical Buddhism (Stone

1999a), it also privileged the imagined non-place of Japan as claimed by the philosophy of nothingness, to the effect that both the West and the East could be sacrificed mercilessly in this philosophical annihilation. Moreover, critical Buddhism detects that this privileged place coincides with Japanese Shinto worship of Amaterasu, in the sense that both are about the origin and premises of world history. These principles do not rely on knowledge, experience, or even facts, and together establish an exclusive claim for Japan's superiority. The philosophy of nothingness formulated by Nishida Kitaro is significantly indebted to the Buddhist concept of Zen (Hesig and Maraldo 1995). Clothed with Buddhist thought, soldiers of the imperialist government lost worldly feelings toward the victims of their violence. In short, the sense of responsibility is particularly weak in Zen philosophy. The rules for entering, taking, and destroying a mundane place, as well as getting rid of it, are obscure, or arguably unnecessary. Consequently, the will to annihilate and the will to transcend have become indistinguishable.

## Original Enlightenment and Silence in the Chinese Debate

The Chinese debate is of a different nature, because the Chinese authorities during the late Qing and Republican periods were never fully able to group their society and people into any coherent modernization project as Japan did.<sup>4</sup> The responses were uncoordinated and slow as well as insincere. The suspicion about a perceived materialist (i.e., inferior) Western civilization continued to support the imagined self-respect that was maintained on behalf of the thoroughly demoralized Chinese system. Nevertheless, the consensus was that something had to be done to rescue the nation from perishing completely. The typical formulation, which was first indoctrinated in Zhang Zhidong's "Chinese Essence, Western Practice" (*zhong ti, xi yong*) (Bays 1978), lingered on through the twenty-first century in the very notion of "the China model."<sup>5</sup> Yet why was a materialist build-up that would eventually be useless necessary in the first place, if these efforts would ultimately be transcended in a state of grand harmony? This concept is especially confusing if "essence" remains in a harmonious world and "practice" involves struggle. This confusion led to the debate on whether essence and practice comprise one thing. Alternatively, essence and practice could be regarded as separate formulations.

The basic difference between essence and practice is the route through which one reaches the state of transcendence. One route is through enlightenment, assuming that the state of transcendence is the state of nature cloaked by all kinds of distractions. Relying on one's own effort is thus critical in retrieving the mind to trace one's origin. Away from the origin, Confucianism and Buddhism appear to be in a state of loss. Learning is important in the modern world. According to the School of Enlightenment, however, the real seed of transcendence is concealed internally. Nevertheless, without being conscious of one's internal source of transcendence, learning in the external world can only lead to loss of direction or rampant materialism (Leung 2008). The state of enlightenment is therefore not related to the external artificial world. Rather, it is ultimately about withdrawal from the external world or from epistemology. Nothingness is the assumed and normatively targeted state of nature. As the targeted state of nature, enlightenment can consciously overcome loss in this world. Likewise, as the assumed state of nature, nothingness enables learning and practice to have a basis, so as to avoid drifting away from the origin (Johnson 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Takeuchi Yoshimi (1910-1977), an influential critic of Chinese literature and sympathetic to the Kyoto School, firmly believed that China's incapacity for modernization actually reflects an amorphous subjectivity that powerfully protected China from cultural subjugation to Western civilization in ways that Japanese modern thought failed to do. Takeuchi Yoshimi apparently incorporated the desired Shinto spirit into Chineseness (Uhl 2009).

<sup>5</sup> The debate on the China model has produced a huge literature in both English and China in the twenty-first century. For a reference to the earlier debate on essence and practice (Fewsmith 2011).



The School of Enlightenment believes that essence and practice come from the same mind. The mind is where all reasons and phenomena are generated. Essence and practice are absolutely equal in the context of an individual's learning; yet, the mind is inexpressible, formless, and pervasive. Such an origin is somewhat similar to the formulation of nothingness based on the Kyoto School. For both schools of thought, the mind has no beginning or end and is therefore perpetual. Its original state is one of grand harmony that encompasses all that is transient and permanent. The unity of seeming opposites in the original mind ensures one's capacity to possess all possible knowledge and all necessary functions, and this condition makes Buddhism and science intrinsically compatible (Lopez 2008). With enlightenment, one is allowed to see through the bewildering world and is exempt from being reduced to materialism when learning science. Without enlightenment, learning and practice lead to anxiety, because the population only sees the varieties and differences in passing phenomena and desires to aimlessly pursue more phenomena. The population thus eventually drifts away from the original mind.

Enlightenment can provide the type of creativity that enriches this world and still contributes to transcendence through the presentation of non-materialist modernity. By contrast, science in itself can never be the route to reaching the transcendent mind. The phenomenon and the cosmology therefore belong to two distinct levels. Self-rectification is essential in moving an individual from pre-enlightenment to enlightenment. Sheer learning cannot suffice, however, because it will confuse the mind. As the Sage acquires scientific learning, the subjectivity of China as a nation will be saved. At such an important moment of revival, commoners would see how it might be possible for China, which now possesses the power of science and technology, to use such knowledge in a non-violent, non-exploitative, and non-expansionist manner (Jacques 2009). Demonstration of transcendent modernity should further enlighten the West; and this makes neo-Confucianism a categorically different norm from the Buddhist-informed World History Standpoint of imperialist Japan. Nevertheless, this neo-Confucian philosophy, which has become popular again in the twenty-first century, is heavily indebted to Buddhist engagement with modernity.

Practice and essence are not two separate processes. Instead, creativity and retrieval are two sides of the one coin. The same mind therefore has two doors: one open to the transient world and the other open to the transcendent world (Billoud 2011; Chan 2011). The first door opens the way for neo-Confucianism to acquire the enlightening message on the importance of improving one's standing in this world, where Chinese and Western knowledge are seen as similar in terms of their common belonging to the transient world. Something significant emerges in the transient world in this formulation. The Confucian Sage has to rely on self-subduing (*ziwo kanxian*) before the transient world in order to speak to and save the suffering commoners and the world.<sup>6</sup> The Sage has to learn scientific knowledge in order to germinate the seed of enlightenment in the consciousness of the masses. Despite the exclusion of science from the transcendent world, the Buddhist notion of Great Compassion inspired neo-Confucianism to take the long route of scientific learning to retrieve the origin.

In sum, Buddhist thought inspired neo-Confucianism in at least four different ways in specific regard to the latter's adaption to modernity. First, Buddhism provided the Confucian Sage with an imagined link to a pervasive universe where self-rectification required by Confucianism acquired a broad scope of influence, such that a constantly self-rectified Sage is no longer only a model to be emulated by others, but also the mind of the universe in claiming an all-encompassing spirit. This condition means that the Sage can actively engage with this world and present himself in science and democracy. Second, Buddhism provided both the notion of "transcendent origin" and that of "this world," so that accessing this world through learning science does not affect the capacity for transcendence, and might even enhance such capacity if the Sage decides to engage

<sup>6</sup> Sub-negation is the popular translation of the notion of *ziwo kanxian*. Self-subduing, however, better connotes the Sage's decision to momentarily sacrifice his transcendence for the sake of awakening the population (Angle 2009; Chan 2008).

with this world. Third, the Great Compassion that Buddhism exhibits to commoners transformed society into a modern state, which is a legitimate goal in Confucianism. Nevertheless, the paramount duty of the Sage is the retrieval of the mind in order to transcend the limit of the self and its materialist pursuits. Without a constantly rectified self, learning is useless if not harmful. Lastly, the achievement of Buddhist enlightenment ultimately lies in everyone's own minds, where the hierarchical value in Confucianism is reconciled with the egalitarianism sanctioned by modernity.

In contrast to the School of Enlightenment, the School of Silence in China adopts a similar strategy to that which was later used by critical Buddhism to deconstruct the philosophy of nothingness (Hubbard and Swanson 1997; Heine 2001; Stone 1999a). The School of Silence worries that practice will corrupt the mind if essence and practice are symbiotic, as alleged by Enlightenment scholars. Critical Buddhism interprets the relationship as one that signifies totalitarianism, which coincides with nothingness. Contrary to the idea of Enlightenment, the School of Silence argues that no nature in the original state is enlightened, because the duty of transcendence is only possible after knowledge of this world is learned. The pursuit of knowledge in this world breaks silence and thus makes silence thinkable. Essence and practice have to be separate to preserve the incorruptibility of essence for transcendence. Reaching such essence is the step that follows learning, rather than the first step before learning. Knowledge of this world can enlighten commoners to the need for reform and germinate the seed of transcendence outside this world. On this particular point, the School of Silence was the harbinger for the emergence of critical Buddhism. Both are wary of the likelihood that nothingness promotes unilateralism. For neo-Confucianism, however, the enlightened state exists in every human being. Silence thinkers did not believe in any universal enlightenment that could take over individual sites and facilitate transcendence.

Silence thinkers emphasize authentic Indian Buddhism (Yuan 1989) and contend that it used to be reform-oriented, considering that commoners constituted a significant portion of the believers. However, Buddhism exported to China was primarily the religion of the well-to-do, whose interpretation turned it into conservative thought. Despite the evolution of neo-Confucianism toward self-strengthening, the learning of the Enlightenment thinkers eventually corrupted the mind and extinguished the seed of transcendence in the self-involving elite. Silence thinkers engaged in knowledge-based reform of the world based on knowledge. Learning is a critical component in Silence thinking (Stone 1999b). The mind is able to grasp the rules of this world by accepting Western science and modernity. Rationality and truth come not from the mind, but from breaking up incorrect knowledge and proceeding to behavioral adjustment that leads to reform. Although this attitude toward knowledge and science is conducive to the need for self-strengthening, neo-Confucianism is hostile toward Silence thinking. For Confucianism, the ultimate task is the restoration of the Chinese nation and the mind's control of science. By contrast, Silence thinking questions the existing order and encourages reform. Learning is perceived as a necessary evil for Enlightenment thinking and a necessary good for Silence.

In sum, the incorporation of modernity into one's life should not be the end of learning. Modernity is a means of achieving transcendence, albeit in different sequences, depending on the school of thought adopted. For the School of Enlightenment, transcendence is the original and ontological state to be restored, whereas for the School of Silence, transcendence is a desired ontology to be accessed by crossing the divide between essence and practice. The epistemological function of learning is therefore necessary for the School of Silence, but not for the School of Enlightenment. For the latter, learning is important because Enlightenment is the guarantee that neo-Confucianism can save the Chinese nation via learning, but without being absorbed by materialism.

## **Enlightened Non-interventionism and Transcendent Modernity**

Understanding China's reservations about the restoration of order in failed states and the aggressive concern for China's own state of governance, requires a level of appreciation deeper than that provided by the usual interpretations embedded in mainstream international relations theory. If China were a typical state that practiced self-help under anarchy, it would not have adhered to a rigid principle, regardless of the suffering of the failed state's population or its own national interest (Pang 2009). Buddhism considers suffering to be a characteristic of this world that reduces failed states to normalcy. According to the School of Enlightenment point of view, transcendence cannot be achieved by merely engaging with this world. Neo-Confucianism's re-appropriation of enlightenment to make sense of learning acknowledges the possibility and rationale of learning. However, learning is futile if the mind is not consciously prepared to be in transcendental unity with heaven (Tu 2001; Yu 2002). The Sage can decide to reach commoners out of his Great Compassion for their suffering by displaying his scientific learning and engagement with modernity. Unfortunately, neo-Confucianism's predilection toward learning has not prescribed any scientific method for commoners (Chan 1957; Needham 1991). In addition, the return to the original mind is ultimately the duty of commoners. This thought could have been the political barrier to China's adoption of interventionism; Great Compassion provided no method, and the local mind of the failed state's leadership could not be made ready by China for the transcendental purpose.

China's own fate was the paramount concern of both neo-Confucianism and Buddhism (Xue Yu 2005). However, the thinking about the original silence that urged scientific learning by all means alienated neo-Confucianism. The School of Silence did not contribute to the contemporary interventionist tendency of the global governance regime, because it was critical of the injustice or lack of equality in its spirit. This spirit of reform fell outside the scope of global governance, which sought a top-down re-establishment of order. The Silence thinkers were likewise critical of the indiscriminate application of rules that ignored reality. Knowledge of local conditions was presumed to be more important than the liberal values dominating most global governance regimes. Despite its rational pursuit of knowledge of this world, Silence thinking fell on the deaf ears of neo-Confucianism. The latter dreads the assumption that no transcendence exists in the original state and frowns at the belief that transcendence can be reached through reform and re-ordering, informed by a correct grasp of the materialist world.

In a nutshell, the political thought that served as the foundation of China's self-strengthening, originated from the apprehension of neo-Confucianism of a perceived reality constituted by the decline of the Chinese nation, the breakdown of traditional Confucian values, and the failure of the Sage's teaching on harmony and self-rectification. Neo-Confucianism lacks a link to modernity that can make sense of the materialist pursuit that seemingly prevails under modernity. Buddhist Enlightenment thinking inspired neo-Confucianism to envision a route toward modernity, because Enlightenment thinkers believe in the original state of transcendence and contend that learning can continue without losing control of the mind. In the traditional Confucian state of nature, self-rectification is the only correct way of life. In the past, although self-strengthening involved physical training, it did not encourage materialism. In the Enlightenment state of nature, modernity is unnecessary and intervention in failed states where the mind is lost is particularly unwise. Modification through Great Compassion allows neo-Confucianism to re-appropriate enlightenment for its pursuit of modernity. In the Silence state of nature, knowledge is the foundation for finding the route to transcendence, and intervention is only proper if knowledge, rather than value, is acquired. No-one can achieve transcendence on behalf of the local population in need of correct knowledge.

From the perspective of Chinese political thought, American interventionism does not come from enlightened self-understanding embedded in transcendence, because of its inherent and value-laden teleology that seeks to transform anything local. Rather, the American call for intervention appears to stem from a mundane desire for material dominance and is a source of chaos in itself. China invariably finds evidence to support this impression in the Hobbesian style of unrestrained

military force and abuse adopted by the United States in its interventions, which are undoubtedly parallel to barbarian invasions. This situation prompts a reaction in the form of calls for self-strengthening, which the Chinese have come to accept as their duty, so that China may serve as a lesson to the rest of the world. Neo-Confucianism intends to prove that power politics can be transcended and that harmony can be restored. However, for other countries, learning must come from self-understanding of internal conditions. Pushing learning from outside destroys the route of return to the mind, which ensures that learning does not proceed for the sake of learning itself. This caution against intervention applies to Enlightenment, which begins with the restoration of the local subjectivity/mind, as well as to Silence, which embarks on the acquisition of localized knowledge and localized behavioral adaptation. The same caution can be used to criticize China on the rise, though, where materialist power is seen to subdue the mind of the Chinese authorities.<sup>7</sup>

The national implication of the return to mind at the individual level is most obvious in China's emphasis on always finding solutions to problems through abiding by national conditions. As long as one believes that enlightenment is possible only via return to the mind, intervention is, by all means, a false prescription. China's appeal for respect for national conditions to justify both the rejection of external intervention in China and the avoidance of China's intervention in other countries' domestic politics has become common. For instance, a Chinese diplomatic message from the Arabian delegation states:

In today's world, changes are turning the heaven and the earth upside down. Whatever ism, system, model, or line one takes has to pass the test of time and practice. Tens of thousands of varieties exist between the national conditions of each country. There is no such thing in the world as the best, omnipotent, and synchronic model of development. There is at best the road of development fittest to the national conditions of the country. (Wang 2012)

The Chinese consciously appeal to traditional political thought when viewing the world. The Daoist notions ("tiptoes do not sustain long standing, big steps do not sustain long walking, self-referencing does not sustain far sight, self-righting does not sustain reasons, self-exaggerating does not sustain achievement, and self-promoting does not sustain leadership") cited by Chinese international relations watchers follow the track of neo-Confucian Enlightenment (Zhang 2014). Another Daoist insight, "strong things turn old" was utilized as a disincentive for stretching over borders. Various mundane strategic concerns, side products, and windfall profits could be conceived by a specific portion of the policy circle each time. However, the reasonableness of non-intervention is the long-held belief.

The rationale behind each of China's decisions on non-intervention, or the use of intervention in a particular manner, differs according to context. The literature cites the Bible of Change (Yi Jing) as saying that "the excited dragon regrets" (flying too high to keep on) to caution against the wish to expand influence. Despite the inconsistency of the policy of non-intervention in certain situations, such as in Somalia in 1992 and in East Timor in 1999, the two cases that China painstakingly explained as exceptional upon giving consent, China has deliberately tied its own hands by discursively ruining the legitimacy of China becoming interventionist in the future. The constant return to classic wisdom conveys two messages: that China has to become stronger and that China has to avoid stretching. For mainstream thought on international relations, the entire point of becoming strong is to expand. Accordingly, Chinese non-interventionism, together with alleged self-restraint, must be logically incompatible.

