



NUS-USPC Collaborative Project  
Intersecting Mobilities: Southeast Asia from  
the Perspective of Religious Mobility

Workshop on  
**Religious Networks in Asia**  
**27-28 April 2018**  
Nagasaki University, Japan



The Scene of the Memorial Service Held at the Urakami  
Roman Catholic Cathedral.  
遺上天主堂に於ける慰霊祭

*A memorial service held at the Urakami Roman Catholic Cathedral on 23 November 1945. Image source from the City of Nagasaki, Japan.*

The concept of mobility is emerging as an innovative framework that challenges the sedentary and territorial precepts of 20th century social sciences (Urry 2006; Sheller 2011; Chu 2010; Basu & Coleman 2008). From a traditional social scientific perspective, travel has largely operated as a black box, a neutral set of technologies that enable other forms of economic, social and political life. This approach suggests that mobility itself is a phenomenon of marginal importance, with limited implications for the study of cultural and political dynamics. The emerging literature in Mobilities challenges this model by focusing on how material and human circulation interact with the technologies that make it possible, having a definite impact on the shape that new social formations adopt. A focus on mobility therefore problematizes models that see stability and place as the 'natural', anchored state of things and mobility as the exception.

With this workshop, we intend to examine in which ways can concepts of 'mobility' and 'networks' offer new insights for the study of contemporary and historical religious circulation across Asia. As a premise, we emphasize the importance of exploring the material dynamics of religious networks, and stress the interplay between the technological, economic and political dimensions of circulation and the changing shapes of religious networks (Vasquez 2011). Intersecting mobilities produce new patterns of interaction where networks redefine arrangements of economic, social and religious life. As John Urry remarked, there is no increase in mobility without extensive systems of immobility. Airports, roads and factories are preeminent examples of this, but so are temples, monasteries and pilgrimage routes. Furthermore, immobility is not only a technical requirement of contemporary networks, but also a consequence of global political dynamics.

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

## CONTACT DETAILS

### *Convenors*

**Dr Bernardo BROWN**, International Christian University, Japan

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## FRIDAY, 27 APRIL 2018

**09:15 – 09:45 WELCOME TEA & INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**KAORI HATSUMI**, Nagasaki University, Japan

**09:45 – 11:15 KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Rethinking Religious Networks in Comparative Perspective

**ANNE M. BLACKBURN**, Cornell University, USA

**R. MICHAEL FEENER**, University of Oxford, UK

10:45 Questions & Answers

11:15 – 11:30 BREAK

**11:30 – 13:00 PANEL 1**

11:30 Saints, Stupas and Statues: Burmese Buddhist Material and Visual Culture in North America and Thailand

**TOM PATTON**, City University of Hong Kong

12:00 Monuments of Transnational Buddhism: Effects of Indian, Taiwanese, and Japanese Collaborations on the Landscape around Nagpur

**JON KEUNE**, Michigan State University, USA

12:30 Questions & Answers

13:00 – 14:30 LUNCH

**14:30 – 16:00 PANEL 2**

14:30 Protestant Churches as Multicultural Places in Korea

**HUI-YEON KIM**, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, France

15:00 Vocation for Travel: Catholic Transnational Priestly Training in Sri Lanka

**BERNARDO E. BROWN**, International Christian University, Japan

15:30 Questions & Answers

16:00 – 16:30 TEA BREAK

**16:30 – 17:30 URAKAMI MUSEUM PRESENTATION**

Amidst Martyrs, Traitors and Prophets: Japan's Hidden Catholics and an Alternative History of Modernity

**CHIYOKO IWANAMI**, Urakami Christian Museum, Japan

**KOJIRO MORIUCHI**, Urakami Catholic Church, Japan

17:30 END OF DAY ONE

18:00 – 19:30 DINNER FOR SPEAKERS, CHAIRPERSONS & INVITED GUESTS

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# SATURDAY, 28 APRIL 2018

## 09:00 – 10:30 PANEL 3

09:00 Religious Networks in Post-Socialist Mongolia: The Cases of Christianity and Buddhism

**KATSUHIKO TAKIZAWA**, Nagasaki University, Japan

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09:30 A New Jerusalem in the Jungles of Borneo: Methodist Migration from Fuzhou and Xinghua to Sibul, Sarawak and the Expansion of the Community in an Era of Massive Deforestation

