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Social Communication and Religion

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

'Religion and Social Communication' is in the name of our center and some people might question what we mean by "Social Communication". This expression was seemingly used for the first time already 50 years ago as a title for a document of the Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council (1963, *Inter Mirifica*). The expression, however, was only in the title but never further developed and explained. Apparently it was just used as a common name for (Mass) Media. It was sociologist Giorgio Braga who took up the expression in a book with the same title (1969) where he sees the field as the "study of communicative processes in society". Later psychologists followed in the use of this expression with "Social Psychology of Communication" (Fiedler, 2007). But within the Church or Religion it was never studied in greater detail and perceived in a broader way which seems to be needed today in a time of "Social Media" and "Social Networks" where the full power and potential of this expression as the "communication of and in Human Society" comes to the fore. It means that *all* ways and means of communication of cultures and societies have to be seen under this perspective. It goes from the cave paintings of some 30,000 years ago via printing to the latest technical developments. It also means that the expression is not determined mainly or only by technology and media. It connotes the communication of people and their society in whatever form available and used. This includes in a special way Religion which cannot exist and live without proper communication on different levels and in different ways. Actually, the study and life of Religion is also the study of its communicative ways and expressions beyond the mere 'human'. It finally boils down to the fact that communication is people, as Pope Francis recently told the members of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication in Rome (*Allocutio*, Sept.21.2013).

Keynote Address delivered during the 6th International Roundtable of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) at the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chaing Mai, Thailand, October 21-24, 2013.

Over the years and in a common approach communication is often identified with Media - also in Religion like e.g. in the expression on “Religion, Media and Culture”. Such an approach and expression, however, refers only the *means* or instruments of communication but not to the full communicative happening and process of living Religion, which goes far beyond technical means and reflects the human being and society as the environment for living in relation to Religion. It is therefore important to take a broader and deeper look at this expression of “Social Communication” which seems to get an additional importance through modern communication possibilities and developments.

Looking at Social Communication in this broader perspective and as a field of life and studies one might distinguish three dimensions of communication as subsections of the field.

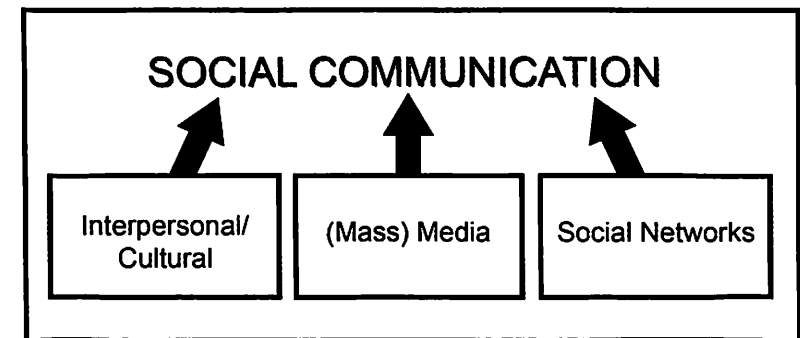
1. First comes the *interpersonal and cultural dimension* which is not necessarily related to any technical means but rather seen as a happening between persons which can be traced already to the very first human beings in history: wherever humans lived they communicated with each other with the simple facilities given to them by the creator. This further developed also into social groups and cultures with all their different cultural communicative expressions. But this is not only to be understood in the historical sense from the birth of humankind but it is also today an essential element of living and bonding together on a more personal level.

2. In the course of technical developments, speaking developed into writing and this further developed into printing for preservation and distribution up to the modern *Mass Media* which also go beyond text into visual and audio with film, broadcasting (radio and TV). Here the technically determined means of communication are central in their mass production, mass distribution and mass consumption: Mass Media. At this stage communication is basically consumption only, passive consumption without any real interaction – communication.

3. Interactive communication, however, comes back and goes now beyond space and time in the *third dimension* of Social Communication, at the ‘*Social Networks*’ level. While the interpersonal and cultural level of social communication is still limited in time and place this now is removed with the “Death of Distance” into a communication beyond time and space. It also goes now beyond the older and longtime existing “social networks” of family and other groupings in society which are already part of the first dimension.

“Social Communication” comprises all of these three dimensions and therefore place a special challenge and need for research and study in our concern for Religion and Social Communication. What does all these mean for our lives and communities, our study and research and our ‘practice’ of Religion and its integration into personal and community life? Buddhism in Thailand and our own place of meeting this year might be a concrete example and challenge for all these.

To capture the presentation up till now in a nutshell the following graph might be helpful:



In a certain way these three dimensions might be seen as historically following each other. This, however, is not fully true. Also in mass media, cultural communication can be taken up and multiplied but here the main emphasis is still on the *technical* transmission of the message which is not the case in the first and ‘original’ position of

the first dimension. There we have a full *interaction* of *all* participants while e.g. in a Television program there is no inter-action!

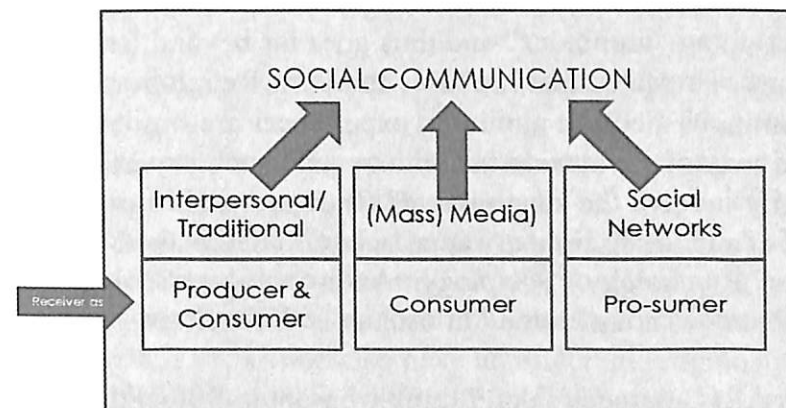
The third dimension refers to 'social networks'. Such networks do exist already since the beginning of humankind in family and social groups though we did not name them that way. What is new, however, and dominant today is the fact that a) social networks are somehow without limits in space and time ("Death of Distance"). We are not confined any more to people whom we directly see and hear but the whole world is open to everybody, b) it also means - in contrast to the mass media - it is the individual or the social group which determines the application of technical means and not any more powerful corporations. "I" determine which means I use and for whom and how. Here the personal qualities, likes and dislikes come in. But also possibilities of communication which were not accessible to me before are now at my disposal. This means on the other hand it is not any more "media-education" in the narrow sense of critical use of the media which is needed but rather communication competence has to be developed where I know when and how and where to use technologies for my communicating.

When the expression "Social Communication" was first proposed by Church people in 1963, the German communication scholar O.B. Roegele (1964) commented "the title is very progressive, but everything which follows is the opposite." In those days communication studies in Germany were still more independent from other 'trends' like the Shannon and Weaver phenomenon with the Sender-Message-Receiver concept which still dominates much of our communication studies. Those days in Germany communication was defined as everything which is made public ("Publizistik"), regardless through which means and ways this happens. Thus already in those days the dimension of *society* was considered and not a technical process (technology).

The Role of the Recipient

Considering the *role of the recipient* in the social communication process it should be clear that he/she is both producer and consumer in the *first dimension*. In the *second dimension* of our presentation of the media process, the recipient is basically passive. S/He receives and "consumes" but cannot easily "talk back" nor even "dialogue" with the big media.

This, however, is again possible today in the *third dimension* where communication takes place directly and immediately in a social network either on the person to person level and in cyberspace. Here the participant becomes what a study group of the German Bishops' conference (2012) called a "Pro-Sumer", a contraction of the words 'Producer' and 'Consumer' S/he moves on both levels and thus can come to a creative exchange similar to the early days where communication took place e.g. in the family.



Religion as an expression to or from a higher being is present in on all three dimensions but also here the mode is different: it can be listening and hearing on the personal/cultural level, or only a passive reception at the media level. It can also be a lively personal exchange in a network - here not so much as listening to a higher power but rather as an exchange of experiences and beliefs and expectations...between people.

How far does all this help us in our concern about Religion and Religion in Asia? Do all these developments contribute to our experience and change in Asian cultures? How is this done, how does this possibly change values? How does it affect the lives of individuals and communities and also the different age brackets within these groupings?

Communication scholar and editor of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication, and Media* Daniel Stout has recently published a textbook on *Media and Religion* (2013) where he distinguishes between (1) organized Religion and (2) elements of Religion like “Rituals, deep feeling, belief and community”(p.2). He quotes Johnston (2001) In defining religion as “a system of beliefs and practices by which a group of people interprets and responds to what they feel is sacred and, usually supernatural as well” (p.4 f.). Thus he states “that religion is multidimensional, comprised of belief, behavior community, and feeling”... Referring to Rudolf Otto’s seminal work on the *Idea of the Holy* (German original 1917!) he equals Religion with everything “numinous” and thus goes far beyond Religion in the strict sense. He states that he “uses the term Religion as well as the term ‘numinous’ because numinous experiences are similar to religious ones and may occur outside institutions, and such experiences do not necessarily involve the supernatural” (Intro, p.4). He further refers to the need of an interdisciplinary approach in Religion and Media studies involving Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Ecology literacy (p.19ff) but does not mention Philosophy and Theology.

In our ARC approach I don’t think we want to follow this somehow superficial approach but rather are concerned about Religion as essential part of our Asian cultures, societies and living. Therefore we are concerned about the relation between Religion, Culture and Society under communication perspective in the sense of ‘Social Communication’ as explained above. This includes considerations and studies like:

- How are cultures and their communications determined and even maintained by or through Religion?
- How are Religion and Technology (in the broad sense) related to communication? Does e.g. communication technology influence, change religious practices?
- How do the ways of communication express, influence or change religious practices or even religious convictions and teachings – from official to ‘banal’ (popular) religious practices?
- How is Religion present, needed or accepted in communicating societies and practices in a culture/society?
- Modern ways of communicating e.g. Social Networks and Religion in Asian Cultures and life: practices, possibilities and needs?
- Religious leaders and their communication competence in modern and traditional society? Which kind of competence do they need to develop in order to be at the level of life, culture and Society of people but at the same time integrating or even promoting Religion – beliefs and practices – in our times?