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<sup>7</sup> This leads to the adoption of the strategy of shaming by the self-perceived victim of China, as during the 2014 maritime dispute, for example. Le Hong Hiep (2014) concludes on behalf of Vietnam that "the most important thing Vietnam can do now is to name and shame China internationally."

## Western versus Buddhist States of Nature

Western critiques that usually see Chinese non-interventionism as theoretically culpable and practically laughable can be broken down into two major categories: normative and scientific. The normative category points to China's lack of sympathy for the suffering of people in need of help under the circumstances of civil war, suppression, and incapacity to supply basic needs. The scientific category attends to the strategic calculus of China's non-involvement to reflect at best the very mundane interests pursued by everyone else. The two types of critiques overlap in the observation that China relies on local corruption and dictatorships to promote its own interests. China's rebuttal of normative criticism is rather relaxed and conveys the simple message that intervention would eventually be useless if local conditions cannot breed a local resolution. The Chinese Academy of Social Science presents the typical Chinese logic of non-intervention, not as lack of care, but as one of appealing to national conditions. This is why China should seriously consider the limits of even its own experiences for the rest of the world.

China's support for Africa to choose its own road of development reflects the most sincere attitude. China has never pointed to Africa one direction or another as for its choice of political system. Neither has China determined its close relationship with Africa according to the ideological position. Some African countries suggest to "look to the East" or to learn the Chinese "model of development." China is willing to exchange governing experiences with them while indicating that the most important lesson of choosing the road of development should be to fit in one's own national conditions. China's modesty is seemingly incomprehensible to the Western countries, but is increasingly appreciated among the African countries. By adhering to the principle of non-interventionism, China stands on the reason. (Wang 2012)

The politics of global governance accordingly see one state of nature as opposing another state of nature. The American vision of the state of nature emphasizes equality, freedom, and the independence of individuals. In Chinese Confucian thought, the state of nature involves chaos and harmony spontaneously taking turns in accordance with the Way and, in Buddhist thought, either Enlightenment or Silence. Intervention is unnecessary and would be harmful if the local mind or local knowledge is not present to exercise transcendence. The Chinese approach to investing in local infrastructure, and the ruling elites' well-being, embodies the principle of non-intervention in the hope that, eventually, the elites' capacity to act with tolerance and affect material improvement will restore the general order. China has shown its willingness to facilitate negotiation between local rivals. Considering that the philosophy of harmony opposes division, China typically receives disputing parties in turns in Beijing in order to create an atmosphere for peaceful settlement.

Non-intervention in human rights violations points to a weak conception of human rights from the perspective of the Lockean state of nature. From the perspective of the Hobbesian state of nature, non-intervention amounts to an alliance between the non-intervening state and the target state. Both traditions are important references in the consciousness of Western intellectuals. The West regards Chinese non-intervention with anxiety; from its human rights perspective, China constitutes a failed state (Tull 2008; Hodel 2008). China could also ally itself with those states that, according to US interventionist policy, should rightly be treated as an enemy within an anarchical international system (Karlsson 2011). In such an intellectual environment, a political thought that explains the rationale of Chinese non-interventionism equals an apologist's excuse for negligence of humanity.

Scientific criticism focuses on the structural imperative for China to adopt non-interventionism, regardless of the value, policy, or principle by which China abides. Such presumably factual criticism contends that non-intervention is not an act arising from any transcendent wish, but is a reflection of sheer incapacity to compete with the West or pursue

national interest at the expense of local human rights (Osondu 2013; Chazziza and Goldman 2014; Lagerkvist 2012; Taylor 2006). Scientific criticism is perhaps asking too much, however. The impact of political thought is rarely on the immediate policy choice. Rather, it is an orientation to either motivate in a certain direction or constrain the range of options. The political belief shifts the population's focus away from specific concerns and distracts them. Both China's self-strengthening cycles in modern and contemporary history and Chinese leaders' reiteration that a rising China will not turn into a hegemonic power, are statements of transcendence; a rising power under firm control of the mind looks beyond the materialist world. If such a wish for transcendence does not show consistently in China's alleged non-interventionism because of immediate urgency, complication, or interlude of sheer opportunism, it will still show in the aftermath that renounces certain interests or power gains to reify transcendence over materialism.

The fact is that China can still intervene under various guises, assist in Western intervention in a soft and harmonious manner, and remain acquiescent about selected interventions while being critical of others. In most of the situations where China decides not to intervene, the domestic policy debate nevertheless hears pro-intervention positions that are at least considered legitimate if not eventually accepted. Despite China's effort to remain discursively consistent, the incapacity of ontological and epistemological standpoints to either directly guide *ex ante* policymaking or provide useful *ex post* explanations of policy behavior, is apparent. This incapacity makes the mainstream international relations theory of power and interest particularly attractive to those who view China's non-interventionism as hypocritical and the Buddhist interpretation as apologist. However, the power of scientific explanation should and can still be extended to situations where policy assessment proceeds in the aftermath, to reveal any earlier act of intervention as inconsistent and ultimately reluctant. How a particular notion of national interest is invoked, re-invoked, and revoked in policymaking is not the concern of the current international relations theory that looks exclusively for consistency.

For a student of international relations theory, selecting non-intervention or revoking an act of intervention, is usually seen to be based on considerations of national interest, even though the initiation of intervention could be simultaneously inspired by normative concerns. The Buddhist perspective that explains how an act of intervention is revoked, even though remaining interventionist, is presumably more in line with the national interest. International relations theories need to explain situations where remaining interventionist and keeping out are both reasonable, depending on how national interests are calculated. More specifically, the question of how non-intervention remains a reasonable option for Chinese foreign policymakers calls for an answer such that intervention will always demand painstaking justification. The School of Silence, along with critical Buddhism, undergirds the suspicion that intervention is in danger of resulting in over-involvement, because materialism may ruin the alternative route to transcendence. In response to the Western criticism of China renouncing the responsibility to protect its people suffering from human rights deterioration, the prevailing suspicion among Chinese commentators is almost always about the purpose of Western intervention infamously becoming reduced to the materialism of power and interest.

Enlightenment and Silence refer to entirely opposite formulations of the state of nature, but both are suspicious of Western intervention. For Enlightenment thinkers, local subjectivity has to be the premise of any reform. Western intervention that installs local leadership in a culturally-estranged institution would easily fail such subjectivity, without which the return to mind could not proceed and materialism would follow. For the School of Silence, reform and knowledge are intrinsic to the capacity of transcendence. Hegemonic intervention to enforce norms of global governance defies the possibility of local knowledge, which is the foundation for reflection upon the materialist world. Buddhist thought on the state of nature thus makes non-intervention a permanently legitimate policy position. It will similarly keep alive a critical and self-critical component to cope with any country's intervention on any pretext. In short, non-intervention is a naturally provided policy, but it does not always prevail. The point is not how it fails to constrain

intervention at a particular point, but how non-intervention is a constantly available and intuitively proper alternative as well as a critical perspective to be incurred, regardless of wherever and by whom intervention occurs.

Non-interventionism is therefore not entirely non-interventional. It proceeds in internal and external cycles. On the one hand, the cycle is composed of great sympathy, reform, and opportunism, which are all epistemological, and can either be Enlightenment- or Silence-oriented. On the other hand, it also involves patience, withdrawal, and restoration of local subjectivity, which reflect ontological premises embedded in the original as well as the desired transcendence. According to the School of Enlightenment, one can go ahead with learning modernity only after retrieving the ontologically original state of Enlightenment. In comparison, the School of Silence urges learning, because breaking silence is the only route to establishing a transcendent ontology of silence. Likewise, interventionism is never entirely interventional; thus, all acts of intervention are also cyclical. Militarist intervention and cold-blooded withdrawal call for the Hobbesian state of nature to make sense. These perspectives are in contrast with the Lockean state of nature that prompts intervention.

### Conclusion: Practicing Buddhism without Being Aware

On May 4, 2014, the memorial day of the May 4th Movement of 1919, Chinese President Xi Jinping gave a speech on “The Core Value of Socialism” in Peking University. The May 4th Movement symbolizes China’s quest for modernity taking place in an anti-Confucian discourse. Later generations have found solid Confucian strings in the movement wishing for the substitution of modernity by Confucianism. In his speech, Xi not only reiterated the spirit of the movement—patriotism, progress, democracy, and science—but also cited all kinds of Confucian values from Confucian classics. Interestingly, he then enumerated the three Buddhist transcendental stages, namely, seeing mountains as mountains, seeing mountains as non-mountains, and seeing mountains again as mountains. The second stage is the transformational stage in which the mind is no longer affected by the outside world. The third stage refers to the transcendental stage in which the mind enjoys, but is raised beyond, the outside world. Xi further encouraged students to rely on the values which the Chinese population “practices without the consciousness of practicing them” (*yong er bu jue*).<sup>8</sup> The last remark relates to the third stage and is therefore parallel to Enlightenment discourse, where the core values of socialism cannot lie in socialism, because it is still the consciously applied slogan in the official language. The unconsciousness of using values naturally in daily life connects this world to a transcendental mind no longer entangled with materialism or socialism. “Buddhism” was not mentioned in Xi’s remarks, making Buddhism a completely hidden perspective.

Hope for self-transformation and aversion to other-transformation can coexist among Chinese without causing anxiety. The pursuit of transcendence prepares the Chinese to hold the self-image that their self-transformation will not fall into materialism and that other-transformation cannot help but be materialistic. Ironically, once the principle of non-intervention confirms the mind of transcendence, intervention could become acceptable again. This line of thinking can be further applied to the mounting calls for Chinese intervention. These calls take place in the global governance agenda, and China’s unease about intervention will probably be reduced in the future. Nevertheless, intervention could be very harmful to the pursuit of transcendence over materialism, such that Chinese leaders, academics, and the media consciously resort to Enlightenment thinking as a self-reminder against interventionism. The hidden but powerful Buddhist influence in the Chinese state of nature ironically restricts any sophisticated review or revision of the Western criticism of non-interventionism.

<sup>8</sup> He actually used the Buddhist dictum to express a form of Confucian advice, because he meant to urge all to adhere to each’s value, without being affected by circumstances (Xi 2014).

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# GENDER-INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMING TORAJA CHURCH IN INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to deconstruct the transformation of Toraja Church's leadership by showing how the Church's patriarchal structure was destabilized by external forces, and how Torajan agency was developed and how it pushed for gender equality from within. The paper also expands feminist analyses of agency in women's leadership to include men's agency. The theory of structural transformation of William H. Sewell Jr. (1992; 2005), and the theory of agency from Sherry B. Ortner (2006), are both employed in analyzing the case study. The data used includes documentary research and in-depth interviews with five male leaders and seventeen female ordained pastors of first and later generations, as well as participant observation from two months of field work in Toraja in 2015. The paper argues that this transformation was the outcome of both external forces from the cultural, political and religious contexts, and the active involvement of human agents. Toraja Church's transformation represents a long process of interaction and negotiation between patriarchal missionary and local matrilineal cultures.

## Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century heralded the development of feminist scholarship around women's struggles for leadership in religious institutions (Gross 1996). Leadership here refers to the decision-making level, and includes access to theological education, ordination, and positions in the hierarchy. Feminist scholarship has generally focused on separate aspects of the issue. Thus several feminist scholars approach this struggle by exposing patriarchal structures, namely doctrines, sacred texts, culture, and institutional practices that limit leadership for women (Adams 2007; Antone 2013; Fiorenza 1994; Kang 2013; Wadud 1999). Others focus on the enabling aspects of the structure that create opportunities for women's leadership (Ecklund 2006; Tremper 2013). Still other feminist scholarship focuses on how women actively use resources and strategies to transform their religious communities or achieve extra-religious ends even within highly conservative religious systems (Adeney 2003; Mahmood 2005; Noriko 2003).

Generally there seems to be a lack of feminist scholarship that looks at this struggle as a whole process and from an outcome perspective, however. In other words, it has not asked the question, "How have women achieved such a level of advancement in leadership?" This paper attempts to contribute an empirical study into the relationship between agency and structure in this process, by

examining a successful case of the struggle for women's leadership in the church, specifically the Toraja Church in Indonesia. The approach is qualitative and sociological.

Toraja Church is an ethnic-based Protestant church located administratively in the upper reaches of the Sa'dan River in south Sulawesi, Indonesia. Protestant Christianity was first brought to Toraja by the Gereformeerde Zendingsbond (GZB) Dutch missionary, van de Loosdrecht, in 1913. The Toraja Church declared independence from the Dutch mission in 1947, but remained under the control of missionaries. In 2015, the Christian population in Toraja reached 369,730 or 71.34 percent of the total population of 518,245 (Kantor Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Tana Toraja 2015a; 2015b). Toraja Church, in particular, has a membership of 327,246 or 63.14 percent of the total population (Sinode Gereja Toraja 2015b).

This Church has been through a transformation process in terms of the role of women. In the beginning, the Dutch missionaries installed a highly patriarchal structure, with women completely excluded from theological education and leadership positions (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006, 67; Taruk 2013, 21, 58). The missionaries used the justifications of gender-biased biblical passages that silence women in the church (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1947, 3). Nevertheless, Toraja Church gradually moved from the complete exclusion of women from leadership before 1955 to a full recognition of women's participation in all Church life in 1984. Two years after the institutionalization of women's rights in Toraja Church, the first woman was ordained. From 1986 to 2015, or within thirty years, the number of ordained female pastors has reached 345 or 45.6 percent of the total ordained clergy (Sinode Gereja Toraja 2015a; 2015b). Women also gained a presence at the hierarchical level. In 2001, a woman became one of the four chairpersons of the synod. In 2011, the synod had a female chairperson and a female general treasurer. While there may remain gender issues to be tackled by Torajan Christians, the formal gender structure of Toraja Church was transformed in 1984 after a long period of persistent struggle from both men and women. This paper focuses on the period before 1984, during which time the negotiation between local matrilineal and patriarchal missionary cultures took place, a negotiation that substantially altered the formal gender structure of Toraja Church.

This paper deconstructs Toraja Church's transformation toward inclusive leadership, by showing how the gender structure was destabilized by external forces, and how Torajan agency was developed, with a push for gender equality coming from within. Among other purposes, this study attempts to explore men's agency and their contribution to the women's struggle. Feminist studies in this field have primarily focused on women's agency, while mostly leaving men's agency untouched, perhaps because men have generally been part of the dominating structure. Although there have been calls from male scholars and feminists to engage men in feminist theory and practice (Hooks 1992; Ndlazi 2004; Pease 2000; Schacht and Ewing 2004), this phenomenon has not been explored empirically in women's leadership studies. This study is also unique in terms of its locality, as there have been no previous vigorous sociological studies on Christian women's leadership in the Toraja Church.

In social studies, the relationship between agency, context, and structure has been long theorized and debated. Anthony Giddens (1979), confined the concept of agency to the reproduction of structure and so structural transformation was not adequately theorized until the work of Williams H. Sewell Jr. (1992; 2005). While Giddens focused primarily on the reproduction of structure as a single entity and in a synchronic manner, Sewell took into account the historical process of structural transformation in convergence with other structures. Sewell viewed structures as multiple, intersecting, and transposable. It is possible to explain structural change, because the conjunction of different structures helps social actors distance themselves from their own cultural structures and creatively apply new schemas, or accumulate and use resources in a new way. Sewell's theory of structural change is applied here to explain the transformation of the gender structure in Toraja Church. This is done by identifying the multiplicity of structures in the Torajan context, namely the cultural, political, and religious structures that intersect with the Church's

gender structure, resulting in the transposability of schemas and the unpredictability of resource accumulation by Torajan agents.

While Giddens restored the concept of agency, his theory of agency was oversimplified, since it focused on agency as power in general, and ignored other dimensions, such as gender, asymmetrical power relations, class, status, and ethnicity. Further, it did not clarify how agency is formulated and how it leads to transformation of structures. Sherry B. Ortner (2006) utilized basic theories of agency and structure from major social practice theorists, namely Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault, Geerts, and Sahlins, to formulate a theory of agency that takes into account the complexity of agency subjectivity and politics, and that locates agency in the nexus of dynamic social relations and power asymmetry in the historical process. Ortner views agency as “pursuing ‘projects’ within a world of domination and inequality” (Ortner 2006, 15). Projects can be understood as culturally and historically constituted goals. The actor’s project enables or constrains his or her agency. Ortner calls this the “agency of project.” To establish the project, the actor devises strategies to restructure the power relations around the decision to dominate, conform, or resist. This she calls the “agency of power.” For example, the capitalists’ project is wealth and competition. This is their agency of project. To establish their project, they have to dominate the workers, and thus they become an agency of power (Ortner 1996, 46ff).