**KENNETH DEAN**, National University of Singapore

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10:00 Questions & Answers

## 10:30 – 11:00 BREAK

## 11:00 – 12:30 PANEL 4

11:00 Christianity as the Radical Cultural Other: Convergence of History, Technology, and Christianity in Japan

**KAORI HATSUMI**, Nagasaki University, Japan

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11:30 The Transnational Education Networks of Vietnamese Catholics during the First Cold War Years and its Impact on Vietnam Politics: The Unknown Case of the “Belgian Connections”

**CLAIRE THI LIÊN TRAN**, IRASEC- Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, Thailand

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12:00 Questions & Answers

12:30 END OF WORKSHOP

12:30 – 18:00 LUNCH & VISIT TO HISTORICAL SITES FOR SPEAKERS, CHAIRPERSONS & INVITED GUESTS

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## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**Rethinking Religious Networks in Comparative Perspective****Anne M. Blackburn**

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and Cornell University South Asia  
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This presentation draws upon our recent work that attempts to bring together the insights and approaches of our respective sub-fields (Buddhist Studies and Islamic Studies) into focused and comparative investigations of one particular form of networks: that of religious 'orders'. This includes a forthcoming book that explores some of the mutually informative dimensions of form and content in the establishment, maintenance, and transformation of religious networks, and the changing dynamics of circulations of people, objects, and ideas coursing through them. In conversation with colleagues here involved with the 'Intersecting Mobilities' project, we hope to expand the conversations to open up new spaces of creative involvement from a broader range of disciplines and specializations in the interest of developing better understandings of the complex forms of and roles played by religious networks in both historical and contemporary Asian societies.

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Anne M. Blackburn is Professor of South Asia Studies and Buddhist Studies in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University, and Director of the Cornell University South Asia Program. She taught at the University of South Carolina before joining Cornell's faculty. She received her BA from Swarthmore College, and MA and PhD degrees from the University of Chicago. Blackburn studies Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia, with a special interest in Buddhist monastic culture and Buddhist participation in networks linking Sri Lanka and mainland Southeast Asia before and during colonial presence in the region. Her publications include *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton, 2001), *Approaching the Dhamma: Buddhist Texts and Practices in South and Southeast Asia*, co-edited with A/Prof Jeffrey Samuels (BPS Pariyatti Editions, 2003), and *Locations of Buddhism: Colonialism and Modernity in Sri Lanka* (Chicago, 2010). She is working on a new project, *Making Buddhist Kingdoms Across the Indian Ocean, 1200-1500*, supported in part by an ACLS Fellowship. For a complete list of publications and additional information, see <http://asianstudies.cornell.edu/anne-m-blackburn>.

R. Michael Feener is the Sultan of Oman Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and Islamic Centre Lecturer in the History Faculty at the University of Oxford – as well as Project Leader for the Maldives Heritage Survey. He was formerly Research Leader of the Religion and Globalisation Research Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, and Associate Professor in the Department of History at the National University of Singapore. He has also taught at Reed College and the University of California, Riverside, and held visiting professor positions and research fellowships at Harvard, Kyoto University, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris), the University of Copenhagen, The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art (Honolulu), and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) in Leiden, the Netherlands. He has published extensively in the fields of Islamic studies and Southeast Asian history, as well as on post-disaster reconstruction, religion and development.

## Saints, Stupas and Statues: Burmese Buddhist Material and Visual Culture in North America and Thailand

### **Thomas Patton**

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Be it Burmese monks building stupas in North America to harness the power of Buddhist wizard-saints for protection, Thai pilgrims taking day trips from Bangkok to Yangon to entreat wizards to cure their diseases, or Chinese businessmen trekking through Burmese jungle to receive amulets from wizards to help them in their business ventures, transnational networks of Burmese Buddhist wizard devotees have been forming since at least the 1950s. This paper examines these networks, focusing particularly on their material and visual aspects, to show how Facebook, tour companies, and business interest groups have created new patterns of religiosity for non-Burmese devotees of Burmese wizard-saints.

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Thomas Patton is assistant professor of Buddhist and Southeast Asian studies at the City University of Hong Kong. His research is on lived religion in Myanmar, specifically examining local cults of saints and peoples' relationships with them, shrines, miracles, and other manifestations of religious devotion. He has published essays in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* and *Journal of Asian Studies*, among others. His book, *The Buddha's Wizards: Magic, Healing and Protection in Burmese Buddhism*, will be published in 2018 with Columbia University Press.