Or the questions placed already in our call for papers:

1. How are traditional ways of communication of and in Religion changed through such developments?
2. How do Religions respond to these developments?
3. Is the internal communication *within* Religions but also their communication to the *outside* influenced and changes: How?
4. Does such a situation also have an effect on religious practices (e.g. pilgrimages..) and rituals (e.g. devotions...) of members? How? When? Where?
5. Do developments in IT enter into religious practices? When, Where, How? With what effect?
6. What do these developments mean for intercultural communication within and between Religions? “Interreligious Dialogue”?

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Communication Technology Impacts Thai Culture and Buddhist Way of Life

Samran Khansamrong

Introduction

In the past two decades, the development of communication technology has tremendously changed human lifestyles all over the world. A totally new environment has been created¹ through satellites and information superhighways.² Rapid changes in the information society are affecting cultural identity and creating a massified society.³ Moreover, technology and popular culture are cultural elements spread through the media that fuel both cultural integration and cultural change. Both elements are integrated more quickly than the values associated with them, creating cultural lag.⁴ Technological advances such as the automobile, the television, more recently, the computer and the cellular phone have brought striking changes in our cultures, our patterns of socialization, our social institutions, and our day-to-day social interaction.⁵ Many people are simply connecting to each other through online devices such as e-mails, websites, forums, chatting programs and social networks. The internet has become an essential elevator to change the standard and lifestyle of message senders and receivers.

Thailand is a developing country which plays a recipient role in mass media transfer from the United States and Western European countries.

¹ McLuhan, Marshall.(1964). *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, New York: McGraw Hill, pp.7-16.

² Canter, A. Laurence and others. (1995). *How to make a Fortune on the Information Superhighways*, Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers.

³ Tofler, Alvin. (1980). *The Third Wave*, Pan Books,

⁴ Linda L. Lindsey & Stephen Beach. (2003). *Essentials of Sociology*. New Jersey. Person Education. p.48

⁵ Richard T. Schaefer. (2004). *Sociology*. New York. McGraw-Hill.p.411.

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News, films, TV programs, magazines, and music are examples.⁶ A main reason why the foreign mass media are growing so rapidly is the open, absorptive, and adaptive nature of Thai society.⁷ These mass media have an impact on Thai society in several ways: new lifestyle, new fashion, and new leisure activities⁸ (National Identity Office, 1984); or as expressed by another study, the imported media affect Thai society in terms of social structure, traditional values, and lifestyle changes (Virasi, 1981).⁹ Mass media from foreign nations act as cultural representatives capable of creating change in the social structure of Thai. Generally, the impact of foreign mass media may have both negative and positive influences on social change. Viewed positively, mass media provide Thais with entertainment and knowledge which is necessary for national development. Foreign media can also reinforce cultural identities and reconcile diverse values in society. However, the negative consequences are also tremendous: social problems, conflict, and unnecessary political, economic and social dependency. The negative impact of foreign mass media stems from their unsuitable content for many recipients.¹⁰

For centuries Buddhism has established itself in Thailand and has enriched the lives of the Thais in all aspects of their lives. Indeed without Buddhism, Thailand would not be what it is today.¹¹ Looking back on our history, we can see clearly the close relationship between Buddhism and the Thai Nation. The history of the Thai Nation is also the history of Buddhism. The Thai Nation originated over 2,000 years ago. Also in that same period Buddhism came and has played an important part in Thai history ever since.¹² The roots of the traditions and cultures of Thailand lie

⁶ Boonchan T and L. Brooks Hill. (1996). U.S. Mass Media and Thai Society Intercultural Communication Studies VI: 1

⁷ Indorf, H.H. (Ed.).(1982).Thai-American Relations in Contemporary Affairs. Singapore: Executive Publications, PTE Ltd.

⁸ National Identity Office, Office of the Prime Minister.(1984). Thailand in the 80's. Bangkok: Rung Ruang Ratana Printing.

⁹ Virasi, B. (1981).Thai Society in Transition. Asian Culture Quarterly, 9 (2), 28-32.

¹⁰ Mowlana, H. (1986). Global Information and World Communication: New Frontiers in International Relations. New York: Longman.

¹¹ <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/kusalasaya/wheel085.html>. Accessed on 2 October 2013.

¹² Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A.Payutto). (2001). Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist world. Buddhadhamma Foundatin, Bangkok, p.14.

firmly within the family structure and Buddhism. Once Buddhism spread throughout Thailand, the *Wat* or temple became the centre of village life. It was the place where people received an education, attended ceremonies and held feasts and festivals. For many Thais, Buddhism is closely associated with traditional values and cultural activities. But the cultural scene itself is fast changing in urban Thai society. Though Buddhism still plays a very important role in the day-to-day life of the vast majority of Thais today, with the rapid increase of modern communications, it is inevitably impacted upon by communication technology.

Communication Technology

In Thai society today we use technology and receive more information from the outside world without realizing that it makes a change little by little to our traditional way of life. Changes are happening at a rapid pace due to many factors, among them - the increasing dominant commercial mode we now operate in and the spread of communication tools (TV, mobile phones, computers, internet, cars and airplanes). We like to see things move very fast, and speed is usually regarded as power and progress. Culture has changed with the new IT revolution. We value immediacy. We have a high regard for simultaneity.¹³ We will feel upset if our electronic machines work slower than our mind. We have less patience. This seems different from the Buddhist way of life that the mindfulness or reflection should be always practiced. A word "*Chuk-Kid*" that can approximately be expressed by the English term "to stop and think" is almost neglected. Many Thais, especially in the city, tend to absorb westerners' concept "Time is money". Thailand which is known as "the land of smiles" is continuously overshadowed by that concept. The scene of the family going to the temple, making merit and listening to the Dhamma talks in the past is replaced by the scene of children playing games, chatting on internet, watching movies or TV program etc. while their aging people making some meritorious activities. The progress of communication can make people who differ both in language and culture communicate conveniently.

¹³<http://fs.libarts.psu.ac.th/research/journal/journal-52-1/1-Language%20and%20cultural%20change.pdf>. Accessed on 2 October 2013.

Mobile phones have become one of the major requisites for Thais everywhere, even for children in primary school. About ten years ago, the scene of a reluctant old woman dressed in rags, led by a girl who is supposed to be her daughter, directing to a mobile phone shop, is still in my mind. According to National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) data in 2011, the number of mobile phone subscribers in Thailand is 74.59 million, or more than 100 per cent penetration rate.¹⁴ The “smart phone boom” has strongly encouraged Thai mobile phone consumers to purchase new smart phone models. All Thai major mobile operators have various special data packages for iPhone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry phones so as to increase non-voice revenue. In the past Thai people used to walk or cycle to chat and share some kinds of food and opinion with their relatives or friends who lived one kilometer or more away from their home. It was good for them for doing exercise as well as having a close relationship with their people. At present they use telephones to communicate with the people who live even 100 meters or less than that. Face-to-face contact has been replaced by telephone conversation, as it saves time, and most people do not think that there is any difference between an actual conversation and mediated conversation.

Facebook is one of the most popular social media in the present time. In Thailand, Thai Facebook users with the ages between 18-24 years old (38.5%) have hit the highest rate of Facebook profile registration with the amount of 237,960 profiles while the ages between 25-34 years old (36.6%) are in the second rank with the amount of 26,460 profiles whereas the ages between 35-44 years old (10.1%) are in the third rank with the amount of 62,180 profiles and the ages between 14-17 years old (8.9%) are the least rate of Facebook registration with the amount of 54,940 profiles.¹⁵ In 2012, there are about 14.2 million Facebook users who have selected their location as “Thailand” (16th in the world).¹⁶ Bangkok is even the top city in the world in terms of Facebook user numbers (8.68

¹⁴ NBTC, Telecom market Report Q2/2011, page 2.

¹⁵ <http://www.hrmars.com/admin/pics/59.pdf>. Accessed on 5 August 2013.

¹⁶ Facebook, Facebook Advertising Tools, <https://www.facebook.com/ads/manage/adcreator>, accessed on 2 February 2013. using location: Thailand filter with all ages and genders.

million).¹⁷ At the time of the writing of this paper, Facebook users are still continuously increasing. Some parents use Facebook or Line in calling their children to get out from their individual rooms in order to have a meal together even though they live in the same house. Many times it is used as a tool to violate the basic Buddhist principles of the lay people, the five precepts; to abstain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lie and taking intoxicants. The word ‘face’ can be ‘fact’ or ‘fake’, if only one alphabet is replaced. A week ago, it was on a popular Thai newspaper headline that a young Thai girl was lured and killed by an old male guard, who tried to rape her after denying having a relationship with him after knowing that he was different from the person on his Facebook photo. The question is always asked as to why these kinds of incidents occur in a Buddhist country like Thailand. There is no doubt that if more people earnestly practiced the *Dhamma* (the Buddha teaching), many of the problems Thailand now faces could be satisfactorily solved or ameliorated. For example, if people really observed the five precepts, there would be less violence, fraud, and corruption. Even if only one precept of the five was adhered to, it would surely contribute tremendously to society. Indeed, it is not Buddhism that is a problem to society, but not following it in the proper way. Communication technology, like Facebook and other social media, is a two-edged sword; we can use them with our loving kindness to other people as well as harming them through it.

Cable and Satellite TV & Community Radio

Satellite TV as well as community radio influences the way of thinking of the Thai people. Since the revolution of the Council of National Security (CNS) took place in Thailand on 19 September 2006, the national conflict has spread all over the country. Although there are many groups involved in the conflict from that time up to the present time, the main ones are the Yellow Shirt movement and the Red Shirt movement. The conflict between these two main groups of people has continued to become more

¹⁷ Socialbakers, <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/cities>, accessed 3 March 2013.

and more deeply rooted. Satellite TV is used for political mobilization. To avoid government censorship, its ASTV sends broadcasting data to Hong Kong via fibre optics and airs programmes from a Hong Kong satellite instead of Shin Corporation's ThaiCom satellites. The Red Shirt movement later started their own satellite channels including D Channel, which changed its name to PTV and then to Asia Update. The Democrat Party started their own channel BlueSky after a defeat in the 2011 General Elections. Since 2005 these political channels have played a crucial role during Thailand's political turmoil. The political turmoil since 2008 and the anti-competitive behavior of the broadcasting industry accelerated the number of political related radio stations mainly created by the Red Shirts. The Yellow Shirts also have community radios in the Bangkok area and other provinces.¹⁸ Those satellite TV and community radio said above were mostly not used for the reconciliation of the people in the country, but for putting blame and spreading hatred on the opposite sides instead. This is against the Buddhist teaching that we should radiate loving kindness out to all beings.