Ortner’s agency framework is useful in analyzing agency in the Toraja Church, since agency in this Church involves both male and female leaders, who have different projects and power relations with regard to the Church’s gender structure. Their respective agencies are enacted through a historical process of context dynamics. Both genders also reflect internal diversity in terms of social status, family relations, and motivation.

Data in this paper includes documentary research and ethnographic field work collected during a two-month project from October to December 2015 in Toraja Church, located in Tanah Toraja and Toraja Utara. Documentary data consists of Church synod documents, and also writings and publications from the first witnesses of the Toraja women’s struggle for leadership. Ethnographic data includes in-depth interviews with five male leaders and seventeen female pastors of first and later generations, and also participant observations. The researchers also had conversations with several male and female lay-leaders from Toraja Church regarding the issue under study.

This paper reveals that the transformation of the Toraja Church toward gender-inclusive leadership was not only facilitated by the cultural, political, and religious context, but was also brought about by the active agency of Torajan leaders with the limited support of some Dutch missionaries. It was a long process of interaction and negotiation between missionary patriarchal and Torajan matrilineal cultures, and was embodied by the actors involved, especially in the pre-1984 period.

## **Transformation of the Torajan Church’s Gender Structure in Context**

Employing Sewell’s theory of structural transformation, this paper argues that the transformation of the Torajan Church toward gender-inclusive leadership was to a certain extent facilitated by three factors: (1) the dominant gender equality practice of Torajan culture; (2) the Torajan political context that facilitated the pursuit of education and international exchanges which increased the agents’ accumulation of resources; and (3) the encounter with progressive Christian movements and alternative gender practices from neighboring churches, which motivated and pressured the Toraja Church to change. These dynamics functioned as destabilizing forces for the patriarchal gender structure of Toraja Church as they encountered one other.

### Gender Practices in Torajan Culture

In cultural studies, scholars are increasingly aware of the dynamics of cultural structures in a given society. For instance, Geertz admits that “[c]ultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is” (Geertz 1973, 29). As for Bourdieu, the field of cultural production is always a contested field of competing discourses and values (Bourdieu [1977] 1995, 72; Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002, 159). This section of the paper therefore attempts to present how the dominant discourses of Torajan culture served as a basis for resisting and destabilizing the patriarchal gender regime of the Church. In fact, existing studies show that the dominant discourses of Torajan culture promote gender equality and give women high social status.

Concerning local custom or *adat*, Waterson states that “[s]o far as *adat* is concerned . . . I could discover no point of *adat* law which discriminates against women” (Waterson 2009, 229). In familial organization, there is no gender preference or discrimination among children. Both boys and girls are valued and share equal inheritance rights; however, women are given strong positions in several areas. For instance, in the Torajan custom of marriage, a man has to live with, and contribute his labor to, his wife’s family after the wedding. In Torajan culture, each large family is represented by an origin house or *tongkonan*. Women are the ones who represent the *tongkonan* and who manage the ricebarn of the family. In terms of death rituals, women are given more honor than men in the sense that the number of animals sacrificed for their funeral is greater than for their husbands who have passed away (Suryadarma 2006, 123; Waterson 2009, 230, 234-237). Torajan custom also prescribes that the funeral of a dead person must be celebrated in a person’s maternal *tongkonan*, regardless of how highly ranked the paternal *tongkonan* is. This means children are considered the mother’s descendants. In kinship terminology, the Torajans rarely distinguish between sexes. For example, they use the same words for both sexes, such as *sampu* (cousins), *api’*, *ulu’*, *unu’*, *siulu’* (local variants for siblings), and *nene’* (grandparent) (Nooy-Palm 1979, 26-29). Women can thus be said to have a special position in the Torajan culture of kinship. In terms of ritual, women participate in all Torajan rituals and their participation is even compulsory. According to the *Aluk To dolo* tradition, there were women who became ritual leaders. This tradition later became rare, however, and almost died out after Dutch evangelists converted the majority of Torajans to Christianity (Suryadarma 2006, 123; Waterson 2009, 232-33). Hence, at the symbolic level of Torajan custom or *adat*, women have high social status bestowed upon them.

There are counter-trends to these gender practices, however. In Torajan society, it is not gender, but class status, that divides the society. Women from upper classes are not allowed to marry men of lower class; whereas this is not applied to men (Nooy-Palm 1979, 31; Tangdilintin 2006, 115-6). In addition, the coming of Christianity to Toraja and the New Order Policy restricted women’s roles to wifehood and motherhood (Waterson 2009, 241). Similarly, and notably since 1974, the New Order Government established women’s organizations composed of wives of civil servants and army officers, in order to promote the domestic orientation of Indonesian women. In Toraja, this organization was headed by the Bupati’s wife (Waterson 2009, 241).

Despite these counter-gender practices, the dominant gender discourses of Torajan culture promote gender equality and respect for women. Research data shows that the conflicting gender regimes of the Toraja Church and Torajan culture became tense and provided grounds for resistance on both small and larger scales. Toraja Church documents and writings show that Torajan men struggled for gender equality very early, even before the Church was established, and before the birth of Western feminist theology or any encounter with it. While Western feminist theologies emerged during the 1960s (Gross 1996), the struggle for gender equality in Toraja Church began much earlier.

For example, in a discussion on women’s right to vote for Church offices at a missionary conference in Rantepao in 1937, four out of seven people agreed to give women the right to vote, while only three members disagreed. However, this decision was not realized, because the missionary leaders did not approve (Anggui 2006, 42).



Since Toraja Church was established in 1947, this struggle of male leaders became more obvious and heated through several synod general assemblies, such as the fifth assembly in Rantepao in 1955, the seventh assembly in Makale in 1959, the twelfth assembly in Makale in 1970, the thirteenth assembly in Palopo in 1972, and the fifteenth assembly in Rantepao in 1978.

There were also strategic gender equality practices that were carried out within the patriarchal gender regime of the Church. For example, in 1960, seven students were sent from Toraja Church to study at Jakarta Theological School. They all requested financial aid from the Church, but the Church gave financial support to only six. The other student did not receive support because she was a woman. Instead of conforming to this gender discriminatory practice, the six male students agreed to divide their scholarships into seven so that the female student received the same amount (Anggui 2011, 30-31). This female student later became the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church.

The above evidence shows that in the early period, Toraja Church gender egalitarianism was drawn from nowhere but their own culture. Toraja Church leader, Rev. A.J. Anggui, and sociologist Suryadarma, agree that the gender egalitarian values of Toraja culture were one of the sources of resistance and transformation of this Church's gender regime (Anggui 2011, 32-33; Suryadarma 2006, 124). In other words, these conflicting gender structures, existing in parallel in the Toraja Church context, shaped the Torajan agency for resistance. They also functioned as a destabilizing force for change.

#### Torajan Political Context

Beside the cultural context, the political context also played a role in the transformation of the Toraja Church's gender structure. In particular, the Torajan political context offered opportunities for personal empowerment through higher education and international exchange, which in turn led to unpredictable accumulation of resources by the agents.

From the colonial period to the present, the Torajan political context in general has facilitated opportunities for education and international exchange. During the colonial period (1900-1942), the Dutch colonial government invested in education for female children and protected women. The Dutch government opened two public schools using the Torajan and Melayuan languages in 1908. They also opened another school that used the Dutch language in 1929, and one more with the name "Christelijke Torajase School" in Rantepao in 1938. From the beginning, female children were admitted to these schools (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006c, 65-66). In 1967, women were allowed to take Christian education in STT Rantepao, and several women became teachers of Christian education during this period. Even though women were not allowed to take theological education in Toraja Church's theological institutions, such as STT Rantepao, before 1984, other theological seminaries or structures such as STT Jakarta opened this opportunity for women. Indeed, women pioneers, such as Damaris M. Anggui-Pakan and Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, were able to receive theological education in STT Jakarta in 1959 and 1972 respectively (Anggui 2011, 31-32; Hutabarat-Lebang 2006c, 69-70). This reveals that the simultaneous operation of multiple incompatible structures can result in the accumulation of resources by agents.

After Independence in 1945, Indonesia opened the country to the outside world in order to boost industrialization and international relations (Vickers 2005, 126-133). This integration of Indonesia in the global context facilitated, among other things, international travel, personal empowerment through higher education, and international interaction with women's rights movements. As an administrative unit in Indonesia, Toraja also benefited from this policy. For example, Rev. A.J. Anggui, who later became chairman of Toraja Church synod and a key figure in Toraja Church reform, including gender reform, earned his Master of Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1965. His education from the United States, and his worldwide knowledge and experiences, qualified him for a leading position in the Toraja Church. Perhaps his worldwide experience also broadened his vision of gender-inclusive church leadership. Upon his return to Toraja Church, he assumed a leading position at the Theological School in

Rantepao and on the Church synod. Under his leadership, women's rights in theological education and leadership participation improved step-by-step.

Another typical example of the power of global integration comes from Rev. Damaris M. Anggui-Pakan, who later became the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church and a key figure in the struggle for women's rights. She was present at the Asia Church Women's Conference (ACWC) in Japan in 1966 (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006b, 55-58). She was also sent by Toraja Church to other countries, such as the United States, India, Philippines, and Taiwan, to join ecumenical women's conferences. She said that her participation in these ecumenical events built strength, confidence and maturity in her struggle for women's rights.<sup>1</sup> By empowering agency, the political context of Toraja Church in particular, and Indonesia in general, therefore played an indirect role in destabilizing the Toraja Church's gender structure.

### Pressure from Religious Context

Beside the cultural and political settings, the religious context of the Toraja Church also had a role in transforming the Church's gender structure. The religious context here means the encounter of the Church with the outside Christian world, both nationally and internationally.

Toraja Church became a member of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (former name "DGI" and present name "PGI") in 1950. It joined the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), which later became the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in 1964. In 1967, Toraja Church became a member of the World Council of Churches and a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 1973 (Hutabarat-Lebang 2006b, 55). Since these Christian ecumenical movements promote, among other things, human rights, contextual theology, and gender equality, Toraja Church, as a member, could not escape their influence. At the level of practice, churches in Indonesia started to ordain women as early as the 1950s and a majority of churches had ordained women by the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> The participation of Toraja Church in progressive Christian movements and its encounter with gender equality practices in neighboring churches thus possibly increased the Church's own awareness of alternative gender practices. Such awareness became both a motivation and a pressure for Toraja Church to change its patriarchal gender structure.

In fact, evidence from research data shows that this encounter did become the ground for change. For instance, one of the reasons raised in favor of women's right to vote in the Church at the fifth general synod assembly of Toraja Church in Rantepao in 1955, reveals awareness by the Toraja Church of gender structure reform in other Indonesian churches. This awareness was articulated by Musa: "I agree with Rev. Sumbung that in the Indonesian Protestant Church, women also vote" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). Change did take place at this synod assembly, which agreed to give women the right to vote for the first time. In the next synod assembly in Rantepao in 1957, a feeling of being under pressure from women's emancipation movements in other churches was again expressed. The assembly was divided into two groups: those for and against women's rights to be elected to Church offices. Here the assembly leaders refused to change the Church's gender structure. The same pressure was expressed in later synod assemblies in 1959, 1965, and 1972. The next four synod assemblies in 1975, 1978 and 1981 saw the reformation of the Torajan Church's structure to accommodate women's rights, culminating in complete change of the Church's gender structure in 1984.

To sum up, this section of the paper has demonstrated that the gender equality practices of Torajan culture; the political context that facilitates educational pursuit and international

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<sup>1</sup> Anggui-Pakan, Damaris M., Rev. Interview with the author.

<sup>2</sup> We have not found an official report about the overall situation of women's ordination in Indonesia. This assumption is drawn from several conversations with Indonesian church leaders and feminist scholars and from Toraja synod assembly records.

experiences that empower agency; and the encounter with progressive Christian communities and gender equality practices in neighboring churches, proved strong external destabilizing forces to Toraja Church's gender structure. The conjunction of these local and translocal structures shaped agency and served as the basis for resistance and transformation of the Toraja Church's gender structure over time. One factor might be stronger than the others, but no single factor can completely explain the transformation of Toraja Church's gender structure.

### **Torajan Agency: Negotiation between Missionary Patriarchal and Local Matrilineal Cultures**

Beside the external destabilizing forces, the internal push of Torajan agency was equally important for the transformation of the gender structure of Toraja Church. This was a long process of interaction and negotiation between the missionary patriarchal culture and the Torajan matrilineal culture and embodied by the actors involved. In this transformation process, and during the pre-1984 period, the local Torajan male leaders, with the limited support of few open-minded Dutch missionaries, played a more prominent role than the women. The Torajan female agents emerged later when they played a no less important role than the men.

#### Male Leaders Negotiating the Patriarchal Structure

The earliest record of men negotiating the patriarchal structure of Toraja Church comes from a 1937 missionary conference, where four out of seven people agreed to give women the right to vote for Church offices. This decision was not realized, however, because the Dutch missionary board did not approve (Anggui 2006, 42). This record does show that there were supporters of women's rights among the missionaries, however. At this time, it was a right to vote in the Church. Would these open-minded missionaries go far enough to support gender equality in the religious order and Church hierarchy?

The battle between the missionary patriarchal perspective and advocates of gender equality in Toraja Church emerged again in the first Church synod assembly of 1947, when the Toraja Church was established. There was a debate between a local gospel teacher, F. Bura, and two Dutch missionaries: Dr. D. J. Van Dijk as chairman of the assembly and Dr. van der Linde, regarding women's participation in church governance. Gender-biased biblical passages were quoted to silence Mr. Bura's questions.

- Mr. Bura:
- (1) Why can't women hold church offices?
  - (2) Why aren't women allowed to vote in the church?
  - (3) What does church governance mean?

Chairman: For the first question, let's look at Corinthians 14:34-35. The second question is related to the first question, meaning women should be quiet. The meaning of church governance is that church offices are not the same as what is outside the church.

Mr. Bura: Please read Romans 16:1.

Chairman: This is not about the office of elder but deacon.

Dr. Van der Linde: We should not think that women are inferior to men, but Paul said that women should not rule over men but men are head of the households. Only this can be used in the Reformed Church's rule. (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1947, 3)

In this debate, the Dutch missionaries imposed a gender-biased interpretation of misogynistic biblical passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which denies women the right to speak in church as follows: "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." The missionaries

successfully silenced appeals for women's rights from this first synod to the fifth synod in 1955. At this later synod, women's rights to vote in the church were raised again. The assembly was divided into two groups: those for and those against women's rights to vote.

Rambu: That right of women belongs to her husband.

Sumbung: After the Second World War, women demanded their rights. This means that Jesus has given women permission. If women are given the right in social matters, they also need to be given the right to vote but not the right to be elected.

Palesang: I agree with the proposal but that right must be limited. Women's labor and thoughts are needed, but their voices are not.

Z.v.d. Hooff: Agree with the proposal from Makassar.

Kadang: I disagree with this proposal with the reason that the household will have two kings if women are given this right.

M. Lebang: It is needed to give them the right to vote, but not the right to be elected.

J. Linting: Give this right to women by seeing the community development. In the beginning, Jesus lifted up women's status. Why are we now viewing women as lower than we are? I agree to give women the right to vote with our guidance.

Siahaya: The Bible does not allow in I Corinthians 14:34-35 (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38–39).

The above record clearly shows how the male leaders of Toraja Church and a Dutch missionary negotiated women's rights in the Church bit-by-bit. The pro-women's rights advocates approached the issue by appealing to Jesus as the source for uplifting women; however, they were careful not to make a big move in face of resistance from the conservative group. Finally, the assembly voted and agreed (23 votes) to give women the right to vote, although not the right to be elected for Church offices such as pastor, elder and deacon.

Right after this general synod assembly, the issue of women's rights to be elected for Toraja Church offices was raised by both Dutch missionaries and Toraja Church leaders, during the sixth synod assembly in Rantepao in 1957. Objections were also raised from both parties, however. During this synod assembly, a proposal from Makale requested women be given the right to hold Church offices. Immediately there was a heated debate, as follows:

Chairman: Church regulation allows only men to hold these offices.