## Monuments of Transnational Buddhism: Effects of Indian, Taiwanese, and Japanese Collaborations on the Landscape around Nagpur

### Jon Keune

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Since 1956, Nagpur in central India has been the major site of activity for Indian Buddhists who inherit the legacy of the Dalit (ex-Untouchable) leader Bhimrao Ambedkar. In the past twenty years, the city's profile has attracted increasing attention, personal contacts, and financial support from Buddhists outside India, especially from Taiwan and Japan. These connections have led to, among other things, three major building projects that prominently display their international collaborative roots. My presentation will explore the cultural, sectarian, and socio-economic dimensions of these transnational Buddhist efforts as they appear in three sites in and around Nagpur. The Nagaloka Buddhist Training Centre on the outskirts of Nagpur is a campus built with funds from India, the UK, and Taiwan, in the middle of which stands a 12m statue of Walking Buddha by a Taiwanese sculptor. The Nagarjuna Mahavihara and Museum near the town of Mansar was constructed through the collaborative efforts of diverse Japanese Buddhists and local Indians. And the Dragon Palace Temple in the town of Kamptee was built through the collaboration of two women – a local Dalit politician and a Japanese entrepreneur – and is now an official international temple of the Nichiren Shu Order. I will focus on the visual economy of these buildings, which proudly display their transnational connections while relating to local communities. The people involved with all three projects testify to a common Buddhist identity and shared heritage, yet each building project is marked with the particular concerns and expressions of its contributors. Each site engages with visitors – Buddhist and non-Buddhist, Indian and non-Indian – in a distinct way. By observing transnational flows of people, resources, and cultural capital through these sites, I consider the prospects and challenges of appealing to a common “Buddhism” at work in them to bridge significant cultural and sectarian differences.

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Jon Keune is an Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department at Michigan State University. After earning his PhD at Columbia University, he held postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Göttingen and the University of Houston. His primary research focus has been social history of Marathi-speaking Hindu devotional (bhakti) traditions between 1600 and the present, especially relating to caste, untouchability, and social change. He is working on a book manuscript entitled *Shared Devotion, Shared Food: the Riddle of Bhakti and Caste in Western India*. His regional and linguistic research also includes the large and growing Buddhist tradition that arose after the Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar converted in 1956. His second major research project, some of the early fruits of which he is presenting at this workshop, focuses on increasing interactions among Buddhists from India, Taiwan, and Japan in the past two decades.



## Protestant Churches as Multicultural Places in Korea

### **Hui-Yeon Kim**

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In South Korea, some protestant churches offer a space where foreigners can re-create their own communities. These foreign workers generally stay in Korea, without their families, for three or four years. In these foreign communities inside Korean protestant churches, they regain a sense of belonging to their country, by speaking their language, sharing dishes of their home and exchanging information on their work and the host country. Most of them were not Protestant before, but claim to have been converted after their arrival in Korea. This conversion is based on the aids offered by the Korean faithful of the Church such as medical care and Korean language classes. These churches used this aid to present themselves as essential actors of a so-called “Korean multiculturalism”.

This presentation aims to show how Protestant Churches play a role in channeling material and spiritual goods to migrants while helping them to re-create their communities in Korea. I will analyze how their belonging to Korean churches influence their migrant identities and their vision of Korean society.

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Hui-Yeon Kim is sociologist and an associate professor at INALCO, Paris, member of the research unit ASIEs and affiliated to the Centre d'études en Sciences sociales du religieux (Césor). Her research focuses on the transnationalization of Korean Protestant church and aims to thereby contribute to a better understanding of the development of Protestant movements on a global scale. Dr Kim developed her research on the South-Korean influence in Southeast Asia and the role of religious leader in the organization of migration toward South Korea. Besides publishing the results of this research in the form of a monograph, she has also authored several chapters in edited books focused on religion in contemporary Asia.