English Words borrowed into Thai Language

Language, as a part of culture, is an important tool for social interaction. It allows much more than communication; it is the key to cultural transmission, the process by which one generation passes culture to the next.¹⁹ All cultures are represented through language. Language exerts such a strong influence on culture that it is often as a key marker for determining the number of world cultures.²⁰ Advances in technology have also brought about changes in language. Meanwhile, the rapid progress in technology and education inevitably leads to linguistic globalization. Many linguists today would regard language change as a natural process, which is neither good nor bad. But in fact, people do pass value judgment on language and do speak about the degeneration of a language. They often go further in finding a correlation between socio-cultural decadence

¹⁸ Manager Radio, <http://radio.manager.co.th>, accessed June 2013.

¹⁹ John J. Macionis. (2009). society. Pearson Education. p.56

²⁰ Linda L. Lindsey & Stephen Beach. 2003. Essentials of Sociology. New Jersey. Person Education.

and language. A change of Thai language is also influenced by mass media communication, especially English. Moreover, a style of using a spoken and written Thai language itself also changes in accordance with Cyber Media. The influence and effects of English on Thai language have thus been accelerated and more widespread than ever. Despite the completely different roots of the Thai and English languages, there are some words and phrases which have been relatively recently borrowed from English. Many loan words from English have entered the Thai language and some grammatical changes in Thai have been fostered by English. *Hello* has been adopted as the common way to answer the telephone, although the Thai version of this is more commonly a *⟨Hallo⟩*, with the second syllable extended and given a rising intonation. In a restaurant it is quite common to hear the phrase *cheque bin*, to ask for the bill.²¹

The Thai language, like other languages such as Japanese, Indian and Singaporean, have borrowed words so extensively from English language. English loan words have an influence in Thai language in both written and spoken language. We usually use English loan words to describe new concepts, which may not have been in existence earlier, for example, casino, wreath, necktie, office, free, care, game etc. Some English words have been adopted and adapted until they sound like Thai words. For example, the English word "number" has become "ber" in Thai. The Thais just do away with its first syllable. Similarly, "tutor", the verb, has become "tu" and "racing" has become "sing". Many of information and technology terms have been adopted and used in Thai. Nowadays the volume of English loan words in Thai language has been increased. Yuphahann used the term "E-Thai" to bring out in the search of Thai Language in the New Millennium. "E-Thai" is used to refer to both novel variety of Thai- the Thai "Netspeak" used in "electronically-mediated communication", and the English influenced Thai in contemporary Thai society. According to Yuphahann's study, the characteristics of Thai net speaking including abbreviation and condensation of words and phrases; pronunciation spelling; international deviant spelling to

²¹ <http://www.macmillandictionaries.com/MED-Magazine/April2006/37-Thai-English-false-friends-print.htm> accessed 7 August 2013

avoid censorship; international deviant spelling to get attention; and orthographic strategies to show paralinguistic features and gestures or emotions. Yuphahann also pointed out that, for Thai, the noticeable impact on the language is that some deviant spellings and pronunciation, spelling of some words that used to be the in-group jargon of chat room.²²

Advantages of ICT according to Buddhist views

After the Buddha attained enlightenment, he spent the rest of his life teaching people all over central India. The Buddha spent forty-nine years barefeet wandering from place to place in India to spread his doctrine to other people. The dissemination of Buddha's teachings was slow due to the limitations of ancient transportation and communications. It took the Buddha's teachings (Dharma) several centuries to reach other countries. Furthermore, it took the Dharma five hundred years from India to reach the East Asian countries. But time was not the only issue. In the target country, the teachings should also have been able to adjust itself to the new society and its culture to become a form of 'localized Buddhism'. In the process of adapting itself to the culture, the Dharma would be transformed and became slightly different from the original. The practice of Dharma was divided into different sects to adjust to the particular culture and tradition of the local people. For example, Theravada follows the original method of practice based on the Buddha's time and the Mahayana tradition a reform of the original. Countries that follow Theravada are Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Burma and so on. Mahayana is more popular in countries like China, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea and Mongolia. Today, the Dharma has found new ways to re-transmit itself to the Sangha, the Buddhists communities and the world. The acceptance of Buddha's teaching does not depend on whether it can accommodate to new cultures or societies, but in the way it presents the core teachings. Media theorist, Marshall McLuhan stated that "The 'content' of any medium is always another medium, the content of writing is speech, and the content of speech is the actual

²² Yuphaphann, H. (2005). Thai language in the New Millennium. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Manoa Press

thoughts or itself nonverbal. The content of written word is print and the print is the content of the telegraph."²³

Buddhism has now existed amongst the changes in the world for almost 2,600 years to the era of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). This technology has been linked to global unity. Humanitarian access and obtaining information was very quick. It is a matter of fact that ICT has both positive and negative impacts on Buddhism. For example, the positive impacts such as using ICT for Worldwide Buddhist dissemination via the Internet, which is very quick. People can reach Buddha's teachings through ICT with ease anytime anywhere. The use of the Internet and World Wide Web is an important form of religious dissemination. They can use websites to further their mission of spreading their religion to serve their members and the communities in various ways. For example, monasteries, and Buddhist Institutions are important organizations in maintaining the Buddhist cultures and traditions. They use websites to display the Buddha's scriptures, images, audio and sometimes spiritual rituals so that they can show the presence of Buddhism or the virtual of Buddha to promote their faith. According to Stevenson "whether we live our lives permanently in the village where we were born or restlessly travel the globe, media cultures are almost certainly present" (1995, 178). Thus Buddhist institutions cannot escape the use of new media especially by the Internet because of its convenience. Secondly, the use of websites in Buddhist institutions is also creating new bonds and communication networks between the Sangha, Buddhist communities and the world.

Before the Internet was introduced to the public, Buddhist monasteries or institutions were mostly known by local people its communities.²⁴ Now they can also be well known by overseas people via the World Wide Web. The use of the Internet to post temple's scenery, services, and activities attracts visitors within the country and overseas who may

²³ McLuhan, Marshall.(1964). Understanding Media: The Extension of Man, New York: McGraw Hill. pp.7-16.

²⁴ http://www.quangminh.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=182:the-use-of-the-internet-in-buddhist-institutions&catid=1:latest-news Accessed 13 August 2013

visit the temple when they have a chance. Furthermore, visitors are attracted by the exposition of Buddhist cultures through images that are posted on the websites. More and more high school students now visit temples on school excursions instead of other places. The internet has expanded internationally and globally for the benefit and convenience of those seeking spiritual places and tourism destinations.

Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto said in his book *Advanced ICT, But the Need to Develop Wisdom and Discipline of the People*, which can be summarized as: "...In the current era of Globalization, let us examine the effects the globalization has on religion beliefs. What is the future of our beliefs? How can religious beliefs be integrated into the ever changing progress? It has long been focused solely on the religion. In this discussion, I would like to discuss 'Religion in the Era of Globalization'. Let us set religious beliefs on one side and globalization era on the other. Each side has effect on the other. How is globalization effect the religion beliefs and how can religious beliefs aids human in this era?..."

... The importance of technologies is not only seen as a tool that helps us save time and energy. It should also be viewed as a miraculous discovery. Technologies represent human ever-growing visions. They enable us into achieving something that our previous generation has not even dreamt of....

...For example, our scripture, *Tripitaka*, has been downloaded onto CD-ROM. We are now able to search the lengthy *Tripitaka* containing 22,000 pages approximately. To find out word 'Sabha' manually, previously took weeks or even months to obtain, but now can be achieved at an unheard of speed. With just one click of a keyword, all information of that keyword will appear within seconds on the computer screen. Technology provides easy and convenient access in the study of Buddhism. I consider this a miracle. It expands human visions...

...Thais should try to fully understand the capabilities of Information Technology. We must utilize its capacities. We must realize the Pros and Cons of this new tool. We then must select the beneficial outcome of technology. We should not focus solely on the commercial benefits. We must also focus on the effects of its output to society as a whole. The output should be identified as favorable or harmful. Least of all, we should be able to identify which outcome of the new technology we can adapt into our society and which to avoid..."²⁵

The Buddha's message "No piece of technology will be intrinsically good or bad. What will matter is how we use it. It is up to use". Technology itself does not harm and value anyone, but we, as the users, do it. For the young children, they have to be guided or educated by the adults who understand its advantage and disadvantage.

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**Religion and Social Communication in
Changing Cultures of Asia: Anthropological Perspective**

S. M. Michael, svd

Human existence is a configuration of historical, rational, political, social, relational and religious layers. Culture offers a site, and network, a texture, and continuum of these varied and myriad events and experiences of life-journey. The discourse on culture in the present globalized world is different from the classicist instrumental approach. Today, culture is an ever unfolding scenario in an ethos of dialogue rather than an idée fixe. Or rather, culture is a creative narrative in which ideas, ideologies and traditions interplay and an organic harmony is achieved; this configuration is not a 'constant' but a process-in-telos offering ever new meaning and horizon to life in the time-space sequence. Religions in dialogue have a vital role in this process of interpretation and integration in the present pluralistic history.

In the present pluralistic ethos cultures do not remain in a lazy aloofness but enter into a dialogical hermeneutic which upholds the inviolability of each culture but not in isolation or exclusion but in a network of mutual appreciation and approximations. What is at work is a relational epistemology which is inclusive, existential and futuristic both in its style and substance. Religions have to partake in this 'cultural' of human existence which is in a constant seeking, and is on pilgrimage in the history and even beyond history. That is to say, religion is not outside the journey of life but a constituent or rather the very 'culture' which gives significance to human life.

Keeping in mind the above considerations, we may explore the possible social communication to give deeper dimensions of religion in the changing cultures of Asia.