Ds. C. Balke: In Romans 16:1, what does it mean regarding this issue? The Greek word (dialognal) in Romans 16:1, in church history generally, there was no deacon's office. In practice, usually women were deacon's assistants to help in things only women could do; however, they should not hold church offices...

Kesu: We need to hold firm to church regulation. As what was said by the proposer that it is easier for women to earn money, women can help but they should not hold the deacon's office.

Zuster vd. Hooff: The congregation needs to lift up the deacon office because there are things men cannot do but only women can.

M. Lebang: Agree with Zuster vd. Hooff. (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1957, 60–61).

Despite the support of the missionary, Zuster vd. Hooff, and some local leaders concerning women holding diaconate positions, the leadership of the assembly decided to reject the proposal from Makale and held firm to the regulation which had been agreed at the previous assembly. The issue of women holding Church offices was raised again in a proposal from Rombon/Ulusalu at the seventh synod general assembly in Makale in 1959. Similar to what had happened at the previous synod assembly, this immediately ignited a heated debate in which gender-biased biblical texts and

patriarchal interpretations were articulated in order to turn down the proposal (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1959, 76).

Another stepping-stone was reached during the fifteenth general synod assembly in Tagari, Rantepao in 1978. This was perhaps the most heated debate of all, and took up several pages in the record of that assembly. Interestingly, this synod obtained consensus from local leaders to support women's full rights based on gender equality theology, while opponents came only from the Dutch missionaries, and were based on gender-discriminatory theology. According to the record, when the synod leaders brought the issue of women holding Church offices to the fore for discussion, it was quickly objected to by missionary representative, Rev. van Roest:

As a church partner, we need to suggest that church issues need to be based on the Bible. It is not clear that Debora was promoted to be a judge. It was because of Barak's laziness (a man) that Debora was forced to rise up and act as a judge. In Israelite society, there was no female priest. In the New Testament, there was no woman who was lifted up to be a disciple, even though many followers of Jesus were women. In Romans 16, Paul mentioned Febe as a deaconess. This service did not include serving the Word, but only serving food. Paul insisted that women be silent. If we give women opportunities in church offices, it means we intend to build a church which is obsolete (in primitive society, women were lifted up to be priestesses). Only what was said above is based on the Scripture. For us, do we want to be loyal to the Bible or do we want to change the foundation of the church which is the Bible? (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 125).

Despite the harsh and accusing objection of this Dutch missionary toward the acceptance of women for Church offices, the Torajan leaders of the assembly declared, "We have already been aware that the roles of God's people both men and women are not different" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1978, 130). This declaration marked a victory for the belief of local men in equality for men and women in all aspects of religious life. This conviction was institutionalized in 1984. It was clear to this synod assembly that the support for women's rights from some open-minded Dutch missionaries was limited to diaconate positions. Hence at the 1978 and 1984 synod assemblies, there was a polarization between the local perspective and the missionary perspective regarding women's full rights in the Church.

The male agents of change in Toraja Church form a special category of agency in this study, because they represent the enlightened part of the dominating structure. They were men seeking change against the conservative and patriarchal elements of the structure—here the missionary patriarchal gender structure. Some Dutch missionaries did support women's rights; however, their support was limited to diaconate or lay-leadership positions. When it came to the religious authority level of leadership, the Dutch missionaries had a unified perspective on women: they rejected women for these positions. Other sources of my data confirm this finding. For example, in 1967, after joining an ecumenical women's conference in the United States, Mrs. D.M. Anggui-Pakan had the chance to visit Holland, where she met missionaries who had worked in Toraja. When she shared with them that Toraja Church needed both men and women to serve in the future, she did not receive a positive response (Mangoting 2011, 330). According to my interview with Rev. A.J. Anggui, it was not until the 1980s that for the first time GZB included women on their Missionary Managing Board.<sup>3</sup>

The question raised is, what enabled the Torajan leaders go further than the GZB missionaries in supporting women's rights in the Church? Why did they not adopt and maintain the missionary patriarchal theology, rather than choose instead to develop a gender-equality theology right from

<sup>3</sup> Anggui, A. J., Rev. Interview with the author. 2015.

the beginning? They were struggling for women's rights from within the establishment of the Church and before women had a voice themselves. Many of these men were top leaders of the structure, such as Rev. J. Sumbung, Rev. J. Linting, and Rev. A.J. Anggui, who held the highest positions (general chairman) in the Toraja Church synod for several periods. These men were situated in powerful positions and had superior status which had been sanctioned by the religious structure. What made them willing to share power and status with women? The author assumes that these men were not merely driven by women's interests, but also had their own interests or projects which gave them the power and the commitment to pursue gender equality. It is not easy to grasp the male agents' subjectivity which led to their agency exhaustively. The data reveals to a certain extent a sense of gender justice and empathy deriving from Torajan matrilineal culture in these men's agency project. These motives are sometimes mixed together when men strategize to transform the gender structure.

### Gender Justice Agency

A sense of gender justice is treated here as the moral value that men and women must be treated with equal dignity and given equal opportunities. According to Torajan culture, a good person or a good man must treat women with respect and children equally, as the previous section on Torajan culture has shown. As the example of the seven Torajan students who requested financial aid from Toraja Church to study at Jakarta Theological School in 1960 reveals, while the Church gave financial help only to six male students, those six male students decided to divide their scholarships into seven, so that the female student would receive the same amount of financial aid (Anggui 2011, 31). This is a sense of gender justice as part of being a good human being that the male students' culture had cultivated in them. This quality enabled them to resist the discriminatory treatment of the Church. The fact that the Torajan male leaders struggled for women's rights very early, even before Western feminist theology was born, and that their voices for women's rights were persistently raised through several synod assemblies, as presented in the cultural section of this paper, shows that their sense of gender justice must have come from their culture.

### Empathy Agency

Beside the element of gender justice, a sense of empathy was also built into the male agents' project. I find Douglas W. Hollan's work "Vicissitudes of "Empathy" in a Rural Toraja Village" published in *The Anthropology of Empathy: Experiencing the Lives of Others in Pacific Societies* (2011) very helpful in explaining the agency of empathy in Toraja's male leaders. Hollan defines "empathy" as "a truly intersubjective process involving someone attempting to understand as well as someone needing or allowing him- or herself to be understood" (Hollan 2011, 195). He finds that Torajan society is built on a system of dependency and reciprocal exchange. He states: "Exchange is so central to sociality in Toraja, so basic to what is considered human, that there are moral and emotional aspects to it as well" (Hollan 2011, 199). Torajan people feel obliged to help if they feel the needs and concerns of the other are legitimate. People can feel deep shame if their needs are neglected or if they fail to help others or let others down. In Toraja, the concept of "love" involves concern and compassion for the other's needs and plight, and one takes action to help as if one has no other choice. If the appeal for help is from a kinsman, this can stimulate a "powerful feeling of love/compassion/pity for that person" (Hollan 2011, 199).

Hollan also finds that the Torajan sense of empathy is restricted when people perceive the appeal for help is not genuine or is beyond their capacity. Nor do they extend empathy toward lowlander Muslims and animals (Hollan 2011, 196, 204-205). In practice, the capacity to empathize presumably varies within this same culture. This study of Hollan concerning the Torajan culture of empathy is significant, because it can serve as a cultural framework for the agency of empathy of male Toraja Church leaders. With a sense of empathy, the male agents' project has one more solid ground. Being empathetic to the needs and concerns of others, especially women, is part of a moral obligation to be a good human being. This sense of empathy is built into subjectivity and forms

men's agency to act. The male leaders' sense of empathy can be clearly seen in their discourses in a few records of the Toraja Church synod assemblies, both in terms of sharing concerns with women, and in terms of feeling ashamed about leaving the women behind.

For instance, at the fifth Toraja Church synod assembly in Rantepao in 1955, a Church leader from Makassar presented a proposal appealing for women's right to vote. He said: "We are from Makassar. We often received insistence from the women who requested that they also be given the right to run the congregation. What we mean is that: 'Until now only men have the right to speak.' We expect that women will also be given the right to vote" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). His discourse reveals that the men from Makassar felt obliged to help the women, because they felt and understood their needs and concerns. When they presented the proposal, it was not only the women's problem. They made it their own problem by using the first-person expressions "we mean" and "we expect." Their agency was embedded in their word choice and also their courage to speak out for women against the patriarchal structure.

We find a strong example of empathetic agency in the struggle of Rev. A.J. Anggui for gender equality in Toraja Church. He can be considered a key figure in this process. His empathy for women can be elicited from his relationship with his wife and his radical reforms of the gender structure. He and his wife, Rev. D. M. Anggui-Pakan, the first ordained female pastor of Toraja Church, met at Jakarta Theological School in 1959. He was her senior and helped her in her study. Later they were married. For twenty years, she worked faithfully as a professor at Rantepao Theological School and Makassar Theological School while patiently longing for women to be accepted into church leadership. During this period, Rev. Anggui was continuously promoted to important positions in Toraja Church. He became Head of Rantepao Theological School and also General Secretary of the church synod in 1965. He then became Chairman of the church synod in 1981 and kept this position for successive synods of 1984 and 1988. It is not difficult to draw from Rev. Anggui a sense of love, compassion, and empathy for his wife's concerns and wishes from those twenty years of sharing life together. Under his leadership, radical changes were made. He employed various strategies, ranging from utilizing his personal position to empower women, to raising gender equality and creating room for women to serve and prove themselves.

Rev. Anggui utilized his position as Head of the Rantepao Theological School and General Secretary of the church synod to empower women through education. Since the missionaries did not want women to become pastors, and in order to avoid direct confrontation, he maneuvered his power to help the women step-by-step. First, he devised the Christian Education Program to train teachers of religion for public schools so that women could become religious education teachers. In 1967, women were admitted to this program. He made a further move in 1970 by revising the Christian Education and Theological Programs. He wisely designed the curricula for both programs to have the same subjects, except for final year subjects. The advantage was that students from the Christian Education Program could then take extra subjects from the Theological Program if they wanted to be pastors.<sup>4</sup>

Rev. Ribka Sinda, the second ordained female pastor, also revealed that in this early period, Rev. A.J. Anggui played a significant role in placing and assisting female pastors to serve at local churches. The placement of female pastors in local churches faced much difficulty, since the churches were not used to women as leaders. However, Rev. Anggui had confidence in women's ability to serve. He was patient in connecting and negotiating with leaders of churches so that female pastor candidates were given a chance to serve and prove themselves. Thanks to his care and help, several female pastors, including Rev. Ribka and her supervisees, were accepted and succeeded in transforming the Toraja Church's view toward women. These pieces of evidence demonstrate that Rev. A.J. Anggui's subjective agency cannot be explained without reference to the complexity of his situatedness: his encounters with local and translocal cultural schemas; his individual position

<sup>4</sup> Anggui A. J., Rev., and Rev. D.M. Anggui-Pakan. Interview with the author.

in the church structure; and his relations with other actors, such as his relation with his wife, Rev. Anggui-Pakan.

To sum up, male leaders played a significant, if not decisive, role in the transformation of Toraja Church's gender structure. This section has to a certain extent pointed out that their agency arose from their cultural framework of gender justice and empathy, which formed the ground for their project to be good human beings. To struggle for women's rights also meant establishing their own projects. These powerful cultural sources motivated them to negotiate with the missionary patriarchal culture. Their struggle is seen through various strategies, ranging from persistently raising their voices for women's rights, to skillfully utilizing their powerful positions to empower women and reform the structure, thereby creating room for women to serve and prove themselves. They did the job of clearing structural constraints and creating opportunities for the women agents. Their agency did not happen all of a sudden, however, but was founded on the existing needs, concerns, and also pressure from the women agents. Many of the men were also transformed in the process, moving from holding a gender exclusive to a gender inclusive position, as seen in their increasing support of women in the church synod records.

### **Torajan Women Negotiating the Patriarchal Structure**

While the local men played the major role in negotiating the formal gender structure of the Church in the public arena, which was exclusive to men, local women skillfully and gently made use of the limited space that had opened in the structure to press forward the issue. Women's agency in Toraja Church is a complex matter for analysis, even more complex than the male leaders' agency. Women comprise the subordinate group and are themselves diverse in terms of their social status, education and aspirations. What united them was their belief in gender equality. During the pre-1984 period, the target of women's resistance was Toraja Church's patriarchal regulations and leadership established by the missionaries; however, their strategies were generally directed toward gaining support from the male agents or male sympathizers. There were basically three groups of women.

The majority group included lay women who demanded the right to manage the congregation. This project might have been inspired by a sense of gender injustice and a lack of empathy from their culture. Torajan culture prescribes that men and women be treated equally. Torajan women are very active in their household management, in local religious traditions and society beside the men, but now suddenly they were deprived of this role in the Church. That their needs and concerns were neglected produced shame, both in themselves and in the Church's leaders, in light of their cultural framework. This shame enabled their agency to transform the situation. There is not enough evidence from the available data to give a religious or theological ground for their agency. To establish their project, these women relied on both male sympathizers and women's collective power and voice to gradually achieve their rights.

The earliest voice for Torajan women is found in the record of the synod general assembly of Toraja Church in Rantepao in 1955, through a proposal from Makassar. It reads, "We are from Makassar. We often receive insistence from women who request that they be given the right to manage the congregation. What we mean is that only men have the right to speak, so we expect women will also be given the right to vote" (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1955, 38). The discourse here reveals that women felt excluded from participation in Church life. Since they were not allowed to have a voice, they appealed to the men for help. The women demanded the right to vote as the first step. They successfully achieved this during the synod assembly. The women also formed a women's fellowship called *Persekutuan Wanita Gereja Toraja* or PWGT in 1966, and had their representative voice heard for the first time at the synod assembly in Makale in 1970, where they demanded women's rights to lead worship and preach at the Church (Komisi Usaha Gereja Toraja 1970, 53).



The second group of women consists of a couple of well-educated women who went against the current and followed a different path for their lives. They left their hometowns to seek theological education outside Toraja Church, which had blocked the door to women's religious careers at that time. They had a clear sense of religious calling and wanted to make it their career. This was their project. They were also fully aware of their subordinate position in the Church, but believed that this was not the final scenerio. Their agency was enabled by conflicting subjectivities: being subordinated in the Church by religious schema, but being equal with men in terms of their cultural schema. Their project was enabled by their hopes and choices. Their strategies were directed toward showing their longing for recognition of their presence, aspirations, and contributions.

For example, Ms. Damaris M. Pakan had a clear calling to become a female pastor when she finished high school. She decided to enter Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1959, at a time when the Toraja Church had not accepted women to become pastors. She wrote in her book *Berbuah dalam Kristus* [Bearing Fruit in Christ] that "I had a strong belief and hope that this situation will surely change one day, so I firmly went on with my study at STT Jakarta." (Pdt. Ny. D.M. Anggui, S.Th, nd., 5). After graduation in 1965, she came back to Toraja Church and was accepted as a teacher at Rantepao Theological School. Her acceptance at this seminary was thanks to the support of some individual male leaders, and especially her status as the wife of Rev. A.J. Anggui, who was Rector. Though the acceptance of Ms. Pakan's leadership at Rantepao Theological School did not mean women's leadership was accepted generally, her position in the structure gave her the opportunity to prove women's capacity to lead and also gave her room to advocate for women's rights in the Church.

Nowhere in her writings, or her conversation with me, did she make any verbal demands or reveal confrontation with the Church. Instead, she showed it through her emotion and her work. She wrote in the aforementioned book, "Beginning from the period of study in STT Jakarta to the period of intense struggle, it was to show the longing so that a woman can also be accepted." (Pdt. Ny. D.M. Anggui, S.Th, nd., 4). She patiently and faithfully carried out her duties as a theological professor, training several male pastors for Toraja Church over a period of twenty years. She said this reality—a non-ordained woman training male pastors—became an issue for the Church. Her students later became sympathizers and supporters of her ordination.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, her personal relationship with Rev. A.J. Anggui as wife was a channel for her to make her wishes and concerns heard. She found solidarity and strength from the Toraja women and also other women internationally through her active participation in PWGT and the international ecumenical women's bodies.

The third group of women includes a few women who did not have a clear calling, but eventually found it in a later period. During this earlier period, their project was simply to have a decent life. When Christian education was opened for women, it became an opportunity for them to accomplish their project, since this program could offer them teaching positions at public schools. For example, in an interview, a female pastor confessed:

In the beginning, I actually did not desire to be a pastor because I knew that there were no female pastors but only male pastors. Second, I saw that pastors suffered a lot and got very little financial support. So I was not interested to become a pastor. Therefore, I entered the Theological School to become a teacher of religion.