## Vocation for Travel: Catholic Transnational Priestly Training in Sri Lanka

### **Bernardo E. Brown**

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The arrival of the so-called “Mobilities” paradigm has allowed scholars of migration to think of human mobility in new ways. Transportation technologies and the circulation of commodities, now studied as closely interacting with migratory flows and shaping transnational networks that operate at multiple levels. Although this “Mobilities” shift has enabled a nuanced approach to the study of migration, it appears to have cast a shadow on traditional definitions of mobility understood as ‘social mobility’. My ethnographic work with Catholic seminarians in Sri Lanka examines whether transnational travel for work or studies amongst future priests and young clergy, can also be interpreted as a marker of ‘traditional’ social mobility. In the context of the changing dynamics of Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – where the flow of missionaries from Europe and North America to the Global South is being reversed – it is worth asking how mobile careers, transnational migration and aspirations of upward social mobility impact on the spiritual dimensions of religious vocation. Moreover, my paper asks if priestly role models are also influenced by the new highly mobile clergy. Catholic young men in South Asia for generations have looked up to local parish priests as inspiration to join the Seminary. Priests arguably continue to be an important source of inspiration, but many parish priests in Sri Lanka today have spent long years working in countries like Italy and Canada, have graduate degrees from European universities and have stories of travel that appear to offer those considering their religious vocations new and attractive dimensions to consider.

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Bernardo E. Brown is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan. His current research projects focus on Catholic seminaries and priestly vocations in South and Southeast Asia. His work on return migration to Sri Lanka has been published in several journals including *Anthropological Quarterly* (2018), *Ethnography* (2015), *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (2017) and *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (2015). He received a MA from the New School for Social Research and a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Cornell University. Before joining ICU, he was Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore and held a post-doctoral fellowship at the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden.

## Amidst Martyrs, Traitors and Prophets: Japan's Hidden Catholics and an Alternative History of Modernity

### **Chiyoko Iwanami**

Urakami Christian Museum,  
Japan

### **Koujirou Moriuchi**

Urakami Catholic Church,  
Japan

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This special presentation will explore extraordinary stories of ordinary Catholics in Japan, who lived during the Edo and early Meiji periods when Christianity was banned (1612-1873). In Nagasaki, where Catholicism flourished in the late sixteenth century, Christianity continued under the ban and in the absence of priests and the Church, by transforming itself into an underground organization. We explore how ordinary people were able to maintain their faith and ritual practices despite the series of persecutions that continued throughout the centuries, and which produced many martyrs, traitors and prophets. The one thing that sustained their hope, according to the community, was the prophesy given by "Prophet Bastian," a Japanese missionary who worked in the first half of the 17th century among hidden Christians. The prophesy reads, "I will consider you as my children until your seventh generation. After that, the salvation of souls will become difficult." This presentation will explore the significance of Bastian's prophesy along with the history of hidden Catholicism, its discovery, and the aftermath.

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Chiyoko Iwanami, born in 1947 in Urakami, Nagasaki, is currently the CEO of CSA Inc., a designing company, as well as Tomo Publishing Inc., both located in Tokyo. She founded the Urakami Christian Museum in 2014 in Nagasaki. The Urakami Christians are the witnesses of two of the most brutal atrocities executed by the modern nation states: the deportation of all Catholics from Urakami under the new ban on Christianity by the Meiji Government (1868-1873) as well as the annihilation of the community by the US Government in 1945 by an atomic bomb. Chiyoko Iwanami founded the Urakami Christian Museum in view of remembering these two tragedies and transmitting their memories to the future generations. She attended Yamazato Elementary School, Junshin Junior High School, Junshin High School, and Nagasaki Prefectural Women's Junior College.

Koujirou Moriuchi, born in 1952, is a member of the Urakami Catholic Church in Nagasaki, and a great-great-grandson of Teru Moriuchi. Teru was one of the fifteen hidden Christians from Urakami, who visited Rev. Fr. Petitjean in Oura Cathedral on 17 March, 1865, and confessed to the French priest that they too were Catholics—an event that is now remembered as the discovery of hidden Christians. This event led to one of the severest persecutions of Urakami Catholics, and is called "*Urakami Yonban Kuzure*," or the Fourth Execution of Urakami Christians. He is currently screening *The Cornerstone of Faith*, a movie that features Urakami Christians and their persecutions.