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I. Introduction

Life is a dynamic process of interacting with nature and other living organisms. Human life, in addition to the above interactions, also seeks meaning to human existence and explores the causes behind the universe and its existence. The history of humanity has built up various cultures and civilizations to understand and organize human life. The universe being an evolving system, the dynamics of human relationship with nature and with one another is also constantly changing. As a result, all human cultures are changing and rearranging themselves to the ever dynamic process of the evolving universe. All the same, the deepest quest of human existence and its meaning is ever present in the human psyche.

This paper is dealing about this dynamic relationship between changing cultures and their ever longing for meaning of human existence present in today's world. The methodology and approach of this paper is anthropological in nature. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the dynamic nature of culture and the place of religion in cultures. The second part concentrates on the characteristics of Asian cultures. The third part analyzes the changing nature of cultures through the process of globalization and the emergence of inter-culturality in today's world. The next part of the study concentrates on the culture and communication revolution in the present world. Based on the above observations, the fifth part of this paper concentrates on Religion and Social Communication in the changing cultures of Asia. The last part is the conclusion.

II. Dynamic Nature of Culture

Human existence is a configuration of historical, rational, political, social, relational and religious layers. Culture offers a site, and network, a texture, and continuum of these varied and myriad events and experiences of life journey.

Culture can be understood broadly in two different ways. One is the universal dimension of culture, i.e. all human beings share in the one

common heritage of culture. Here, we distinguish human beings from animals. As a fish cannot live without water, so human beings cannot live without culture. There is an intimate relationship between culture and being human. Here, culture is understood as a nurtured behavior addressing the entire human being in contrast to animals who live in nature with their instinct.

The second dimension is the distinctive way one community or society organizes itself from other communities or societies. This implies that there are many cultures in the world. There is a distinctive way a group or a community organizes itself in its economic, social, political, religious and other aspects of life. Thus, we can use the term "culture" in singular to distinguish human behavior from animal behavior, or "cultures" in plural to distinguish one group's behavior from another. In both the cases, culture is understood as a learned behavior as opposed to the instinctual behavior of animals. This is the literary meaning of the term "culture". It derives from the Latin verb *colere* ("to cultivate or instruct"). "Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior, that is, the totality of man's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior acquired through social learning" (Keesing, 1958:18).

From the ancient times, there has been a dynamic relationship and communication between cultures from different parts of the globe. This communication has intensified today in the scenario of global village. Accordingly, the discourse on culture in the present world is different from the classicist instrumental approach. Today, culture is an ever unfolding scenario in an ethos of dialogue rather than an *idée fixe*. Or rather, culture is a creative narrative in which ideas, ideologies and traditions interplay and an organic harmony is achieved; this configuration is not a 'constant' but a process-in-telos offering ever new meaning and horizon to life in the time-space sequence. Religions in dialogue have a vital role in this process of interpretation and integration in the present pluralistic history.

III. Culture and Religion are Constituent Elements of the Journey of Life

In the present pluralistic ethos, cultures do not remain in a lazy aloofness but enter into a dialogical hermeneutic which upholds the inviolability of each culture but not in isolation or exclusion but in a network of mutual appreciation and approximations. What is at work is a relational epistemology which is inclusive, existential and futuristic both in its style and substance. Religions have to partake in this 'cultural' of human existence which is in a constant seeking, and is on pilgrimage in the history and even beyond history. That is to say, religion is not outside the journey of life but a constituent or rather the very 'culture' which gives significance to human life.

IV. Characteristics of Asian Cultures

Asia has never been a unified cultural world. For thousands of years the continent and its surrounding islands had been home to a vast number of languages, cultures, and religions. Major centres of urban civilization in Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and China had emerged several thousand years ago. By the beginning of the Common Era they were actively trading with one another across the continent. Arab rulers successfully joined Arabia, Mesopotamia, Persia, and much of central Asia under a common Islamic government in the seventh and eighth centuries for the first time, but eventually regional rulers rose to become more important. The Mongol empire in the fourteenth century had come closest to unifying the entire continent of Asia under a single ruling dynasty, reaching from China to Europe and into northern India. By the fifteenth century it too had split into several political and cultural factions. Thus, the diversity of languages, religions, and cultures are marks of Asia.

Even colonization and the process of globalization have not unified the cultures of Asia into a single civilization. All the same, the communication technology has influenced the people, especially

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Even colonization and the process of globalization have not unified the cultures of Asia into a single civilization. All the same, the communication technology has influenced the people, especially

the youth of Asia. The post-modern and relativistic value system has captured the imagination of many Asians. Hence, today, Asia is not in isolation. Asian cultures are changing, and changing very fast.

V. The Process of Globalization and the Increasing of Inter-culturality

Globalization is a complex process by which the world is becoming a highly interconnected world through economic, social, political and cultural contacts. It refers to the intensification of global interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchange (Inda and Rosaldo, 2002:2). As a result, the world is shrinking in terms of time and space making the world feel smaller and distance and distances shorter. The intensity and the momentum of this process are further enhanced by the sophisticated instant communications and ever-expanding fast travels. Globalization symbolizes a world in motion providing people with resources to new ways of being human in the fast changing world.

There is another important cultural process taking place in the world of today. A multivalent or polyvalent culture is on the rise in which 'global' and 'local' contest as well as collaborate generating 'glocal'. The simultaneity of humanization forces of global, and indigenization protests of the local spins out into an inevitable dialogue between them. There is no 'local' untouched by the outside forces, and no 'global' not influenced by the 'local'. The 'universal' as well as 'local' lose their edge in the interface of 'local' and 'global'. Instead what is in ascendancy is 'intercultural' and multi-cultural.

VI. Culture and Communication Revolution

The world today is consumed in an ambience of technological sophistication. The Social Network, Internet and Mobile revolutions which are collectively called the *Triple Revolution* have created

a new information and media ecology that is distinct from the past. The New Media have contributed to a great way to the convergence in information, education, entertainment and career. There has been a great shift from the traditional one-way, mass communication towards more interactive communication between medium and the user. What all these means for people and cultures is unpredictable.

The diffusion and the robust presence of technologies in formal and informal contexts are determining the way we organize our private time and our social presence. Internet has raised new possibilities of interactivity and participation in virtual social relationships leading to a shift of boundaries between public and private spaces. More than being a tool to hasten communication and information transfer, new media has become a very important social device to get in contact with usual friends, to expand relationships and communicate identity, acting as a strong social connector. The process of creating, collecting, assessing and distributing information is increasingly becoming networked. Key technological changes have given rise to new affordances that shape the everyday lives of individuals as well as their decisions and their behavior. This is especially true when it comes to the interrelation between technology and youth.

For young people, internet and social networks are real settings that work together with their physical life. In Facebook, Blogs, Messenger, or other social networks, young people tend to expand their networks and build up their world. It has made a big influence on their lifestyles, changing their traditional leisure activities. They almost live, relate, feed, grow and express their needs, aspirations through these new media. It seems to make more sense to them to relate and communicate through new media, than face to face encounters.

This climate of digital explosion and New Media technological communication give rise to new cultural models. However, today, technology is not only a passive instrument at our disposal, but because of its networked character, it has more or less become an active agent

that affects and transforms both the scenario and the people involved in it. Nevertheless, ICTs have also given rise to previously unknown ethical problems and concomitant conflicts concerning ecology and nature, humanity and life value, and the morality and ethics of society.

VII. Religion and Social Communication in the Changing Cultures of Asia

In this context, it is pertinent to explore Religion and Social Communication in the changing cultures of Asia. Since religion is the meaning giving system, it is very important that in the midst of changing worldviews and moral and ethical ambiguities, religion explores the effective social communication to revitalize the deeper meanings of life in the changing cultures of Asia.

a) *Religious Communication has to be in Visual Culture Today*

The concomitant consequence of the communication revolution in this post-modern era is the assertion of 'space' over 'time'. Owing to the globalization process coupled with media, 'space' has become the culture-scape which facilitates the juxtaposition of diverse traditions and ideologies. Michael Foucault figures out the present history as the 'epoch of space.' Our experience of reality has become existential rather than historical; it should be searched in a network of relationship here-now. Post-modernists will not postulate or postpone 'meaning' to a virtual utopia in the unknown future. The art and skill of post-modernism is to celebrate the polyphony of diverse flows and stands of discourses in a creative and inclusive harmony of life's manifold expressions. Consequently what we have is a creative ambivalence of plurality in the intricate texture of the Real!

Media and its sequent visual culture, to a large extent, caused the death knell of a unilinear, centralized and normative referent leading to a moral and cultural relativism. A visual gives birth to a creative spectrum, not a rigid centre; it symbolizes, harmonizes and upholds

the variety and diversity in an incommensurable logic. It is more experiential, existential; it enhances the concrete rather than abstracts in universals. It paves way to the birth of a culture of multiple sources and fosters a multiple belonging. The universal is a 'lie'; what really exists is the inviolable and vulnerable 'concrete', the 'individual'. A religion becomes irreligious the moment it stops to appreciate and appropriate the individual. The individual lives in a narrative of life, not in abstraction and absolutes. God is not an abstraction; God is of life. Post-modernist ethos calls for a return to the narrative to construct a new identity of human existence, inclusive, vibrant, creative and innovative right in the reality of everyday life.

b) *Narrative Communication*

In today's pluralistic world of relativity, media virtuality, randomness and liminality of human experience, what we need is a story that gives perspective and meaning to the fragmented experiences and uprooted identities, and to make sense of the temporality. Story as a figurative language interprets us as we interpret it. By and large, the Scriptural literatures are generally narratives. They are vast narrative canvas of polyvalent discourses of contrasting themes. The paradoxicality of Godhead can be revealed and comprehended only on a narrative spectrum. In this context, the theme of the Asian Mission Congress (2006) calls our attention. It advocates the rationale of the return to the art and craft of a story-telling in its efforts to tell about Christ in Asia. This intrinsic approach gives primary importance to the interpretation of Jesus' life. Sadly, the Enlightenment caused the collapse of the very capacity to tell stories and to listen to stories. Today, the increasing communication technologies such as social network, internet and mobile revolutions have brought back the narrative communication. Religions must use this method in their communication.