In this sense, their agency was not to resist, but to flow with the new opportunity. In brief, this early period of women's struggle for leadership in Toraja Church sees the diversity of women's

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<sup>5</sup> Anggui-Pakan, Damaris M. Rev. Interview with the author.

motivations, goals, and strategies. They used soft power to approach their struggle and appealed to powerful men to act for them. The common thread that wove these groups of women's agency together was their participation in the new current that brought transformation to the Torajan gender structure in 1984, when women were given equal rights with men in all aspects of Church life.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to provide a comprehensive explanation of the transformation of Toraja Church toward women-inclusive leadership, by deconstructing the transformation process and focusing on the relationship between context, gender structure, and agency. The study has found that the convergence of the Toraja Church's patriarchal gender structure with the gender egalitarian values of Toraja culture; the Toraja political context that facilitates personal empowerment and international exchange that empowers the agency; and the Church's encounter with progressive Christian movements and gender equality practices in neighboring churches, became strong destabilizing forces for the patriarchal gender regime of Toraja Church. For these reasons, this paper has benefited from Sewell's proposed approach to analyzing structural transformation.

Beside these external forces, Torajan agency played a significant role in the process. Here the paper argued for an extension of feminist analysis of women's movements for leadership in religious organizations to include male agency. The case of Toraja Church shows that male agency played a decisive role in the early period of the struggle. The male agents' subjectivity was informed by the symbolic expressions of gender justice and empathy as the ethical core of being a good human being, which was derived from their local cultural framework, and also from social relations with female agents. This enabled them to negotiate strategically with the missionary patriarchal structure to transform the gender structure of the Church. While there were open-minded Dutch missionaries who supported women's rights, their support was limited when it came to the level of religious order. This shows that positive Asian values can be strong forces for transforming patriarchal religions.

Beside male agency, the study found that women's agency also played an important role in pushing for structural change in achieving women's leadership in the Church. In the analysis of women's agency in Toraja Church, Ortner's framework seems inadequate, because in the struggle for women's leadership, female agents benefited from the structural change that in the early period was brought about mostly by male agents. The focus on analyzing cultural schemas might not sufficiently capture the complexity of the women's subjectivity. Agency in this sense is pragmatic.

One of the implications of this study is that women are not alone in their struggle when men also start to make it their own. However, narrowing the gap between male patriarchy to gender equality is an art and a puzzle for gender activists in each context. The case of Toraja Church might be unique because it is from a matrilineal culture; however, this study assumes that there are patriarchal churches within other matrilineal cultures. Further studies should investigate why men respond or do not respond to women's struggles in both patriarchal and matrilineal cultures, in order to form a more accurate assessment of the issue.

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# EXPLORING YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUALITY AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY CHOIR: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM CHRIST UNIVERSITY AND VIT STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore young people's perceptions of spirituality and the role of the university choir in India. A survey was conducted among Choir group students of Christ University and Non-Choir group students of Christ University and Vermana Institute of Technology in relation to four dimensions of spirituality—self-awareness, spiritual beliefs, spiritual practices and spiritual needs. The survey results were analyzed to determine if there was any significant difference between the two groups in each dimension of spirituality. The analysis confirmed that there were significant differences between the two groups in the dimensions of spiritual beliefs and spiritual needs. In both cases, the Choir group obtained higher spirituality scores. A further analysis was carried out of data from focus group discussions in order to explore the different perceptions of spirituality among the students. Four different groups of spiritual perceptions were identified—*religious and open spirituality*, *religious and closed spirituality*, *secular and open spirituality* and *secular and closed spirituality*. Finally, the role of the university choir in all these groups was redefined based on the research findings.

## Introduction

India has a rapidly growing young population, as evidenced by the National Census Bureau. Thirty percent of the population is aged between ten and twenty-four years (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner 2011). It is also a multilingual society with over 780 languages spoken used (Bhasha Research and Publication Centre 2014). Besides this, there are 5.2 million foreign-born persons living in India (Population Division of the United Nations: Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2015). Along with globalization and open markets, there has been an influx of professionals and students from Asian, African, European and other cultures. This influx has exposed Indian youth to opportunities to share diverse experiences, but also to the challenges of competition. Rising mental health problems, addictions, loosening ties with social support systems and growing preoccupations with career goals have led young people to become increasingly lonely and anxious. As per the WHO Report of 2015, more than 2.6 million young people aged between ten and twenty-four years of age die each year in the world, mostly due to preventable causes. About 16 million girls aged fifteen to nineteen give birth every year. Young people, fifteen to twenty-four years old, account for 40 percent of all new HIV infections among adults. In any given year, about 20 percent of adolescents will experience a mental health problem, most commonly depression or anxiety. An estimated 150 million young people use tobacco,

negatively affecting their health. Approximately 430 young people aged ten to twenty-four die every day through interpersonal violence (World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region, 2015). These statistics are not very different for many Asian countries, including India.

In this destructive environment, where does spirituality stand amongst young people of today? There is no single definition of “spirituality” (McSherry and Draper 1998). Spirituality is complex, highly subjective, and difficult to measure (Coyle 2002). While religion is an aspect of spirituality for many people, spirituality is not limited to religious beliefs or practices. It involves the human quest for meaning in life that goes beyond religion (Tanyi 2002). In the context of relationships, spirituality can mean a sacred relationship with the Divine, a social relationship with others, an inner relationship with self or a universal relationship with the totality of being. In order to quantify these relational dimensions of spirituality, a survey tool developed by Parsian and Dunning was employed for this study (Parsian and Dunning 2009). The tool measures a person’s Self-Awareness, Spiritual Beliefs, Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Needs. Apart from this quantitative approach, focus group discussions were conducted in order to measure the relational dimensions of spirituality in a qualitative manner. These multifaceted observations provide better understanding about the perceptions of spirituality among young people in Indian universities. Based on this understanding, the role of the university choir can be redefined.

## History of Western Music

It has long been agreed that music has the capacity to improve the mind and body and positively enhance spirituality. Plato, who had the same view on music, wrote in the Book III of *The Republic*, “Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful” (quoted in Theory of Music 2008).

According to Mocquereau, the Greeks had a high ideal of music and used it to lay the foundations of civilization and morality. Music was used as a source of peace, order for the soul, and beauty for the body (Mocquereau 1896, 1-2). The Bible also admonishes believers not to get drunk on wine, but to be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit (Eph. 5:18-19). The Church has stood on this teaching and used and developed music extensively throughout its history in order to nurture the spirituality of its members.

As the Christ University Student Choir mainly adopts western classical and popular songs in its repertoire, it is worth at least skimming through the history of western music. Western music developed along with the ancient civilizations of the Near East and Mediterranean regions, particularly ancient Greece and Rome (Hanning 2010). Aristotle believed that music could imitate and thus directly influence character and behaviour, and should play an important role in education (Pelosi 2010, 20). When the Romans came to power after the Greek empire, they did not hesitate to adopt the legacy of Greek musical culture. Music played an important role in religious rituals, military events, theatrical performances, private entertainment, and youth education. As the Roman Empire declined, the Church came to center stage as a unifying force and channel of culture in Europe until the tenth century. The Church saw in music the power to inspire divine thoughts and to influence the character of its listeners (Pelosi 2010, 21-22). In fact, St. Augustine, one of the early Church fathers, wrote in Book 10, Chapter 33 of his *Confessions*, “When they are sung in a clear voice to the most appropriate tune, I again acknowledge the great value of this practice” (quoted in Chaplain Mike 2011).

As the early Church spread from Jerusalem to Asia Minor, North Africa, and Europe, it expanded its influence by absorbing other musical dynamics. During the ninth century, Frankish monks and nuns—from modern day Switzerland, France, and western Germany—played a crucial role in the preservation of these musical influences by laboriously notating the texts and melodies

into manuscripts that were housed in monastic libraries. The repertory of melodies thus transmitted in writing is known as Gregorian chant (Pelosi 2010, 22-24). Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, Western Europe music remained religious. Then, during the fifteenth century, it began to cultivate secular genres with the contribution of English composers. Another change took place in the sixteenth century after the Reformation. In early Christian services, all those present had sung the hymns and psalms, but by the late Middle Ages the music in Catholic services was assigned to the celebrants and choir alone. Then Martin Luther sought to restore the congregation's role in church music when his new church was established (Pelosi 2010, 152). Coming to the seventeenth century, a delightful, theatrical and expressive music began to prevail, known as Baroque, which laid a systematic foundation, not only for sacred, but also for secular music. Baroque composers strived to express a wide range of feelings vividly and vigorously. It was in this era that the early operas were staged. The eighteenth century, often called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment, is also known in music history as the classical era. The word "classical" is used because of the mature styles of the century's composers, such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. In music history, the nineteenth century is known as the Age of Romanticism. Romanticism transgressed the rules and limits set by its predecessors and went on to introduce distant, legendary, fanciful, and imaginative music (Pelosi 2010, 303, 399). From the twentieth century to the present is the Age of Modern music, where the stride of technological and social change has been more rapid than in any previous era, and music has not escaped its direct impact. In this present era, popular and classical music began to separate. Some composers even abandoned the precision of music notation that many Romantic composers prided themselves in (Pelosi 2010, 517). The student choir of Christ University stands in the stream of this long history of western music and has adopted not only so-called sacred and classical music, but also popular music.

### **Christ University and the Student Choir**

Christ University was established in July 1969 by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), the first indigenous congregation of India. Located in Bengaluru, the capital of Karnataka state in South India, the University has been continually rated among the top ten educational institutions of India. In spite of being established by a Christian organization, the University is secular in its outlook and welcomes students from all castes, religions, creeds, and languages. Currently, the University has about 20,000 students in its undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes. The gender ratio is equal between male and female students. Characterized by religious diversity, 64 percent of students identify themselves as Hindus, 25 percent as Christians, 4 percent as Jains and 6 percent as Muslims, Buddhists or the believers of other religions. Only 1 percent of students identify themselves as atheists. The University also reflects regional diversity, with 67 percent of its students from South India, 23 percent from North India, 6 percent from East India and 4 percent from West India. About forty national and international languages are spoken daily on the campus—English being the most predominant, followed by Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tamil. A total of 630 foreign students add an international flavour to this multicultural, multilingual, multiregional and multi-religious environment (Christ University 2016). Having the advantage of such a dynamic, the University initiates various inter and intra-collegiate cultural festivals. It also actively encourages mega theatrical productions in which about 200 students from different deaneries, religions and cultures take part.

The University is proud of its Student Choir, which was established in the year 2000 and now has 160 members from diverse backgrounds. The majority of its members come from South India (75 percent), followed by North India (16 percent), East India (5 percent), and West India (4 percent). In terms of social category, 92 percent of members are from the General category followed by OBC/SC/ST category (6 percent) and others (2 percent). The choir reflects also a very diverse spectrum of mother tongues, beginning with Malayalam (41 percent) followed by Tamil (14



percent), Hindi (14 percent), English (7 percent), Konkani (7 percent), Bengali (5 percent), Kannada (3 percent), Telugu (3 percent), Marathi (2 percent), Nepali (2 percent) and Odiya (2 percent). In terms of religious diversity, the majority of the members are Christians (71 percent), followed by Hindus (27 percent) and Buddhist (2 percent) (Yeon 2016). Though the Choir members have extremely diverse backgrounds of region, class, language, religion, culture and music, they learn to be in tune with each other through choir training. On average, the Choir sings twenty songs per year, of which 60 percent are Christian. However, the Choir has also been performing pieces ranging from classical to contemporary, that is, from Handel to TOTO, Sting and the Police, Michael Jackson and many more. The Choir travels, not only to participate in competitions, but also to serve children in orphanages and elderly people in old age homes as noble social causes. Music practices may improve their spirituality, which motivates them to demonstrate their genuine concern for the underprivileged. An investigation into music as a vehicle for service is outside of the scope of this study, however, and would require further research. The conductor of the Choir nevertheless believes that students develop character, conduct and discipline through their tenure in the Choir (Jason Kishander, unpublished data, March 24, 2016).

### **Vemana Institute of Technology (VIT)**

The Institute was established in 1999 and is located in Bengaluru. Because situated in the heart of the Silicon Valley of India, the Institute has good interaction with various IT Companies (Vemana Institute of Technology n.d.). This provides extra exposure to western culture to a certain degree. In addition to the survey of the 220 students of Christ University (85 from the Student Choir and 135 from the Non-Choir group), 100 VIT students were also selected for the survey so as to maintain more balanced perceptions of spirituality, especially among the Non-Choir group.

### **Methodology**

A Spiritual Self-Assessment Survey was conducted among 320 students from convenient sample groups: 220 from Christ University (85 from the Student Choir and 135 from the Non-Choir group) and 100 Non-Choir group students from Vemana Institute of Technology, Bengaluru. The students were given a questionnaire developed by Parsian and Dunning, which was originally devised to measure the spirituality of young adults with diabetes in Australia. The authors confirm that the questionnaire is a valid and reliable research tool that can be generalized to a wider population of young people with or without diabetes (Parsian and Dunning 2009, 7). Parsian and Dunning have defined spirituality as a “concept encompassing the search for meaning in life, self-actualisation and connection with inner self and the universal whole” (Parsian and Dunning, 2009, 2).

The final questionnaire has a total of twenty-nine questions divided into four dimensions: Self-Awareness, Spiritual Beliefs, Spiritual Practices and Spiritual Needs. The dimension of Self-Awareness, like one’s brain, involves conscious knowledge of one’s own character, feelings, motives, and desires. Thus the questionnaire asks about satisfaction with self, quality of life, positive attitude, self-esteem, self-confidence, meaning in life, equality with others, compassionate character, and meaning in difficult situations. The dimension of Spiritual Beliefs, akin to that of the heart, involves inner attachment to the Divine or to the self. In this questionnaire, the latter is emphasized. Thus it questions life goals, self-realization, life approaches, and life integration. The dimension of Spiritual Practices, like a person’s hands and feet, involves actions taken to improve one’s spirituality. The questionnaire asks about environmental friendliness, reading books about spirituality, achieving inner peace, living in harmony with nature, taking the opportunity for spiritual enhancement, and meditation. The dimension of Spiritual Needs, like one’s life, involves various aspects of spiritual survival. The questionnaire asks about life purpose, the role of music,

the mysteries of life, relationships, inner peace, beauty, connections with people, evolving life, and a meaningful life. This tool was re-examined from the perspective of Indian university students on the hypothesis that the Choir group students would obtain higher spirituality scores than the Non-Choir group students in all four dimensions.

Responses provided by students in a casual manner, such as not answering some of the mandatory questions or providing false information, were discarded. As a result, 278 out of 320 cases were taken for analysis. Through Factor Analysis, it was found that three questions had collected invalid data and Cronbach's Alpha test indicated that the data collected for the dimension of Spiritual Practices was not reliable. Further analysis was conducted excluding these data. The average scores were computed on each of the three remaining dimensions. A boxplot was used to check outliers and extreme values. The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted on the average scores of each dimension to measure the normality of data. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data was not normal across all dimensions for each group. Thus a Mann-Whitney U test was used for two independent samples of non-parametric data. Kruskal-Wallis' One Way ANOVA test was employed for three or more independent samples of non-parametric data. Not only Choir vs Non-Choir group variables, but also Gender, Age, Religion and Spiritual Inclination group variables were considered in order to measure statistically significant differences across the spiritual dimensions.

The total spirituality score was computed by taking the average score of all dimensions. Based on the result, the students from Christ University were divided into four focus groups: Choir group with High Spirituality, Choir group with Low Spirituality, Non-Choir group with High Spirituality, and Non-Choir group with Low Spirituality. Thirteen students representing each group were then called for focus group discussions—first the Choir group and second the Non-Choir groups (Yeon and GS. 2016). Data from the focus group discussions was carefully examined to find reasons behind spirituality score differences and the diverse perceptions of spirituality amongst the young students.

## Findings

### Survey Data Analysis

Factor Analysis results indicate that three questions have collected invalid data.

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>

	Component			
	1 (SB)	2 (SA)	3 (SN)	4 (SP)
SA9				
SP2	.599			.380
SP5	.692			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Suppressed coefficient values less than .3. <sup>a</sup> Rotation converged in 5 iterations.				

The responses collected for the ninth question on Self-Awareness, that is, "I find meaning in difficult situations," had less than a .3 factor loading coefficient value, which means they were not valid for any dimensions (Table 1). The variable was thus discarded. The responses collected for the second and fifth questions concerning Spiritual Practices, i.e., "I read books about spirituality" and "I try to find any opportunity to enhance spirituality" had a greater than .3 factor loading

coefficient values (SP2 loading = .599, SP5 loading = .592). However, their loadings were found to be more valid for Spiritual Beliefs (Table 1). As reading books about spirituality and trying to find opportunities for spiritual enhancement evidently belong to Spiritual Practices, these two variables were also discarded.

Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted on the revised data set for each of the four dimensions, and its results indicated that the data set collected for Spiritual Practices was not reliable ( $\alpha < 0.7$ ) (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.620	4

Table 3. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
P1	8.65	2.772	.348	.586
P2	9.11	2.349	.407	.549
P3	8.38	2.637	.548	.462
P4	8.32	2.711	.332	.599

The "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" field suggested that the deletion of any of the four questions would not improve Cronbach's Alpha value for Spiritual Practices (Table 3). The data set for this dimension was thus discarded.

A boxplot was used to check outliers and extreme values. Yet even after deselecting the outliers and extreme values, the Shapiro-Wilk test result indicated that the data sets of all three dimensions were not normally distributed over the Choir vs Non-Choir group variable ( $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 4). It was the same for all other groups variables—Gender, Religion, Age Group and Spiritual Inclination. As a result, Non-Parametric Tests had to be conducted for mean rank comparison analysis.

Table 4. Test of Normality

	Choir vs Non Choir	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Self_Awareness	Choir	.174	78	.000	.956	78	.009
	Non Choir	.093	200	.000	.973	200	.001
Spiritual_Beliefs	Choir	.128	78	.003	.920	78	.000
	Non Choir	.132	200	.000	.952	200	.000
Spiritual_Needs	Choir	.119	78	.008	.938	78	.001
	Non Choir	.089	200	.001	.968	200	.000

The Mann-Whitney U test result indicated that there was no significant difference between the Choir group (Mean Rank = 141.49) and the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 138.72) in the dimension of Self-Awareness ( $U = 7,645$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 5, Table 6). This meant whether a person

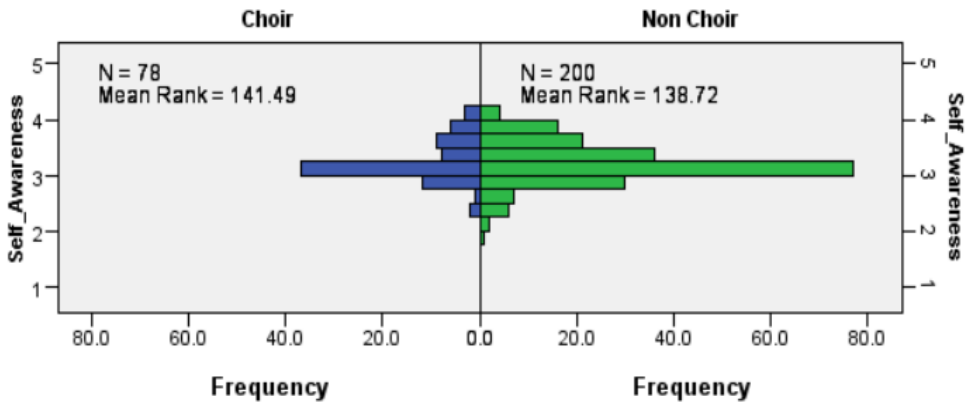
joins the Choir or not, he or she would obtain more or less equal scores of Self-Awareness with the people in the other group.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Summary (Self-Awareness)

SINo	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Self Awareness is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.796	Retain the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of Spiritual_Beliefs is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.001	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of Spiritual_Needs is the same across categories of Choir_NonChoir.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.036	Reject the null hypothesis.

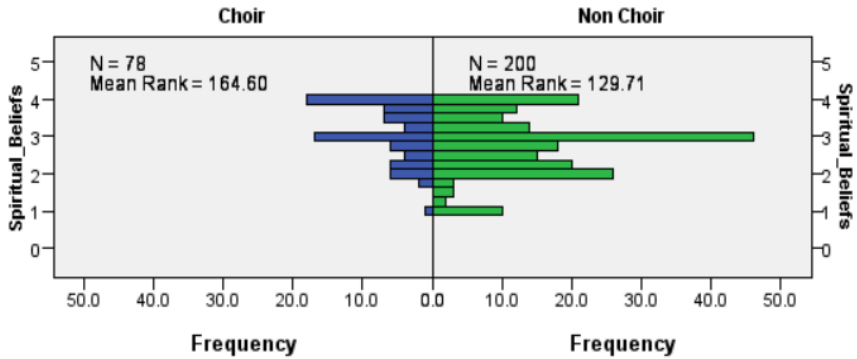
Asymptotic significance are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Table 6. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Self-Awareness)



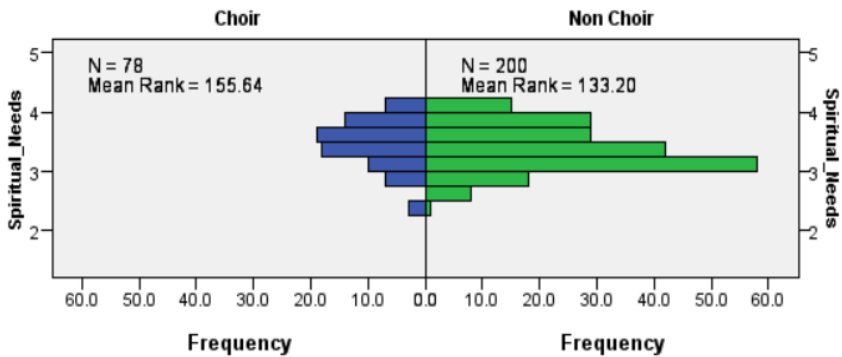
The Choir group (Mean Rank = 164.60) was statistically significantly higher than the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 129.71) in the dimension of Spiritual Beliefs ( $U = 5,842$ ,  $p = .001$ ) (Table 7). However, it did not confirm any causality between the Choir group and spiritual beliefs. In other words, we cannot say that the Choir students obtained significantly higher mean rank for Spiritual Beliefs because they had joined the Choir. The same type of interpretation was applied to all the following Mean Rank Comparison analyses.

Table 7. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Spiritual Beliefs)



The Choir group (Mean Rank = 155.64) was again statistically significantly higher than the Non-Choir group (Mean Rank = 133.20) in the dimension of Spiritual Needs ( $U = 6,541$ ,  $p = .36$ ) (Table 8). The Choir group students felt significantly greater spiritual needs than the Non-Choir group students. This did not confirm that the difference was caused by the Choir group students joining the Choir.

Table 8. Choir and Non-Choir Mean Rank Comparison (Spiritual Needs)



The Mann-Whitney U test result on Gender indicated that there was no significant difference in all three dimensions. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result on Age Group (17-18, 19-20, 21-22, 23 and Above) indicated that there were statistically significant differences in all three dimensions (Self-Awareness:  $p = .003$ , Spiritual Beliefs:  $p < .0005$ , Spiritual Needs:  $p = .037$ ). The oldest age group (23 and Above) scored the highest spirituality mean rank for each dimension. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result for Religion (Christianity, Hinduism, Others) indicated that there was no significant difference in all three dimensions. The Kruskal-Wallis One Way ANOVA test result on Spiritual Inclination (mild, moderate, strong) indicated that there was no significant difference in the dimension of Self-Awareness ( $p = .204$ ). However, there were statistically significant differences in the other two dimensions (Spiritual Beliefs:  $p < .0005$ , and Spiritual Needs:  $p = .008$ ). Those who had strong spiritual inclinations obtained the highest spirituality mean ranks in the dimensions of Spiritual Beliefs and Spiritual Needs.

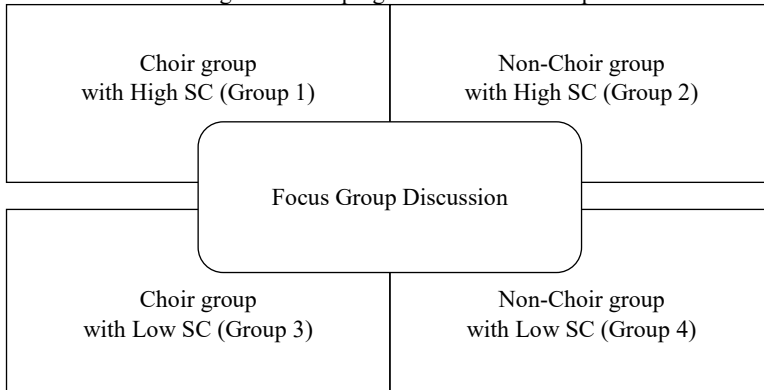
This quantitative analysis brought to our notice that there were significant differences between the Choir group and the Non-Choir group in the dimensions of Spiritual Beliefs and Spiritual Needs. In other words, the Choir group had stronger spiritual beliefs and greater spiritual needs. Where do

these significant differences come from? The answer was sought through qualitative analysis of the focus group discussion data.

#### Focus Group Discussion Data Analysis

According to the analysis of the survey data, the Choir group had stronger spiritual beliefs and felt greater spiritual needs. Yet when the focus group discussion data was analyzed, it gave an entirely new insight into the perceptions of spirituality among Indian University students. Out of thirteen students who came for the focus group discussions, two were from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1), four from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2), three from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) and four from the Non-Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 4) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Groupings for the Focus Group Discussion



The following four students connected their perception of spirituality to religious beliefs and practices. A student from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1) said,

The most important factor on the basis of which I can call myself a spiritual person is that I always look forward to a supreme force that is supervising me and guiding me in everything I do.

Another student from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2) said,

[I call myself spiritual because] I think the Creator is there to guide me in all my ways. Even if bad things happen, I will obey the Creator.

A student from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) said,

[I'm not spiritual because] I don't remember to put God before everything else. I haven't made it a habit to read the Bible every day.

He thinks he is not spiritual simply because he does not read the Bible every day. Another student from the Non-Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 4) said,

[I am not a spiritual person because] I am a non-religious person. I'm not sure if I believe in God. I do not believe in destiny or fate. And I'm not very interested in religious rituals.

She considers herself not spiritual because she does not have a religious inclination. These four students draw their concept of spirituality from religiosity. They can thus be defined as Religious Spirituals whose spirituality is perceived in connection with a sacred relationship with the Divine within a particular religious tradition (Phan 2014). The reason why some of the so-called Religious Spirituals obtained low spirituality scores was that they considered themselves not religious enough, even though they might be excellent in their self-actualisation.

Another group of students perceive their spirituality from a different perspective. A student from the Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 1) said,

It's important to understand that being spiritual is more important than being religious.

He clearly differentiates spirituality from religiosity. Another student from the Non-Choir group with high spirituality scores (Group 2) said,

I believe in self-discovery and am in constant process of it. I am not materialistic and try to see the good and uniqueness in each person.

Her perception of spirituality is not restricted to religious inclination. She instead considers self-discovery an essential factor in becoming spiritual. One more student from the same group made a stronger statement,

A spiritual person does not have to be a religious one. I am agnostic and have distinct thoughts about the existence of God, the cosmos, and the society. I meditate to be lost and found in my world. I help people in every opportunity because I am able to understand and empathize.

The student seeks spirituality not from religion but from her meditation in which she is lost and found in her world. She also performs her own spiritual practices by closely connecting herself with others. A student from the Choir group with low spirituality scores (Group 3) followed the same line of thought when she said,

I just believe in doing what I love and not harming anyone. I believe in actions and kindness rather than praying.

The perception of spirituality of these four students was not limited to or connected to religiosity. Their spirituality was constituted by a social relationship with others, an inner relationship with self, and a universal relationship with the whole of being. This group of students can be classified as the Secular Spirituals. Crawford and Rossiter explain the social background of Secular Spirituals as follows:

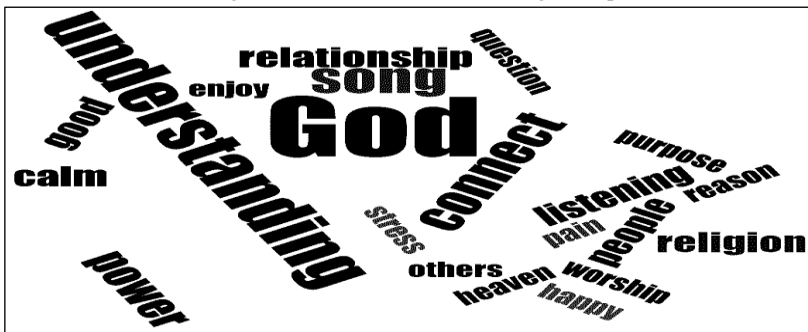
Youth in industrialised, urbanised societies see people negotiating life and forming values more from their own initiative, with less dependence on traditional religious guidance. For them, religion no longer speaks with relevance or authority; if they have concerns about the environment, human rights, personal relationships and sexuality, they are more likely to refer to organisations in society which are unaffiliated with religion. In their self-understanding and self-expression many youngsters are eclectic, drawing on elements in trans-cultural, trans-ethnic and trans-religious ways—the mass medias are significant sources. (Crawford and Rossiter 1996)

Some of the so-called Secular Spirituals obtained high spirituality scores when they realised that their self-actualisation was an essential aspect of spirituality. Based on this observation, not only the Religious Spirituals, but also the Secular Spirituals have full potential to improve their spirituality. It is important to educate them to pursue spiritual growth in their social relationships with others, their inner relationship with self and their universal relationship with the whole of being. It is also interesting to observe the frequency of particular words used by the Religious Spirituals and the Secular Spirituals in the form of word clouds (Davies n.d.). Commonly used words such as “music,” “spiritual” and “life” were not counted. The Religious Spirituals frequently use the words “God” or “understanding” (Figure 2), while the Secular Spirituals preferred to use the words “people” or “experience” (Figure 3). The word frequency of each group was not much different from the characteristics of each group.

Figure 2. Word Cloud for the Secular Spirituals



Figure 3. Word Cloud for the Religious Spirituals



As the focus group discussion data was more closely examined, two subgroups were discovered under each group. The two subgroups may be classified as Open Spirituals and Closed Spirituals. A student who belongs to Open Spirituals said,

Understanding God Almighty can be achieved through constant prayers. [But at the same time] it's important to understand that being spiritual is more important than being religious.



He is a Religious Spiritual and at the same time an Open Spiritual. Another student talks only about God and religious activities in all his responses. He is quite close to the group of Closed Spirituals. One student said,

I'm not a spiritual person. I believe in actions and kindness rather than praying. [But] I do respect the people who believe in spirituality.

She is a Secular Spiritual and at the same time an Open Spiritual. Yet another student said,

Despite having had supernatural experiences in nature, I have remained a cynic for a simple reason that how my destiny should unfurl is to be in my hands. It is to be in my hands, and in my hands alone.

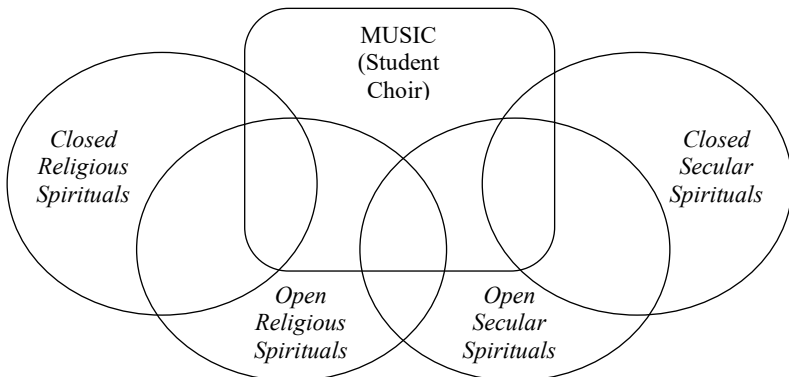
He is a Secular Spiritual and likely to be a Closed Spiritual. These observations disclose how Indian youth position themselves in the context of spiritual perceptions.

## Conclusion

In a broad sense, Indian university students position themselves in the spiritual arena of COOC—*Closed Religious Spirituals*, *Open Religious Spirituals*, *Open Secular Spirituals*, and *Closed Secular Spirituals*. There is an ideological interaction between *Closed Religious Spirituals* and *Open Religious Spirituals*, because they share the same perceptions about religious spirituality. In the same manner, there is an ideological interaction between *Open Secular Spirituals* and *Closed Secular Spirituals*, because they have the same perceptions of secular spirituality. There is also an ideological interaction between *Open Religious Spirituals* and *Open Secular Spirituals* because of their openness towards each other. But *Closed Religious Spirituals* do not interact ideologically with *Closed Secular Spirituals*, and vice versa, due to their closedness to each other.