## Religious Networks in Post-Socialist Mongolia: The Cases of Christianity and Buddhism

### **Katsuhiko Takizawa**

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This paper explores the actual situation and significance of religious networks surrounding Mongolia after its democratization in 1990, focusing on the cases of Evangelical Christianity and Buddhism. In the aftermath of the collapse of the socialist system in Mongolia, “traditional” religions, such as Buddhism and Islam, resumed their activities. Alongside these traditional religions, new religious movements entered Mongolia, which have spread throughout the country. Evangelical Christianity is the most remarkable case of the latter, which, while completely absent during the socialist era, have now established more than 500 churches. Furthermore, believers of this new religion have access to the global network of evangelical Christianity, which have promoted both the inbound and outbound flow of people and finance. In Mongolia, many Christian NGOs are currently involved in social welfare activities, and many churches serve Mongolian diaspora spread all over the world. There are about twenty Mongolian churches in the United States and sixty in Korea. These churches play an important role in connecting Mongolians who are working or studying abroad. Buddhism, too, has developed its global network since 1990. Though transnational religious exchange was limited before the democratization, today it is so active that hundreds of Mongolian monks are studying abroad. This paper specifically focuses on the case of Arja Rimpoche, an incarnated lama, who was born in Amdo, present Qinghai province in China. He went into exile in the United States in 1988 due to political reasons, and since then he has conducted transnational activities, which include not only religious propagation but also various social welfare activities, such as establishment of a hospital in Mongolia and support to disaster victims by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

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Katsuhiko Takizawa is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences at Nagasaki University, Japan. His research concerns religious dynamics in Mongolia and Japan. His main works include *Religion across Borders: Religious Revival and Rise of the Evangelicals in Post-socialist Mongolia [Ekkyo suru shukyo, Mongoru no fukuinha]* (Tokyo: Shinsensha, 2015). *Disaster Damage to Intangible Folk Cultural Assets: Ethnography of Coastal Societies in Miyagi Prefecture Affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake [Mukei minzoku bunkazai ga hisai suru to iu koto]* (Co-Editor with H. Takakura. Tokyo: Shinsensha, 2014).

## A New Jerusalem in the jungles of Borneo: Methodist Migration from Fuzhou and Xinghua to Sibü, Sarawak and the Expansion of the Community in an Era of Massive Deforestation

### **Kenneth Dean**

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In 1901, over 1000 Chinese Methodists led by Huang Naishang migrated from Fuzhou to Sibü, Borneo. Huang had won the agreement of the Brooke Rajah of Borneo for a settlement on the Rajang River. Ten years later Methodist pastor William Brewster led another 100 Xinghua (Putian and Xianyou) families to Sibü. After Huang left Sibü due to significant debts to the Rajah, Methodist pastor Hoover led the community to self-sustainability and then prosperity, building 35 churches during his stay in Sibü. Subsequently, the Methodist Chinese moved from their villages into Sibü city, and their financial success in rubber plantations led the local Fuzhou bank to bankroll a massive timber industry that has cut down 70-80% of the original forest cover of central Borneo in 30 years. The massive financial gains have gone partly into the development of huge museums and public parks commemorating the successes of the Sibü Methodist communities and their leaders. An extraordinary archival fever has gripped the community, even as radical pastors argue that the Methodist church has failed the community and that the church has been overtaken by other networking institutions such as banks, business partnerships and common surname groups. This paper explores the internal critique of Paster Huang Jingsheng of the rise (and subsequent irrelevance) of the Methodist Church in Sibü.

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Kenneth Dean is Raffles Professor of Humanities and Head of the Chinese Studies Department, National University of Singapore, and Professor Emeritus, McGill University. He is the Religion and Globalization Research Cluster Leader, Asia Research Institute, NUS. Dean is the author of several books on Daoism and Chinese popular religion, including *Ritual Alliances of the Putian Plains: Vol. 1: Historical Introduction to the Return of the Gods, Vol. 2: A Survey of Village Temples and Ritual Activities*, Leiden: Brill, 2010 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: The Quanzhou Region*, 3 vols., Fuzhou: 2004 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Lord of the Three in One: The Spread of a Cult in Southeast China*, Princeton: 1998; *Epigraphical Materials on the History of Religion in Fujian: The Xinghua Region*; Fuzhou 1995 (with Zheng Zhenman); *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*, Princeton 1993; and *First and Last Emperors: The Absolute State and the Body of the Despot* (with Brian Massumi), Autonomedia, New York. 1992. He directed *Bored in Heaven: A Film about Ritual Sensation* (2010), an 80 minutes documentary film on ritual celebrations around Chinese New Years in Putian, Fujian, China. His current project is the construction of an interactive, multi-media database linked to a historical GIS map of the religious sites and networks of Singapore. His most recent publication (with Hue Guan Thye) is *Chinese Epigraphy in Singapore: 1819-1911* (2 vols.), Singapore: NUS Press, 2017.