What is implied and entailed in this advocacy is a radical shift from the Western normativity to narrativity. Religions, especially Christianity have to pro-actively 're-conceive' itself as a narrative entity in the

present scenario of dialogue of religions, multiculturalism, media etc. to communicate the truth of their religions. The late Pope John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia* recommends an Asian narrative pedagogy which will introduce people step by step to the 'Fullness of Life' that Jesus has brought about.

c) *Experiential Communication*

In a multicultural world of today, cultural and moral relativism dominates the experiential life of people. Post-modern culture sees doubt as a form of health. It often derives meaning or excitement through experiments with sensation, sex and drugs. At the same time, people in general and the youth of today in particular experience a great vacuum and emptiness. They search for deeper meaning and understanding of their existential situation of brokenness in family, relationships, in marriage. They seek understanding and compassion. In this situation religious social communication has to be existential. The religious personnel must be persons who understand the changed cultures of Asia and show compassion, forgiveness and inclusiveness. The life of religious witness, firmness, compassion and understanding will help the wayward, un-firm to see religion in a deeper way answering their existential situation created by the present world.

d) *Religious Communication through Feasts and Festivals*

Studies show that in spite of urbanization, industrialization and modernization the religious practices of feast and festivals do not die out, rather they strengthen group solidarity, by modifying themselves and adjusting to new situations.

Feasts and festivals are related to the experiential dimensions of life. They are cultural celebrations. It is in the celebrations of the feast and festivals that a community re-experiences, re-lives, re-creates, re-tells, re-constructs and re-fashions its culture. Thus, festivals constitute a prime act of reflexivity, whereby a society gets shaped and reshaped.

Thus, festivals can be considered as rites of intensification, whereby the values and solidarity of the society are enhanced.

The concept of festival embraces two modes - a) enjoyment and b) enrichment. Enjoyment (carnival) inverts the social order and leans towards breaking barriers between the rich and poor, between high and low in status, between the privileged and the underprivileged. Victor Turner refers to this equalizing process in celebrations as anti-structure, which is more or less subversive of the social order. *Communitas*, that is, universal fellow feeling, reigns for those who are willing to participate in the celebrations. Society looks at itself transformed. Enrichment is done by the performance of rituals and ceremonies, which celebrates the past memories making it a reality today giving meaning to human existence in the midst of death and life. It is the tension between these two dimensions of festival that gives it its warmth and power. According to Sutton-Smith, the tensions between enjoyment and enrichment are the seedbeds of cultural creativity of a community (1972). Everyone may participate in a festival because of its enjoyment element.

Studies on feasts and festivals by Milton Singer, Dell Hymes, Richard Bauman, Victor Turner and others have shown us that feasts and festivals are not only naturally occurring units of *meaning* but are also *periods of heightened activity* when a society's presuppositions are most exposed and the core values are expressed. Through the celebrations of feast and festivals the people involved give expression to the meanings of life which their religion, culture and language have crystallized from the past.

The feasts and festivals are usually connected with the periodic changes; the daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly changes which are associated with changes in technology through the alternation of day and night and of the seasons. The celebration of feast and festivals which come periodically, help to reinforce the habitual relations within the society. E. D. Chappell and C.S. Coon (1942) call these rites and rituals as "rites of intensification", since the goal of these celebrations are the strengthening of group unity.

Religious festivals illustrate the importance of the social factor in religious experience. Religious festivals include enormous gatherings. The largest festival in the world, the Maha Kumbha Mela of India, is held every twelve years, timed to take place at an auspicious position of the planet Jupiter. The Maha Kumbha Mela draws 15 million participants to the banks of the Ganges River. Ascetic holy men abound, seeking the opportunity to cleanse themselves from sin by bathing at the auspicious moment, thereby obtaining merit. The major world pilgrimages also include massive festival occasions, such as Guadalupe Day (December 12), near Mexico City, where the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego in 1531, this festival is the most heavily attended Christian pilgrimage in the world, attracting more than 5 million pilgrims a year. Other religious festivals take the form of passion plays. Another type of religious festival primarily takes the form of a public procession.

In the post-modern world where there is so much of ambiguity, confusion and moral relativism, feasts and festivals give a cohesion and re-living of a culture in a changing world. Hence, religious communication should take the celebrations of feasts and festivals seriously and communicate their religious worldview in a creative way to reinforce the religious convictions of people in the post-modern world.

e) *Religious Communication through Rites of Passage*

Every individual in a society undergoes different phases of life such as birth, puberty, adulthood, old age and death. From birth till death human beings take up different positions in life such as childhood, youth, marriage and parenthood. All these changes and positions in life involve different responsibilities and each of these changes disturbs the individual's equilibrium in relationship within his family and society. A person's ability to handle these situations is marked with uncertainties. Hence these disturbances, which involve marked changes in the habitual interaction rates of individuals, are known as crisis (Chapple and Coon 1942:484). Every culture meets these crisis situations through various rituals so that an individual may pass through these stages without much

stress and strain. These rites and rituals are called *rites of passage*. (cf. Gennep 1960). These rites and rituals literally mark the passage of an individual from one state in his relations with other people to another state. Hence, these are marked with celebrations. A careful observation of different cultures would reveal the universality of these celebrations.

The purpose of these rituals and celebrations is to transform an individual from one stage of life to another. These rites and celebrations are seen as both indicators and vehicles of transition from one socio-cultural state and status to another – childhood to maturity, virginity to marriage, childlessness to parenthood, sickness to health, death to ancestry, and so on. These ceremonies and specific rites also play an important role in the ordering and reordering of social relations (Gluckman 1962:4).

In Asia, still these rites of passage play an important role in the lives of individuals and families. These occasions can be very good occasions to communicate religious beliefs and values in today's world.

f) *Religious Communication through Pilgrimages*

Pilgrimages are related to cultural celebrations. It is one of the most powerful ways through which a community re-experiences, re-lives, re-creates, re-tells, re-constructs and re-fashions its culture. Thus, pilgrimages constitute a prime act of reflexivity, whereby a society gets shaped and reshaped.

Pilgrimages are of ancient origin in human history. They are related to the reality of human existence. As humans we experience joys and sorrows of life, holiness and sinfulness in our being. Pilgrimages are intimately related to these dimensions of life. There is a basic desire to be good but at the same time, the social reality of life is so complex which leads to structures of guilt, anxiety, and stress. So, there is a longing for renewal in human hearts. Certain types of pilgrimages are related to penitential rites for self-purification.

A pilgrimage is a sacred journey. On such a journey one gets away from the reiterated “occasions of sin” which make up so much of the human experience of social structure. Nagging guilt and a desire to get relieved motivates individuals to undertake pilgrimage with the hope of purification. For many pilgrims the journey itself is something of a penance.

In short, we can say that in human life there is a tension between order (structure) and creativity to go beyond order, which disrupts order (anti-structure). In this process of structure and anti-structure, individual, society and culture get renewed. Victor Turner refers to pilgrimage as a kind of anti-structure, which is more or less subversive of the social order. *Communitas*, that is, universal fellow feeling, reigns for those who are willing to participate in the pilgrimage celebrations. It is in the tension between these two dimensions of structure and anti-structure pilgrimage gives it its warmth and power. According to Sutton-Smith, the tensions between structure and anti-structure are the seedbeds of cultural creativity of a community (1972). Pilgrimage is an important process of this renewal and rejuvenation. They are the celebrations of life and death. A pilgrim is an initiand, entering into a new, deeper level of existence than he has known in his accustomed milieu. The essential aspect of pilgrimage is the inward movement of the heart. The moral dimension of the pilgrimage is salvation or release from the sins and evils of the structural world. Pilgrimage, then, offers liberation from profane social structures. This paradigm will give a measure of coherence, direction, and meaning to their action, in proportion to their identification with the true meaning and sincerity of the pilgrimage. Since life is a process, the need for pilgrimage is a continuous one seeking renewal and transformation till the end of one’s life.

We concretely see how pilgrimages are on increase in today’s world. The fast communication system also enhances the increase of pilgrimages. Hence, in today’s world religions must make use of this channel to deepen the moral and ethical values of their religions in this post-modern world.

g) *Presence and Witness of Religions in the New Media*

Today there are over 2 billion people who use the Internet and more than 650 million websites are in existence. In a day nearly 10,000 web pages are created, and as per the latest statistics of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) a blog is created every second. On an average, there are 31 billion searches on Google every month.

These technologies are integral to an emerging global culture that offers not just an effective means of communication, but immense possibilities to transcend the limits imposed by geography and national borders, and address millions of people without meeting them face to face.

Today, the way to connect with the emerging generations cannot be only through traditional print media, television, or radio but online – through blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accessed on smart phones, tablets, and e-readers. In his message for the 44th World Communication Day, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, highlighted how New Media could be at the service of the Word and how the Church and her members could discover new possibilities to carry out the ministry. The world of digital communication has almost limitless expressive capacity and the increasing availability of the new technologies should be made use to witness the religious values in the cyber space. Religious presence in and through the New Media is not an option but a necessity. Religions need to be present in the world of digital communications as a faithful witness to the Gospel. For example, Fr. Robert Barron’s blog, *Word on Fire*, www.wordonfire.org, has hundreds of homilies, teachings, and reflections that have brought a new face to the understanding of Christianity online, and provides a platform for interaction and sharing. The challenge is to be present as a leaven in this new culture of communication, using media wisely and carefully yet at the same time not to substitute direct encounters and dialogues with mere virtual contacts.

h) *Dialogical Communication*

Today, in order to understand one's own religion, one should also know other religions. Surrounded by people of other faiths as we are in Asia, we must consider it an opportunity to interact closely with people of other faiths in order to deepen the knowledge of our own. Any attempt to shield ourselves from the experiences of people of various religions, or to show no interest in understanding the world views of others around us, thinking that these are good ways of insulating and protecting our own faith, is a misguided course of action. When one grows in critical thinking and observes the diversity of faiths, the inability to understand one's roots in relation to others will ultimately lead the person to complete faithlessness. One can explore other faiths only when one is rooted in one's own; and one deepens one's roots in one's own religion only when efforts are made to understand one's faith in the light of other faiths.

In the context of increasing violence, deteriorating economic situation and ecological concerns, religions need to pool their resources to build a "new civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* 2000, No. 5). This requires inter-religious cooperation. A cooperative venture among religions in Asia to engage themselves in the liberative struggles of people is essential for social justice, human rights, gender justice, eco-equity etc. Only by being part of people's movements and struggles for a just society, religions can be envisaged in new paths and paradigms to uphold the integrity of their religions in the Asian context. Living in an information age and "speed" what is needed is to be in the process. That is possible only when we are dialogical and receptive.