What then is the potential role of the University Choir in this context? Surprisingly, all thirteen students but one agreed that music was essential for their religious pursuit or self-actualisation. This is where the University Choir can play a crucial role. Westermeyer says that music and spirituality are inextricably interwoven (Westermeyer, 2013). Music can be personally enjoyed and used to improve individual spirituality. Young people, through active and collective activities, strengthen their selves and collective efficacies (Dunne, Murphy, and Golubeva 2014, 150). As shown in the COOC-Music diagram (Figure 4), music in the form of a collective activity, such as a University Choir can provide a space for all the four spiritual groups to interact with each other and nurture their relational spiritualities.

Figure 4. COOC-Music Diagram



Mr Jason Kishander, the present conductor of Christ University Student Choir, notes,

A music piece that has good moral values [for self-actualisation] and/[or] [good spiritual values] that can connect us to God has definitely impacted and transformed many lives. The vision for the Choir is not just to sing but to unite the hearts and minds of students and give them something that is so unique and life changing. (Jason Kishander, unpublished data, March 24, 2016)

When the University Choir embraces all four spiritual groups, youth in a destructive environment have a higher chance of becoming positive and collaborative spiritual adults. This research has found that the existing survey tool for assessing spirituality is neither sufficiently adequate for identifying different spiritual groups among the Indian university students nor is it designed to measure the impact of collective activities of the youth. Therefore, a new tool is to be developed through inter-disciplinary collaboration and applied to the various youth activities of Indian universities. This paper concludes with remarks from Nicholas Cook: “Through a combination of pitches, rhythms, timbres, durations, and dynamics, music can unlock the most hidden contents of one's spiritual and emotional being” (Cook 1987, 1).

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# A “GRAND SUMO TOURNAMENT”: ŠOWQĪ EFFENDI RABBĀNĪ VS. DEGUCHI ONISABURŌ

Bei, Dawei

Published online: 8 November 2017

## ABSTRACT

In 1929, Šowqī Effendi Rabbānī—Guardian of the Bahā’ī Faith, and a great-grandson of Bahā’ Allāh, the Bahā’ī founder—indicated that he was “very surprised to learn that the Ōmoto religion of Japan has published a statement to the effect that the Bahā’ī Revelation is a branch of their religion.” His reference was to 1923 dictations by Deguchi Onisaburō, the co-founder of Ōmoto, introducing a Bahā’ī character called “Bahā’ Allāh” into a fictional dialogue about the coming messiah (hinted as being Onisaburō himself). The episode reveals some of the limitations and unacknowledged agendas of inter-religious dialogue.

The core teachings of the Bahā’ī and Ōmoto religions have an interfaith dimension. Bahā’īs view their nineteenth-century Iranian founder, Bahā’ Allāh, as the most recent in a series of prophets, which includes the central figures of the world’s major religions, whose authority is thus subsumed by the new revelation. Of course such claims raise a number of thorny theological difficulties, to which Bahā’ī scholars are not entirely insensitive.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Ōmoto principle of *bankyō dōkon* (万教同根, “ten thousand teachings, one root”) suggests that Ōmoto is the root, and other religions the branches, of a common religious tree. Richard Fox Young (1988) has described the historical background of this theme, including parallels in other East Asian syncretistic sects—several of which exchanged visits, or entered into loose alliances with Ōmoto during the 1920s and 1930s. Bahā’ī, as well as Ōmoto leaders, combined doctrinal inclusivism with a practical program of inter-religious outreach, so that what might have remained variations of *ghulāt* Shi’ism or sectarian Shinto respectively, have instead cultivated independent identities and transnational presences on the model of the “great” religions. When the two groups finally encountered one another in the 1920s, however, initial expressions of goodwill broke down in the face of inter-religious rivalry and cultural misunderstanding.

What happens when two religious groups, each claiming to unite all world religions under its aegis, encounter one another? Do they embrace each other as like-minded comrades, or—like the “Three Christs of Ypsilanti”<sup>2</sup>—scoff at their obviously deluded rivals, while remaining confident in their own tendentious claims? Or do they rethink their own theologies, even as they search for

<sup>1</sup> For example, Christopher Buck (1998) admits that “Bahā’u’llāh’s fulfillment of Zoroastrian prophecy was never meant to bear the test of textual and hermeneutical scrutiny.” Moojan Momen (1989), commenting on the Bahā’ī understanding of Buddha as a prophet of God, concedes that there is “not much evidence for all of this in the Buddhist writings” (60).

<sup>2</sup> Three Michigan psychiatric patients, each of whom believed himself to be Christ, were brought together for two years by a curious psychologist (Rokeach 1964).

some respectful way to frame their differences and engage one another? In this case, all three responses occurred, though not at the same time, or from the same people.

## Early Bahā'ī Inter-religious Activity

The early twentieth-century spread of the Bahā'ī community beyond the Persian and Ottoman Empires coincided with the emergence of formal inter-religious dialogue, following the example of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions. This event, held as part of the World Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair), is remembered by Bahā'īs primarily for the fact that one of its speakers mentioned Bahā' Allāh, who had died the previous year.<sup>3</sup> Between 1911 and 1913, Bahā' Allāh's son and successor, 'Abd-al-Bahā, made several international voyages, in the course of which he addressed a variety of European and North American audiences—including the Greenacre summer camp in rural Eliot, Maine (f. 1894), whose annual inter-religious forum followed the same format as the 1893 Parliament, and included many of the same speakers.<sup>4</sup> Chicago-style dialogue events also proved popular in India, and Bahā'ī representatives participated in the second Convention of the Religions in India, held January 6-8, 1911 in Allahabad, and sponsored by the Vivekānanda Society.<sup>5</sup>

After 'Abd-al-Bahā's death in 1921, leadership of the Bahā'ī community passed to his grandson, Šowqī (or Shoghi) Effendi Rabbānī (1897-1957). From his base in Haifa, Rabbānī received visitors and kept up a voluminous correspondence, while supervising the completion of several monumental building projects. Under his direction, Bahā'ī "pioneers"<sup>6</sup> traveled to most of the countries not yet reached, and the outlines of what would become a global hierarchy of elected councils took shape. At the same time, he steadily translated into English a number of key Bahā'ī scriptures, as well as a popular history of the faith. Their elevated Gibbonian style would later come to characterize much institutional Baha'i rhetoric. Where earlier believers distinguished between "Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian, and Mohammedan Bahais" (e.g. Abdul-Baha 1910), Rabbānī forbade multiple identities on the principle that the "Bahā'ī Faith" (to use his nomenclature) was nothing less than an independent world religion—a reformulation made possible by the transition from Ottoman to British (and later, Israeli) rule.

Rabbānī took an active role in planning the Bahā'ī presentation at the Conference of Some Living Religions of the British Empire (or the Religions of Empire Conference), held at the Imperial Institute in South Kensington from September 22 - October 3, 1924, in connection with the 1924-1925 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. Although the initial idea came from Theosophists, the conference was sponsored by the School of Oriental Studies (whose director, Sir E. Denison Ross, served as chair) and the Sociological Society. The main Bahā'ī speech was drafted by Horace Holley, longtime secretary of the then combined, New York based National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the United States and Canada, and delivered on September 25 by its chairman, C.

<sup>3</sup> See Jessup (1894). Henry Harris Jessup was an American Presbyterian missionary posted to Beirut. His paper—read by a colleague, George A. Ford of Sidon, on September 23, 1893—eulogized Bahā' Allāh as "the head of that vast reform party of Persian Moslems who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the Deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers."

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd-al-Bahā spent the week of August 16-24, 1912 there, giving five talks. Greenacre's founder, Sarah Jane Farmer, had become a Bahā'ī in 1900. The intervening years saw a power struggle between Bahā'ī, Vedantin, and late Transcendentalist / New Thought factions. After Farmer's death in 1916, the property became a Bahā'ī retreat center. See Schmidt (2012, 185-224); and Richardson (1931).

<sup>5</sup> See Vakil (1911, 5). Unlike its 1909 Calcutta predecessor, no book of the conference proceedings seems to have been published, although many individual speeches were circulated. Siyyid Mustaffa Rumi contributed a paper summarizing Bahā'ī history, which was read for him at the conference by Narayan Rao Sethji, aka Vakil.

<sup>6</sup> Bahā'īs distinguish their "pioneers" from the "missionaries" of other religions. As Rabbānī explains in a letter of February 7, 1945 (Hornby 1983, no.1962), the latter term "has often been associated with a narrow-minded, bigoted type of proselytizing quite alien to the Bahā'ī method of spreading our teachings."

Mountfort Mills (representing Canada). A second paper was read by Rabbānī's cousin, Rūhī Afnān.<sup>7</sup> Rabbānī's letters to other Bahā'īs express the hope that participation in the high-profile, semi-governmental event "might arouse and stimulate widespread interest among the enlightened public," and that "it will be known to the public that the Cause is not a movement collateral with other movements such as the Brahmo Somaj or Ahmadi movements."<sup>8</sup>

Bahā'īs spoke at the fortieth-anniversary (1933) commemoration of the 1893 Parliament, also in Chicago, and held under the auspices of the newly-formed World Fellowship of Faiths, whose co-directors were American social worker Charles Frederick Weller and Tagore associate Kedernath Das Gupta.<sup>9</sup> The previous year, Rabbānī had noted with concern Das Gupta's leadership of the WFF (the initial letters had been sent by Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise), and urged the North American assembly to inquire "whether its purpose was in any way political," or "a form of Indian propaganda."<sup>10</sup> Bahā'īs also attended the inaugural conference of the World Congress of Faiths founded by Sir Francis Younghusband, and held July 3-18, 1936 at Queen's Hall and University College, London. (Confusingly, this event was sometimes called the Second International Conference of the World *Fellowship* of Faiths, which is how Rabbānī refers to it in his writings.) On July 6, George Townshend read a paper "approved" by Rabbānī, "Bahā'u'llāh's Grand Plan of World Fellowship." The session was chaired by the British High Commissioner for Palestine, Herbert Samuel, whose Zionism aroused no objection from Rabbānī (Bishop 1939, 634-645; Braybrooke 1980, 20-39). Although the conference became an annual event, no Bahā'īs seem to have participated in 1937 (World Congress of Faiths 1937).

That year, Shirin Fozdar—a second-generation Bahā'ī from Bombay, of Iranian Zoroastrian ancestry—presented a paper on "The Bahai Religion" at the International Parliament of Religions, held March 1-8, 1937 in the Town Hall of Calcutta, under the auspices of the Sri Ramakṛṣṇa Centenary Committee (Fozdar 1938). Mrs. Fozdar was the longtime secretary of the All Faiths League, which met monthly in various Indian cities. In addition to Bahā'ī functions, she often spoke on behalf of secular causes such as education or women's rights (Fozdar 1983).

In her diary, Agnes Baldwin Alexander—a Hawaiian Bahā'ī "pioneer" residing permanently (from 1914) in Japan—reports attending the Japan Religion Conference (日本宗教懇話会, *Nihon Shūkyō Konwakai*) held June 5-8, 1928 in Tokyo (Alexander 1977, 73-74). Sponsored by the state-run Shinto Propagation Society (神道宣揚会, *Shintō Senyokai*), the conference rallied major Japanese religious groups against Communism and sectarian religious movements (Ives 2009, 28), although Barbara R. Sims (1998, 12) paints it in more progressive terms. Alexander was one of some 1,500 participants, three foreign guests, and eighteen selected to speak (for two minutes each) during a banquet held on the sixth. Her diary also records another Tokyo interfaith conference held in 1931, but provides no further details, except to note that she had met the Rev. Kunio Kodaira of the (Congregationalist) Japanese Independent Church of Oakland, California, which nine years earlier had hosted 'Abd-al-Bahā. Interestingly, Alexander does not mention the Great Religious Exposition (宗教大博覧会, *Dai Shūkyō Hakurankai*) held March 8 to May 6, 1930 in Kyoto.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Bahā'ī World*, vol. 2 (1926-1928), part 4, contains several relevant items, including the two speeches.

<sup>8</sup> From a letter of January 6, 1924, to George P. Simpson, in which was enclosed a January 4, 1924 letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of the United States and Canada (Rabbānī 1981, 19-21).

<sup>9</sup> Proceedings collected in Weller (1935). The Bahā'ī contribution is in vol. 3, sec. 14.

<sup>10</sup> In a letter dated November 16, 1932. In a follow-up dated November 30, 1932, Rabbānī seemed to conclude that the organization was political, and ordered that no Bahā'īs attend. At some point he must have changed his mind. He seems to have believed that Das Gupta succeeded Rabbi Wise as WFF leader; in fact, Wise was vice-chairman of the U.S. committee (Braybrooke 1980, 167-170). Ironically, Rabbi Wise would later write in support of a petition protesting Rabbānī's 1935 excommunication of Rūhī Afnān, among other family members (Sohrab 1943, 16).

<sup>11</sup> Twelve religions were represented, including Ōmoto, whose pavilion was especially popular. See Stalker 2008, 118-130.

As in India, early Bahā'ī interfaith activity in Japan (and there were numerous smaller-scale exchanges) blurs together with other causes such as peace, world federalism, and the welfare of the blind, in which many of the same people were active. One of these causes was Esperanto. Agnes Alexander had begun studying the language at the urging of 'Abd-al-Bahā, who was also responsible for sending her to Japan. Her diary, which is peppered with Esperanto, shows that the language was one of several in common use among local Bahā'īs. Nor were they the only new religious group to embrace it.

## First Contact with Ōmoto

Ōmoto was founded in the 1890s by Deguchi Nao (出口 なお), on the basis of mediumistic revelations received from the folk deity, Ushitora no Konjin (艮の金神). After Nao's death in 1918, leadership passed to her son-in-law, Deguchi Onisaburō (出口 王仁三郎, 1871-1947),<sup>12</sup> with whom she had had a vexed relationship. A charismatic, flamboyant extrovert with a penchant for cross-dressing, Onisaburō introduced ceaseless innovations, gradually supplanting Nao's revelations with his own. Nancy K. Stalker (2008) describes "a series of rapidly evolving campaigns" (3) including spiritual healing and exorcism, educational and agricultural reform, newspaper publishing, and humanitarian projects. There were constant experiments with organizational structure aimed at placating the government.<sup>13</sup> Ōmoto applied to join one, then another state-approved Shinto body, while simultaneously remaining in the public eye (e.g., by deploying teams of street preachers). By the 1930s the sect had grown dramatically, and acquired a presence in several foreign countries as well as the Japanese colonies of Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria.

Not that Onisaburō's management style was entirely rational. In one memorable 1924 episode, he and several comrades (including Aikido founder Ueshiba Morihei 植芝 盛平) were arrested on the border of Inner Mongolia, and nearly executed by firing squad. Apparently their plan had been to recruit a mercenary army, and rally Inner Asia to the banner of the "Oomoto Dalai Lama." (Cf. the similarly quixotic nation-founding projects of Baron Nikolaus von Ungern-Sternberg and Nikolai Konstantinovitch Rerikh.) Stalker (2008, 142) adds the irresistible detail that Onisaburō had brought along costumes for Noh dramas, which he intended to perform in Jerusalem at a later stage of the campaign.

Between 1921 and 1934, Onisaburō dictated an 81-volume work titled *Reikai-monogatari* (霊界物語, "Tales from the Spirit World"), based on a week long series of ecstatic visions received on Mt. Takakuma (高隈山) in 1898. Volume 6, chapter 23 of this work (revealed January 1922) introduces the concept of *bankyō dōkon*, asserting that the founders of the world's major religions were Japanese deities in disguise. Young (1988, 269) points out the venerable Japanese history of the arboreal metaphor (for example, Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠 親房 in the fourteenth century described Shintō as the trunk of a tree with Confucian branches and Buddhist leaves), as well as the numerous Chinese sects purporting to harmonize the "three teachings" (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism), or perhaps five (adding Christianity and Islam) or more. In fact, Ōmoto cultivated ties with a number of new, spiritualist, syncretistic religious groups throughout the 1920s and 1930s (see Young 1988, 264, n.3 for a list), beginning with the Dàojuàn (道院, = Tao Yüan in Wade-Giles romanization; Jp. Dō-in), a Shandong-based planchette divination sect, and its humanitarian arm, the World Red Swastika Society. Although this alliance is officially traced to

<sup>12</sup> The two are not related. Onisaburō (born Ueda Kisaburō 上田 喜三郎) took the Deguchi surname when he married Nao's daughter Sumiko (on New Years Day, 1900), and following a custom of the time, was adopted into the family. Their personal names are used here in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>13</sup> With mixed success, in view of the suppressions of 1921 and 1935.



relief efforts in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, Young suggests that the two groups had been in contact for some time before that. On May 22, 1925, after a scant few months of planning, Ōmoto and the Dàoyuàn organized the inaugural (and only) meeting of the World Religious Federation in Beijing, apparently intending the religious equivalent of world federalism, i.e., a League of Nations style body characterized by mutual recognition. When this project floundered, Onisaburō shifted his attention to Jinrui Aizenkai (人類愛善会, anglicized as the Universal Love and Brotherhood Association), an Ōmoto-sponsored international humanitarian organization founded June 9, 1925, and open to participants from all religions.