## Christianity as the Radical Cultural Other: Convergence of History, Technology, and Christianity in Japan

### **Kaori Hatsumi**

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and Social Sciences,  
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The ban on Christianity was first introduced in Japan in 1612 and remained in place throughout the Edo period. In Nagasaki, where there were many Christians, for 250 years, residents had to face annual inspections that called for them to trample on a tablet bearing Christian images (*fumie*) to deny Christ. The ban was reinstated in 1868 when the new Meiji government elevated Shintoism to national religion and outlawed Christianity. Today in Japan, unlike in the past, no religion is forced on its citizens, yet Christians remain less than one percent of the population. In this talk, I explore the convergence of history, technology and Christianity in Nagasaki and new possibilities that emerge in the wake of their meeting. Drawing on an ethnography of a missionary from India, I study the discordance between how he sees his pastoral work among the Japanese and how local residents understand his practices. The pastor is talking about love of neighbor when Japan's economy is built around cutting human ties and emphasizing fear of neighbor. For him, Japan is "new Egypt," a nation under slavery, needing salvation. For local residents, he is a troubled *gaijin* (stranger), seriously needing help. Not many people seem to comprehend his message, for even after two years of pastoral work he has no followers. Without followers in Japan, he persists in continuing the work of delivering daily sermons through the WhatsApp mobile app to his listeners among Tamil diaspora in South and Southeast Asia and in the Middle East. I examine the significance of this small religious movement in relation to the history of the place where the movement finds itself — namely, Urakami in Nagasaki, which is the traditional center of Japan's Christianity and also the ground zero of the 1945 tragedy.

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Kaori Hatsumi is Director of International Exchange Programs in the School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences at Nagasaki University. Her current research projects focus on Christianity in Japan in the wake of neoliberalism and the breakdown of the family and traditional community. Her earlier work on the role of faith in the lives of Catholic Tamil war victims in Sri Lanka has been published in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (2017). She received a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University. Before joining Nagasaki University, she was Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Kalamazoo College (USA) and Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame (USA).

## The Transnational Education Networks of Vietnamese Catholics during the first Cold War Years and its Impact on Vietnam Politics: The Unknown Case of the “Belgian Connections”

**Claire Thi Liên Tran**

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The transnational Education networks of the Vietnamese Catholic Minority are ancient and have been created by the missionaries to build a clerical clergy in a context of persecutions, long before the French conquest (17th century). Then, the new mobilities permitted by the French Indochina system, have developed new education pilgrimages in Indochina and France (Benedict Anderson 1983) and contributed to the building of a modern Catholic elite in the twenties and thirties. But the colonial historiography has been so nationally bound, that it has blinded us the circuits of knowledge that took other routes those shaped by the metropole-colony axis alone. It has also ignored the proper Catholic Vietnamese strategies in developing their own networks.

This paper focuses on the unknown Belgian transnational network which began in the 30's and have been developed largely during the 50". The building of this network has been the result both of Belgian missionaries and Vietnamese Bishops initiatives in Phat Diem, the first Apostolical Vicariate given to a Vietnamese bishop by Rome, in 1933. The initiative came from this first Vietnamese bishop *Nguyễn Bá Tông* who requested yearslong to the Belgian *Société des Auxilliaires des Missions* (SAM) to send missionaries to teach in their seminaries, then “independent from the French rule”. Religious order created by the Belgian missionary Vincent Lebbe (one of most fervent advocate of the promotion of the first Chinese bishop which lead to the nomination of the First Chinese bishop in 1924), the SAM sent Belgian missionaries late 30' serving the first Vietnamese bishops. In the fifties, whereas the French Indochina War was still raging and after, a large education network has been built in Belgium, Germany and the United States. What have been the impacts of this Education mobility in the Catholic community, and more largely on Vietnam Politics? Indeed, the clerical and lay elite which emerged from this network became key activists in the political debates in South Vietnam during the sixties.

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Claire Thi Liên Tran is Director of IRASEC, a French Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, Bangkok. She completed her PhD at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris and till 2016, was Associate Professor at Paris Diderot University. She is working on the Catholic minority and relations State/religions in Contemporary Vietnam and also on the Elites, Press and Gender History. Her recent works include “*Công giáo và Dân Tộc The Vietnamese Catholic minority and the Nation State*” in T Engelbert, *Vietnam's Ethnic and Religious Minorities: A Historical Perspective* (2016) and *Nguyễn Xuan Mai, Itinéraire d'un médecin indochinois engagé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale*, in H Baty-Delalande and C Trévisan, *Entrer en guerre* (2016). She is the coeditor of the annual publication *Asie du Sud-Est 2017, Bilan, enjeux et perspectives*.