VIII. Conclusion

Human beings are gifted with creativity to survive and live a meaningful life through their cultures. Discovery and inventions in human history will affect the lives of people. All the same, the deeper

questions of life like birth and death, meaning of human existence will always remain in spite of the continuous changes in the world. Communication is the essence of this human life. The modes and methods may be changing always but the deeper questions of life still remains. This is an anthropological problem and paradox. As culture creativity is a continuous process, so also, religious communication is also a continuous process. Religion which deals with the ultimate questions of life must use both the traditional communication channels like the celebration of feast and festivals, rites of passage, pilgrimage and story-telling methods as well as the modern means of social communication to revitalize the human spirit in the changing cultures of Asia.

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The Rediscovery of Religious Silence in the Social Media Era: A Korean Case *Ignatius Kim Min-Soo*

1. Introduction

We are used to live in a noisy world full of artificial things, accepting noise or constant sound as a price worth paying for contemporary convenience.¹ Various kinds of chaotic noise and sound from construction sites, congested streets, loud voices, spectacles of ads, or mobile phones give us so trouble frequently as to bring about the deterioration of human relationships or even human death. Recent neighbor disputes over noise traveling between floors left two people dead and several others injured. These similar cases have been increasing over years in Korean society. However, noises of the emerging smart age² are more delicate and complicated, different from analogue noises. In particular, the darker side of the smart age is characteristic of mentality and invisibility. The use of mobile phones or iTunes in the public space results in 'a kind of invisible violence' as the suffering and stress of the others. The bigger problem in the smart age, however, is ceaseless connection with different Social Network Services (SNS) that causes in a kind of an addiction by which reflection and contemplation are deprived of. In other words, those who are highly dependent on SNSs including Internet tend to become 'shallow and unthinkable'.³

¹ Kenny, Colum (2011). *The Power of Silence: Silent Communication in Daily Life*. London: Karnac, p. ix.

² The smart age means that distribution channels of contents have a kind of an information highway with the advent of smartphones and SNSs.

³ Carr, Nicolas (2011). *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. NY: W W Norton & Co Inc

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The purpose of this paper is to point out the very serious problems of SNS in Korean society and to stress and rediscover religious silence as an alternative to them. The Korean society is so competitive and sticky to an outcome principle that many people are harassed with self-exploitation and depression. It is reportedly asserted that this phenomenon causes from SNS in part. In spite of the definite advantage of SNS, it frequently keeps us from contemplation and reflection, eventually making us unthinkable. In recent Korean society, there are various movements, including secular and religious measures, which are aware of the need of silence in some forms such as healing, spirituality and therapy.

The paper assumes that silence is a vital way that facilitates intra- and inter-personal communications, leading into contemplation and reflection deprived by SNS. It first deals with the strength and weakness of SNS in Korean society, in particular giving more attention to its negative aspect. Secondly, it illustrates an important role of silence to overcome the negative effect of SNS, including the various problems that the current Korean society faces, and introduces a communication model concerning silence. Thirdly, it compares between Catholic ways (ex., silence retreat, Eucharistic adoration, Holy Hour or 'digital fast'⁴) and Buddhist ways (ex., Temple Stay) on the basis of the communication model suggested above. Consequently, the paper emphasizes the necessity of religious silence in the SNS era, the silence whose effect makes men thinkable and recovers their humanity

2. The Strength and Weakness of SNS

In the recent years, SNS (Social Network Service) has been a very important means of communication. It is reportedly that it is used by 82% of world-wide online population.⁵ According to Market Research Agency (eMarketers), the number of people to use SNS once a month has reached at least 1.2 billion until Dec. 2011 and this trend is expected to continue

⁴ Digital fast means to unplug from digital devices such as the Internet and smartphones at stated periods, like the traditional Catholic Lenten fast.

⁵ comScore (2011). Top 10 need-to-knows about social networking and where it's headed. *comScore Report*. 1-69.

until 2014. This means that, 2.2 billion people who correspond to 31.4% of the world-wide population use the Internet, and that the 12 million people, 54.5% of them, use SNS.⁶

According to the 2012 survey of Korea Internet and Security Agency, 47.5% of Korean smart phone users are those who experience SNSs such as Twitter, Facebook and Kakao talk. Among them, 78.5% uses SNS over once with average 0.99 hour per a day.⁷ It has been investigated that Korean SNS users have primarily the purpose of social networking with various people or personal relation management. According to DMC Report of the 'SNS user awareness', the purpose of SNS use is as follows: social networking management (76.1%), exchange of information (59.8%), management of personal history (29.5%), fun (42.6%), business (11.4%), and personal promotion (5.6%).⁸ In spite of the vast use of SNS, it has a weak and negative aspect as well as a strong and positive one simultaneously.

(1) The Strength of SNS

SNS has the positive impact on both the individual and the society. Twitter, one of most popular SNSs, is under the limelight due to the following seven reasons: involvement in social issues through the exchange of information, follower group formation based on the interaction, convenient function of communication, easy communication, relaxation and entertainment, the space for private writing, and the availability of 140-character posts.⁹ In case of Facebook, the reasons for its popular usage are as follows: the expression of identity, social interaction, usability, interaction with friends, searching for friend information, the good use of leisure, human relation management, escapism, participation,

⁶ eMarketer (2012). 29, Feb.

⁷ Korea Communications Commission and Korea Internet & Security Agency (Jan. 2013). *The Survey of Smart Phone Use in the second half of 2012*. p. 16.

⁸ Statistics Agency of South Korea (2012).

⁹ Shim, Hong-Jin and Hwang, You-Sun (2010). The Study of Micro-blogging use motivation: from the perspective of Tweeter. *The Journal of Korean Broadcasting*, 24(2), 192-234.

and breaking from loneliness, and so on.¹⁰ In addition, many people use cyberspace to gain the same experience like that they are there¹¹ and SNS enforces a weak network since it can be easily maintained at the cheap cost of the network¹² Eventually, SNS offers positive dimensions such as the formation and maintenance of relationship, trust-based social searching, and formation of public opinion and so on.

(2) The Weakness of SNS

SNS provides the good use of maintaining and enhancing the formation of a relationship and of sharing and spreading of information. However, it provokes its user's fatigue, that is, 'SNS fatigue', as a result of overusing the social network.¹³ According to the study of Kim, Hye-Youn and Oh, Joo-hyun, the SNS fatigue is derived from the burden of SNS management, information overload, and control loss in relationship¹⁴ Hyun-Jee and Jung, Dong-Hun show that the motivation factors of SNS fatigue are the burden of SNS management, reputation care, and acknowledged risk of information privacy.¹⁵ They point out SNS' discontinuance intention in terms of SNS fatigue and negative attitude toward SNS. Another study gives attention to the people who have resistance of the social media such as Twitter and Facebook that tends to be the use as innovation.¹⁶

From the perspective of SNS fatigue, the overloaded use of SNS brings significant damages to users themselves. The ubiquitous environment

¹⁰ Kim, You-Jung (2011). The Use and Gratification Study of SNS. *Media, Gender, and Culture*. 20, 71-105.

¹¹ Zhao, D., & Rosson, M. B. (Aug. 2010). *How and why people twitter: The role that micro-blogging plays in informal communication at work*. Paper presented at the ACM 2009 International Conference on Supporting group work. Retrieved from ACM.

¹² Donath, J., & Boyd, D. (2004). Public displays of connection. *BT Technology Journal*, 22(4), 71-82.

¹³ Kim, Hye-Youn and Oh, Joo-hyun. (2012). The Current Domestic and overseas SNS Reality and Social Meaning. *A Study of Information and Telecommunication*. 24(12), 19-42.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lee, Hyun-Jee and Jung, Dong-Hun. (2013). A Study of Discontinuance Intention of Tweeter and Facebook. *Journal of Information Systems*, 56(4).

¹⁶ Kim, Hyong-Jee and etc. (2012). A Study of Innovation Resistance among Social Media Non-Users. *Journal of Information Systems*, 56(4), 439-464.

by smart phones equipped with the PC in hand can connect to the Internet anywhere, anytime with SNS like Twitter and Facebook, but the excessive use of smart phone and SNS causes in the colonization of private and public time. A recent survey shows that more than 60 percent of smart phone users tap on their handsets an average 30 times a day. Such a trend causes not only the danger of digital addiction but also brain fatigue. Therefore, the use of SNS may be time-wasting, making users uneasy (in particular unless they do not have their smart phone right now) and difficult their concentration, and so being at risk of addiction.

The representative symptoms of serious SNS addiction are as follows¹⁷: SNS users feel severely anxious and nervous when not in possession of a smart phone; they think they should reduce the use of smart phones, but do not succeed; they are deprived of sleep hours by using smart phones until late night; they continue to use smart phone without any reason or pay more fees than they expected. This addictive attitude toward smart phone and SNS not only becomes more and more fatigued with mental and physical exhaustion, but also puts their users under a lot of stress.

3. The Status of Korean Society related to SNS Fatigue

It is said that today Korean society is dominated by limitless competition making everyone dedicate themselves to being a winner. While such a limitless competition tends to bring about corruption by hook or crook, it drives many people to be exhausted physically and mentally and susceptible to potential illnesses such as depression and characteristic disorders. Professor Han criticizes the abnormality of a Korea based on strict discipline and ruthless competition in his book, 'Fatigue Society.'¹⁸ According to an interpretation of his discourse on fatigue society,

Korea is a 'society of undue meritocracy,' which forces each member to endure a never-ending race of productivity and efficiency, like a salesperson who must continue to rise to a

¹⁷ Lee, Gyun-Ho and etc. (2013). *Communication and Society*, Seoul: Ewha Press, p. 413.

¹⁸ Han, Byung-Cheol. (2012). *Fatigue Society*. Seoul: Literature and Intelligence Press.

higher rung by selling as much product as he or she can. The consequent competition for survival results in extreme fatigue and indifference. Those who do not reach the goal regard themselves as the underdogs of society. Such an inferiority complex in turn drives people into a state of mental and physical exhaustion.¹⁹

Korean society definitely can be defined as a result-oriented society to work to death and get tired without any coercion or pressure.²⁰ The obsessive outcome principle and the culture of competition that should win others are a factor to make Koreans tired and exhausted. Thanks to becoming more fatigue society by limitless competition culture, long working hours and result-oriented systems, Korean society faces various problems with higher levels of divorce rate, suicide death rate, and unemployment and lower birth rate, compared to those of OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Furthermore, the problematic Korean society is intensified as it encounters SNS fatigue syndrome.