Ōmoto sources point to “a Baha’i follower” or “some Baha’i followers” as having introduced Onisaburō to Esperanto in 1922.<sup>14</sup> Stalker clarifies that Onisaburō had been “intrigued by Esperanto since 1913,” but lacked the opportunity to study the language. In May 1922, he sent an aide, Katō Haruko, to enroll in an accelerated Esperanto course in Tokyo; she then recruited an Esperanto teacher to teach Esperanto at Ōmoto headquarters in Ayabe (near Kyoto). As for the Bahā’ī connection, Stalker adds that Onisaburō’s wife, Sumiko, met an elderly American Bahā’ī Esperantist named Ida A. Finch on a streetcar in July 1922,<sup>15</sup> and invited her to visit Ayabe, which she did the following September (Stalker 2008, 157-158). Alexander supplies the additional information that Finch returned in late April or May of 1923 in the company of yet *another* American Bahā’ī Esperantist, Martha L. Root.

These dates do not encourage the notion that *bankyō dōkon* was inspired by Bahā’ī teachings, and as noted above, Young suggests a number of alternative sources. Nevertheless, according to Stalker, this early exposure to the Bahā’ī religion influenced subsequent Ōmoto doctrine, and awakened in Onisaburō an abiding interest in interfaith dialogue:

Although there does not appear to be a sustained interchange between Baha’i and Oomoto, concepts from the former strongly influenced the latter’s beliefs and practices. Onisaburō made Baha’u’llah a prominent character in episodes of the *Reikai-monogatari*, including him in a prophetic dialogue entitled “Grand Sumo Tournament” in which Baha’u’llah condemns war and warns of a coming world war between two great forces in the world. (Stalker 2008, 158)

Her reference is to volume 64, unique in the *Reikai-monogatari* for being (according to Onisaburō’s preface) a work of fiction, “something like a novel.” In it, a Japanese missionary named Burabasa<sup>16</sup> arrives in Jerusalem in order to prepare for the return of the messiah, and (if this is not the same thing) to prepare for a future visit by his master, a certain Udumbara Chandra,<sup>17</sup> the head of a new East Asian religion called “Root-Baha.”<sup>18</sup> Selected for his knowledge of languages, including Esperanto, Burabasa is apparently modeled after real-life Ōmoto missionary Nishimura Kogetsu (西村 輝雄), later Ōmoto’s first representative to Europe, who attended the 1925 World Esperanto Congress in Geneva. Several chapters touch on the Bahā’ī religion, but contain numerous

<sup>14</sup> Both quotes are from the pamphlet *Bankyō Dōkon: Seventy Years of Inter-Faith Activity at Oomoto* (1996). See also ch. 20 of K. Deguchi (1998). The 1923 meeting is reported by Nishimura Kogetsu in a May 10, 1923 article in the Ōmoto magazine *Kami-no-Kuni* (神の国, *Realm of the Gods*) entitled “*Bahai-kyo senkyoshi kitaru*” (“Baha’i missionaries have come”).

<sup>15</sup> I have taken the liberty of correcting Stalker’s “Aida” to “Ida.”

<sup>16</sup> A non-Japanese name of uncertain origin. Japanese phonology would also permit such variant renderings as “Brabasa” or “Vulavasa.”

<sup>17</sup> This Sanskrit name combines *udumbara* (*Ficus racemosa*, a species of fig celebrated in Buddhist lore, whose flower is said to bloom once every 3000 years) with *chandra* (the moon).

<sup>18</sup> Rendered *ruta* or *luto* in Japanese phonetics, this foreign word suggests the English “root,” and presumably refers to Oomoto, although one thinks also of Bahā’ī pioneer Martha Root. Perhaps Onisaburo was struck by the coincidence. *Bahā* (Arabic: “splendor”) is the “Greatest Name” which Bahā’ī tradition adds to the ninety-nine “Beautiful Names” of God mentioned in Qur’an 7: 179, and which forms part of the names *Bahā’ Allāh* and *.Bahā’*.

fundamental distortions. Onisaburō's peculiar method of transmission—he dictated 27 chapters in four days, apparently while lying on his side (Stalker 2008, 100)—goes far in explaining his rather free-wheeling use of sources.

### **Bahā'ī Content in *Reikai-monogatari* vol. 64**

The character introduced as “Bahā' Allāh of the Bahā'ī Faith” first appears in chapter 2 (“The Missionary,” revealed July 10, 1923), as a passenger on the Palestine Railways line from al-Qantara, Egypt to Jerusalem. In the course of this journey, he strikes up a conversation with Burabasa. Since the real-life Bahā' Allāh died in 1892, and the text (as we shall see) is apparently set in 1923, one struggles to make sense of the chronology. Perhaps the solution is to say that Onisaburō's “Bahā' Allāh” is not really the Bahā'ī founder, but an ordinary Bahā'ī missionary who inexplicably shares his religious epithet. Interestingly, “Bahā' Allāh” is described as an “elderly gentleman” with “white hair.” In real life, Bahā' Allāh in his old age used henna to dye his hair black,<sup>19</sup> although images of him are not distributed by Bahā'īs, and his appearance would not have been widely known. The reference to white hair suggests instead the ubiquitous photographs of his son, 'Abd-al-Bahā. Later in the same chapter, “Bahā' Allāh” refers to 'Abd-al-Bahā as “my holy master.” Although Bahā'īs do customarily refer to 'Abd-al-Bahā as “the Master,” they would find the reversal of roles bewildering, since Bahā' Allāh is their prophet, not 'Abd-al-Bahā, whose cognomen literally means “slave of *Bahā*” (i.e., of Bahā' Allāh; see note 18).

“Bahā' Allāh” observes that Burabasa does not have the face of an ordinary person, but seems to be a holy man. Burabasa thanks him, and explains that he is a missionary of the god Okuni Harutachi no Ōkami, come to serve his religion and experience the holy atmosphere of Jerusalem. Declaring that religion is not limited by race or nationality, he offers his friendship. “Bahā' Allāh” eagerly accepts. All human beings, he says, ought to help each other, for they are all God's children; the same sun shines upon them all. The Bahā'ī religion was founded on the principles that all religions are equal, that science and religion are one, and that religion should be free from prejudice. Humanity needs neither “the dead Buddhas of the past” nor the old, moldering, formal religions which fuel conflict by demonizing one another. After all, the purpose of religion is to deepen the bonds of love and affection among the world's people. Touched, Burabasa responds that he cannot see any difference between “Bahā' Allāh's” words and the teachings of his own religion, “so please, let's become sister religions and foster eternal friendship.”

To which “Bahā' Allāh” replies, “Yes, please, let's do this. But what do you think about the current situation of the world?” Burabasa relates a news item from the previous day's *London Times*,<sup>20</sup> about a message received by Arthur Conan Doyle from the spirit of Lord Northcliffe (d. 1922), warning that unless the human race reformed itself spiritually, it would be punished with an even worse disaster than World War I. He adds that thirty years ago, the founder of Root-*Bahā* was ridiculed for predicting global upheaval, the deterioration of human morals, and a restless spirit of malevolence. Only a messiah can save them. “Bahā' Allāh” states that “my God told me that the messiah will appear soon,” on the Mount of Olives, and that the Bahā'ī religion was founded in order “to warn the people of the world” to follow him. Burabasa responds that the messiah has already been born.

Startled, “Bahā' Allāh” lists nine qualifications (the number nine being a prominent Bahā'ī symbol) by which the messiah can be recognized:

1. He will be an educator of humanity.
2. His teaching will be universal.
3. He will possess innate (not acquired) knowledge.

<sup>19</sup> As reported by his barber (Salmānī 1982, 18-19).

<sup>20</sup> Conan Doyle gave a press conference to this effect on 31 May 1923, with news articles appearing in early June.

4. He will answer all kinds of questions put to him by sages, resolve all problems, and willingly accept suffering.
5. He will be a “giver of pleasure,” and the “leader of a happy kingdom.”
6. His knowledge will be limitless, yet comprehensible to ordinary people.
7. His speech will be comprehensive, and powerful enough to overcome even the worst enemy.
8. He will not be bothered by sorrows or troubles, but will grow increasingly powerful and passionate, showing godlike courage and judgment.
9. He will perfect global culture, and unite all religions; his character will be capable of realizing world peace, and embody the highest morals for humanity.

Although numbered lists are common in Bahā'ī literature, and certain details suggest Bahā'ī inspiration (for example, Bahā'īs call their prophets the “educators of humanity”), this particular list appears to be original to Onisaburō.

When “Bahā' Allāh” confesses his personal belief that ‘Abd-al-Bahā is the messiah, Burabasa objects that “he is not alive anymore. Even though he meets the nine qualifications, he cannot do anything to save the world.” Burabasa instead proposes his own master, Udumbara Chandra, now preparing for some great work from his base in Mt. Okebuse (桶伏山, a mountain near Ayabe) on “Takasago Island,” and makes his case point by point.

By now it should be obvious that Udumbara Chandra is really Onisaburō, who in effect spends several pages praising himself. Udumbara Chandra is said to be the return of Jesus, while the founder of his religion—Nao's fictional counterpart—is identified with John (Jp. *Yohana* ヨハネ), presumably the Baptist. In real life, Bahā'īs regard Bahā' Allāh as fulfilling the messianic expectations of all religions: he is the future Buddha Maitreya, the Second Coming of Christ, the *Mahdī* and the *Qā'im*, etc. (Although some turn-of-the-century Western Bahā'īs regarded ‘Abd-al-Bahā as Christ, he repudiated the claim.) The Bahā'ī counterpart of John the Baptist would be another nineteenth-century Persian religious figure known as the Bāb. Meanwhile, Onisaburō had been proclaiming the advent of Maitreya since 1916, and made public his claim to be this personage on March 3, 1928 (Miyata 1988, 188; cf. the similar developments in Theosophy). In any event, “Bahā' Allāh” reacts positively but noncommittally (“What an amazing person. He must be a real messiah...”), then excuses himself when their train arrives in Jerusalem, bringing the chapter to an end.

In chapter 15 (“A Grand Sumo Tournament,” revealed 12 July 1923), “Bahā' Allāh” visits Burabasa at the latter's lodgings, in a pilgrims' hospice run by a Catholic monastery in Jerusalem (and based on the real-life French Hospice of Notre Dame). After some small talk, the conversation turns to the threat of war. “Bahā' Allāh” relates prophecies of a global conflict (“Armageddon”) between two unnamed powers, strongly hinted to be Japan and the United States. This is the “Grand Sumo Tournament” of the title. Their oppositional relationship is indicated by the fact that one has the sun for its symbol and the other the stars, making it a land of “eternal night”; one is aggressively trying to dominate the world, while the other has only recently opened its doors to competition and entered the world stage. Burabasa tells “Bahā' Allāh” of a third power, “Sunrise Island” (日の出島, *Hinode-jima*), which will attempt to unite the world. Confusingly, it too seems to represent Japan. This country has a special tie with the Jewish people. For example, it was founded some 2,600 years ago (an allusion to the mythological compendia *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihongi* 日本紀), around the same time as the Babylonian Captivity. Where “Sunrise Island” has had a continuous culture and imperial line since ancient times, the Jews lost their language and kingdom long ago; still, “nothing compares with them in terms of their faith, endurance, patience, and power of spirit.”

Before taking his leave, “Bahā' Allāh” invites Burabasa to visit him at his Bahā'ī “church” near the Jordan River. Burabasa does so in chapter 18 (“A Scandal in the Newspapers,” revealed July 13, 1923); however, they interact only briefly, and the chapter introduces little new Bahā'ī content.

## The Fallout

Japan-based Bahā'īs may have read the above in Esperanto translation in *Oomoto Gazeto Esperanta*, where it was serialized from January 1925 (Stalker 2008, 227 n. 76). Agnes Alexander was clearly offended by what she felt to be an attempt to co-opt Bahā'ī teachings, and ascribe to Onisaburō a station comparable to Bahā' Allāh. According to her diary,

There was at that time in Japan a religion called Oomoto, which had rapidly spread throughout the country. The head of the religion was regarded by his followers as a Manifestation of God.<sup>21</sup> They used Esperanto in their propaganda. In their publications they had taken some of the Baha'i principles and teachings and published them as their own.

Alexander reported the situation to Rabbānī. On January 11, 1929 his secretary, Soheil Afnān, responded that Rabbānī was “very surprised to learn that the Oomoto religion of Japan has published a statement to the effect that the Baha'i Revelation is a branch of their religion,” and ordered Alexander to issue a rebuttal (Alexander 1977, 75). Some irony may be perceived in Bahā'ī protests against the appropriation of their religion by another. In any case, all this goes far in explaining the absence of Bahā'īs from subsequent Ōmoto-sponsored interfaith events, such as the 1925 World Religious Fellowship, or its branch meeting held concurrently in Japan.

It is tempting to blame the rift between Ōmoto and the Bahā'īs on their competing claims to represent the quintessence of all religions. Yet this did not prevent Ōmoto from enjoying cordial relations with the DàoYuàn, or other groups with similar pretensions to universality. The problem seems to have arisen from their fundamentally different notions of inter-religious dialogue. Onisaburō did not intentionally set out to offend his Bahā'ī guests; rather, he honored them in the same way that East Asian spiritualist sects customarily honored one another—by acknowledging, through a revelation, the divinity of their founder and basic principles. What he perhaps failed to appreciate was the exclusive nature of Western religious identity, and the efforts of Rabbānī to distinguish the Bahā'ī religion from other minor sects. Onisaburō's characterization of what would become *Reikai-monogatari* vol. 64 as “something like a novel” may represent his attempt to rescue the situation. For his part, Rabbānī (as we have seen) took great pains to control how his faith was presented, and approached inter-religious dialogue primarily as an exercise in public relations. We can only imagine how he must have greeted the news that Bahā' Allāh—whose depiction is avoided by Bahā'īs, even in fiction—was more or less being trance-channeled by some Japanese shaman, with no great concern for detail. Reconciliation, of a sort, only became possible after Onisaburō's death in 1947.

On August 8, 1955, two Bahā'īs (Dr. David Magarey Earl and his wife, Joy Hill Earl) attended a session of the Conference of World Religionists held at Ayabe.<sup>22</sup> Both religions sent representatives to the founding session of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, held 1970 in Tokyo.<sup>23</sup> In 1993, Roberta McFarland represented the Bahā'īs at the 70th anniversary meeting

<sup>21</sup> From the Arabic *maẓhar ilāhī* (“theophany”) or *ẓuhūr* (“appearance”). In Bahā'ī parlance, a “Manifestation of God” is generally a founding prophet of one of the world's major religions, the most recent of whom is said to be Bahā' Allāh.

<sup>22</sup> Personal communication from Okuwaki Toshiomi, of Ōmoto's international department. For Bahā'ī records of the event (which do not specifically note the Ayabe session), see Sims (1998, 37; 1989, ch.46). The Ōmoto pamphlet *BankyōDōkon* lists the 1955 event as the “World Religious Congress for Peace, Ayabe Congress,” which seems to represent confusion with a similarly-named event held in 1970. According to Sims, the Conference of World Religionists took place in Tokyo (though with some sessions held elsewhere) between August 1-14. Dr. Earl formally represented the Bahā'īs at the event; also present were Agnes Alexander and Philip Marangella.

<sup>23</sup> The Bahā'īs were represented by Glenford E. Mitchell (then secretary of the US National Spiritual Assembly, later a member of the Universal House of Justice), Shirin Fozdar (visiting from Thailand), Toshio Suzuki (representing the Tokyo-based National Spiritual Assembly of Northeast Asia), and Rouhollah Mumtaz (Continental Counselor from 1968). See Sims (1989, 159).

of the (Ōmoto-sponsored) Esperanto-Populariga Asocio (Association for the Propagation of Esperanto).<sup>24</sup> While world peace was hardly at stake, the rift between Ōmoto and the Bahā'ī religion seems to have mended, leaving the two groups at last free to “become sister religions and foster eternal friendship.”

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<sup>24</sup> Personal communication from Mr. Okuwaki.

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