Nicolas Carr's book, 'The Shallows', accounts for how the exhausted Korean society can take a closer look at its problems in the light of SNS fatigue, as follows:

We want to be interrupted, because each interruption brings us a valuable piece of information... And so we ask the Internet to keep interrupting us, in ever more and different ways. We willingly accept the loss of concentration and focus, the division of our attention and the fragmentation of our thoughts, in return for the wealth of compelling or at least diverting information we receive. Tuning out is not an option many of us would consider.²¹

¹⁹ Oh, Jung-hun. (22 Mar. 2013). Fatigue School. *Koreatimes*.

²⁰ Ibid., Han, Byung-Cheol. (2012). 23-29.

²¹ Carr, Nicolas. (2011). *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. 133-134.

The Internet and SNS encourage the rapid, distracted sampling of small bits of information from many sources, but what we are losing is our capacity for concentration, contemplation, and reflection. This phenomenon is confirmed by Shin, Dong-Won, a Korean medical scientist. According to his explanation,²² the brain reacts continuously to outside stimulations particularly by the frequent usage of the digital devices. Thus the brain needs rest to enhance its function, which is achieved by the default mode network. If people quiet the brain through practices like meditation in default mode, it will improve its function. However, recently people can't afford to give time to their brains, which later blurs judgment because of a malfunction in perceiving information. It leads to spiritual energy exhaustion.

There is growing apprehension that Koreans have a trend toward 'an unthinkable man', like 'one dimensional man'²³ who conforms to the established order without any criticism and resistance in terms of false consciousness. They are at a risk to be dehumanized, who are interpellated by different social systems, lack independent thinking, and then lose their self. While the feelings of alienation, indifference, anger, and depression are rampant in Korean society, recent healing craze has spread with the pattern of spirituality in both the secular and sacred measures. These measures share a meditation method based on silence.

It is indeed believed that only way to heal the sick and tired Korean society, including SNS fatigue, is that everybody should recover inner communication through concentration, contemplation, and reflection, within silence. Professor Han asserts that Hannah Arendt, a German political theorist, figured out human being as speculative rather than active.²⁴ In other words, it is no exaggeration to say that the tragedy of this time results from the loss of contemplation ability. The keyword for rediscovering concentration, contemplation, and reflection is 'silence' that relates to both intra-personal and inter-personal communications.

²² Shin, Dong-Won, *Brain Healing & Digital Detox*, Century One, 2013, p. 280.

²³ Marcuse, Herbert. (1991). *One-Dimensional Man*. 2nd Edition, Boston: Beacon Press.

²⁴ Ibid, Han, Byung-Cheol. (2012). p. 46.

It helps unthinkable men to lead to self-examination and self-reflection as an inner communication.

4. Silence as a Communication Process

The rapid development and evolution of communication technology doesn't allow any room for silence in the modern world. Silence can be seen as inefficient and unproductive to modern people who are caught by perpetual access and data smog.²⁵ However, the more silence is rapidly deported or lost, the more the meaning and value of life is disappeared. To lose silence is to lose human nature.

Pope Benedict XVI recommends through his 46th World communications day message of 2012 that those who live in the digital age rely on search engines or SNSs too much, but should equip silence as a larger virtue. "Silence is a precious commodity that enables us to exercise proper discernment in the face of the surcharge of stimuli and data that we receive."²⁶ Mother Teresa also has stressed the importance of silence as follows: silence of eyes, ears, the tongue, the mind, and the heart.²⁷ She points out that we can hear the words of comfort given by God through silence and offer comfort to Jesus suffering within the poor with all our heart.

President Obama's latest "51 seconds' silence" has been highly appreciated as a masterful speech. He gave a silent speech at the memorial service that held in honor of victims dead wrongfully by 2011 shootings in Arizona. He kept silent without any words during 51 seconds, instead of expressing his feelings of anger and sadness. Such an action turned out to be more effective and formed a deep bond of sympathy. The moment of his silence seemed to be the time of healing and consolation for all Americans.

²⁵ Data smog is defined as overwhelming amount of information that would make it more difficult for the average individual to sift through and separate fact from fiction.

²⁶ Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 46th World Communications Day. (20 May 2012). *Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization*.

²⁷ Mother Teresa. (1997). *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories, and Prayers*. California: The Mother Teresa Reader.

As mentioned already, silence is a kind of communication which leads to lead to contemplation through reflection and then allows those who are tired by fatigue and stress to recover their humanity. The important role of silence accompanies an inner communication process which is called intra-personal communication or self-communication. According to Pope Benedict XVI, "we observe the most authentic communication taking place between people who are in love: gestures, facial expressions and body language are signs by which they reveal themselves to each other. Joy, anxiety, and suffering can all be communicated in silence."²⁸ It is necessary to understand how such an inner communication occurs in the mind and spirit.

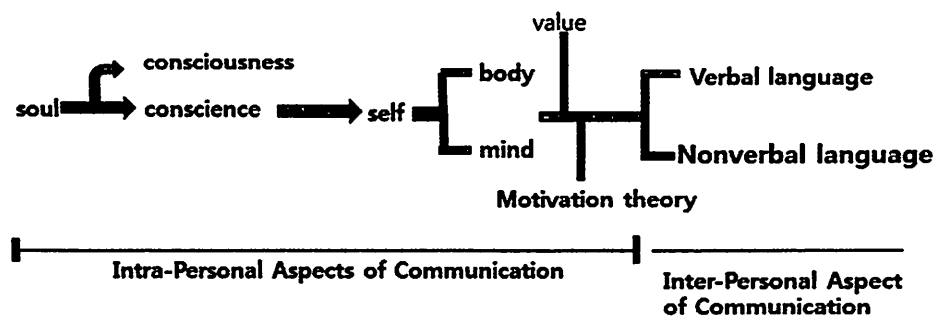
5. The Analysis of Silence Communication

All dimensions of communication are initiated from one's own self. Self-communication or intra-personal communication is fundamental in all forms of human communication as a process of thinking inside human beings: that is, the self, relationships with others, reflection on their environment, their interior monologue, and so on. When the fundamental communication operated from inside the self is in a good condition, the communication of different dimensions such as inter-personal communication, group communication, mass communication, and global communication is well done properly. Eventually the inner communication is a key element of communication, at the same time, the root to regulate all dimensions of communication.²⁹

Especially, it is very necessary to understand how silence plays an important role in the process of the inner communication. Above all, the following diagram suggested by professor Choi helps to figure out a basic principle on self-communication.

²⁸ Ibid., Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 46th World Communications Day.

²⁹ Choi, Chang-Seop. (1994). *Self-Communication*. Seoul: Bumwoosa, 308-309.

Figure 1³⁰

According to figure 1, inter-personal communication presupposes intra-personal one. These two communications are not separate, but a process. A soul is the most basic element and works as a standard interactive among all kinds of elements. It prompts human instinct urges that make true through conscience beyond experiences. There are conscience and consciousness to connect between a soul and the self. While conscience is related to religion and ethics, consciousness is to psychology. The self is always developed by a process of motivation with different values and is composed of the body and the mind. Therefore, the self-communication or intra-personal communication forms inter-personal communication (verbal and nonverbal), passing the above interaction through the body.

However, it is silence that is necessary to operate the above communication model for intra- and inter-personal communication. It is difficult for the model to be carried out as long as noise, exhaustion, and speediness affect the self. On the contrary, Calmness, serenity, solitude, and silence induce to reflect the self, helping to facilitate intra-personal communication.

³⁰ Referred and revised on the basis of *ibid.*, p. 376.

6. The comparison of Catholicism and Buddhism regarding silence

All religions put emphasis on silence. As Pope Benedict XVI mentioned, “different religious traditions consider solitude and silence as privileged states which help people to rediscover themselves and that Truth which gives meaning to all things.”³¹ Christianity has preserved the importance of silence from Desert Fathers to modern spiritual practitioners. The reason that it needs silence is to be on with God in a severe solitude. To put it concretely, “silence is an apparatus that triggers and transforms the human heart from within to attain integration, liberation, inner transformation, and perfection in Christian life.”³²

In Buddhism, silence is a means of practicing asceticism in order to listen to his/her inner voice. It is always accompanied by Zen meditation and contemplation. Eventually, silence brings people to attain emptiness and absolute silence is for attaining enlightenment.

Recently those who are tired and suffer from stress tend to pursue secular or sacred spiritual healing programs for recovering the body and the mind. In particular, many of them follow the spiritual programs that the existing religions like Catholicism and Buddhism have practiced as a long-standing tradition. There have been retreats, Holy Hour, Eucharistic adoration, and pilgrimages to practice by participating in silent hours in the Catholic Church. In Buddhism, numerous people have attended at ‘Temple stay’³³ programs to perform silence. This phenomenon explains how much the Koreans want to be healed.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 46th World Communications Day.

³² Seso, P. (2013). *The Role of Silence and Consequences for Pastoral Ministry*. MA Thesis. Manila: Graduate School University of Santo Tomas.

³³ Temple Stay is a unique cultural program which lets you experience the life of Buddhist practitioners at traditional temples which preserve the 1700 year old history of Korean Buddhism. Temple stay programs which have begun in 2002 usually include monastic formal meals with healthy, vegetarian dishes; tea ceremonies; morning and evening chant services; and “Seon” or Zen meditation. The communal Buddhist meal service or “Balwoo gongyang” is a unique way of eating in Korean temples, where food is consumed in total silence and not a single grain of rice is wasted.

Both Catholic and Buddhist programs mentioned above use silence for meditation in common. First of all, both are merged in inner and outer serenity to have an insight into the self, leading self-examination and self-reflection. In a Catholic way, there are two kinds of silence; meditative and contemplative ones. The meditative silence is an active and intentional communication which leads to self-reflection as a process of encountering God. On the other hand, the contemplative silence brings about a passive concentration in which God invites into his love, communicates and unites with us. In a Buddhist way, also, silence is a kind of instrument for concentration to escape from outer world. Another dimension of it is to enter into interior silence to discover the innermost center of the soul and to empty the mind.

However, there is a considerable difference between Catholicism and Buddhism in the process of the intra- and inter-communication model. In case of Catholicism, "Christian meditation is a term for form of prayer in which a structured attempt is made to get in touch with and deliberately reflect upon the revelations of God."³⁴ It is sometimes taken to mean the middle level in a broad three stage characterization of prayer: it then involves more reflection than first level vocal prayer, but is more structured than the multiple layers of contemplation in Christianity.³⁵ As an example of Christian meditation, Eucharistic meditations are always under silence, one by which someone can take a close look at his/her self and leads through his/her soul to God. Therefore, the communication model offered already can be revised to explain the process of Catholic meditation, as follows:

³⁴ Zanzig, Thomas. (2000). *Christian Meditation for Beginners*. Marilyn Kielbasa: Saint Mary's Press, p. 7.

³⁵ Griffin, Emilie. (2005). *Simple Ways to Pray: Spiritual Life in the Catholic Tradition*. NY: Sheed & Ward, p. 134.

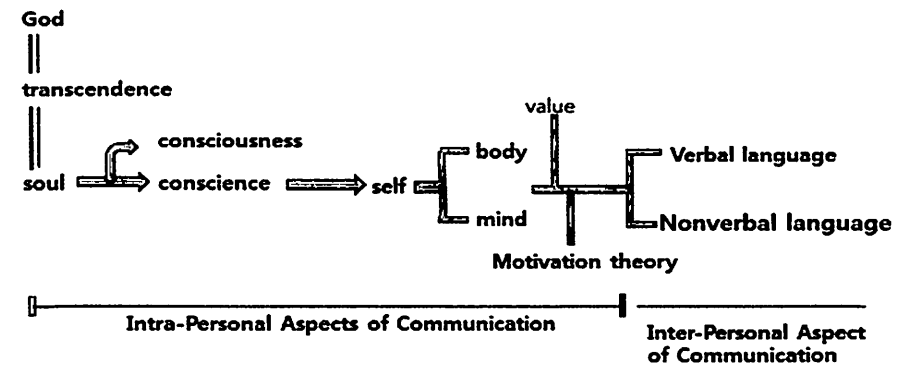


Figure 2³⁶

From Figure 2, a soul can meet and unite with God through His revelation and transcendence. However, the encounter with God is followed by an attitude of conversion and purification, a flight from "self" to the "You" of God and His illumination, based on silent contemplation.

In contrast with Catholic meditation, Buddhist meditation refers to the meditative practices associated with the religion and philosophy of Buddhism. It lacks of the concepts of God, salvation, and grace. Buddhists pursue meditation as part of the path toward Enlightenment or Nirvana. As seen by Temple stay programs, most of them offer some time for Zen meditation (Ch'am Sŏn). Not only Buddhist religious contents such as chanting, bowing, meditating, etc. are presented as part of monastic life in the temple stay program. All temple stay programs include the morning and evening ceremonial services (yebul), which consist of chanting and bowing in the main dharma hall. They also normally include sitting and walking meditation. Such Zen meditation with silent contemplation makes all of participants in the program self-reflective. If they take a close look at their soul through conscience and consciousness, they may attain "Euphoric states" or Nirvana.

³⁶ Ibid., Choi, Chang-Seop, p. 376.

The figure below presents a communication model for Nirvana that Buddhist meditation pursues.

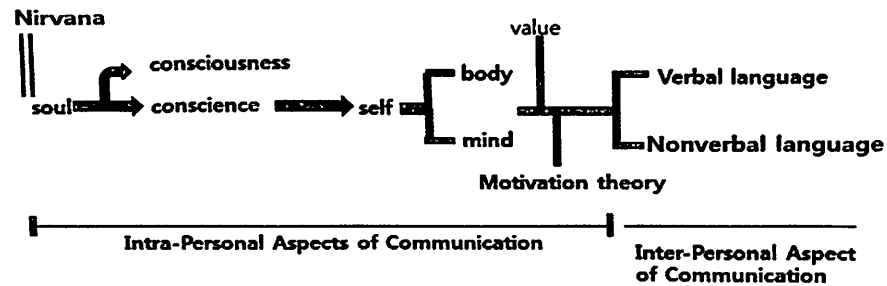


Figure 3

Nirvana obtained through Buddhist meditation should not be confused with prayer or assumed to be signs of the presence of God, a state that should always result in loving service to others.

Consequently, both Catholic and Buddhist meditations reach a soul through the self with assistance of silence, but show quite differences each other. There is no concept of God, salvation, and grace in Buddhism in principle. Moreover, while Buddhist meditation may suggest approaches to disengage the mind, Christian meditation aims to fill the mind with thoughts related to Biblical passages or Christian devotions.

7. Conclusion

The SNS era we live drives us to be tired and get stressful due to various kinds of noises. Such a fatigue society has brought about alienation, depression, and apathy, with severe social problems like high rate of suicide and divorce and social injustice. One of the most problematic things is to make us unthinkable as a result of overusing SNSs in part. Those who don't think of themselves anymore lose their self, including their

conscience and consciousness. Furthermore, their soul cannot experience any transcendence by which Catholics meet God and Buddhists Nirvana.

Recently, everyone hears the word "healing" being mentioned all around. There are things such as healing camp, healing leadership, healing land, healing concert, healing industry, healing food, healing marketing, healing therapy, healing journey, healing forest, healing meditation and so on. "Healing" seems to be the key concept of Korean society on these days. Why do we emphasize and talk about healing so passionately?

Above all, the healing process transcends merely listening to the inner voice. Though there are various healing methods, religious meditation through silence helps to cure and recover the self. However, there is a big difference between Catholicism and Buddhism in the communication model of meditation as intra-personal communication. In one word, it relies upon salvation in terms of God or his/her own efforts.

This paper has tried to stress the importance of religious silence rediscovery for overcoming the fatigue society of Korea. It may have some limits in explaining the analysis of the meditation process through silence in intra-personal communication. However, it expects its follow-up study to supplement.

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An Act of Faith: From the Spiritual to the Ritual

Chandrabhanu Pattanayak

A characteristic trait of the social and, to a certain extent, political life of India over the last ten to twenty five years has been the appearance and rapid growth of the influence of various types of new forms of religious worship, as well as of individual saints, incarnate gods, gurus and swamis (religious teachers), yogis and tantrics, astrologers and soothsayers who have a vast and growing number of followers. These cults are called neo-religious because, although their leaders usually use some of the postulates, symbols, and practices of traditional Hinduism, they develop their own rituals, system of views, and cult practices that differ widely and are often contrary to those of Hindu orthodoxy. Leaders of the latter group and more frequently now, the media, often voice sharp criticism of the new preachers, calling them *jet gurus*, *false gurus*, and even “tricksters who undermine the foundation of the true faith.” Whether one calls them charlatans or wise men, they have millions of followers world wide. This new-age religion and “spirituality” has been one of India’s biggest exports since the 60s.

A recent film, *Kumare*, has brilliantly attempted to bring out the frailties of the follower and the making of a guru who really isn’t one. He is in fact the award-winning film and documentary maker Vikram Gandhi, who creates an ecosystem for youth. *Kumare* is one of his creations, created to explore the power of religion on those who choose to believe in it.

Through this film, the paper will try to explore the question of what is the social space these gurus and babas and sadhus inhabit, who affords them this space and what is the place of the follower in this phenomenon. What is the special relationship between the guru and

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the devotee and how society itself is being reframed as a result of this complex relationship.

A characteristic trait of the social and, to a certain extent, political life of India over the last ten to twenty-five years has been the appearance and rapid growth of the influence of various types of new forms of religious worship, as well as of individual saints, incarnate gods, gurus and swamis (religious teachers), yogis and tantrics, astrologers and soothsayers who have a vast and growing number of followers. “These cults are called neo-religious because, although their leaders usually use some of the postulates, symbols, and practices of traditional Hinduism, they develop their own rituals, system of views, and cult practices that differ widely and are often contrary to those of Hindu orthodoxy. Leaders of the latter group and more frequently now, the media, often voice sharp criticism of the new preachers, calling them *jet gurus*, *false gurus*, and even tricksters who undermine the foundation of the true faith.” Whether one calls them charlatans or wise men, they have millions of followers worldwide. This new-age religion and “spirituality” has been one of India’s biggest exports since the 60s.

What I propose to do here is to try and locate the social space that is afforded to this new age Guru within which he/she survives, and operates. What I also am trying to see is whether these Gurus are operating essentially within a religious frame or that of a ritualistic one. I shall venture to go a step further and try to explore whether in fact, if ritual is what they are engaged in, then it is extended to “play” rather than religious ritual.

In order to take this discussion forward, I would like to play a short video of a TED talk of an American Film maker of Indian origin who engaged in a social experiment and filmed himself. Here he is talking about this experiment. I would have ideally liked all of you to have seen the film before this, but, the trailer is included here. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3BJ23H5yBQ>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3BJ23H5yBQ>

Kumaré: The Time I Became A Guru

Posted: 07/06/2012 12:04 pm

Six years ago, I filmed a gang of sadhus (spiritual ascetics) smoking weed on the banks of the Holy Ganga in Northern India. Their guru stepped away from a young European woman meditating under a banyan tree, and approached me, machete in hand. "You want to know about gurus?" He popped a squat, and lit up a bidi. "All those big gurus you see, they are not spiritual people. All they want is money. It's not that easy man... Living a spiritual life is very difficult." That night, they swapped the pot for heroin.

Back home in New York City, I filmed the world around me embracing the "spiritual life," or at least one packaged into a healthful 90-minute alternative to aerobics class. The modern definition of yoga is convoluted as the postures yogis aspire to. Symbols, smells, words, icons, and religions of the East became an easy aesthetic for branding and marketing. Was the culture I grew up in becoming just a marketing scheme for a flourishing industry? In yoga class, was I the only one who wasn't feeling the vibe of getting enlightened? And why were people all of a sudden bowing down to people in robes with expensive philosophies and the promises of happiness? I became skeptical of anyone who sold a spiritual product, anyone who claimed to be holier than anyone else, anyone who said they had the answer.

Since those days as one-man crew, my answers and strong opinions have turned more into questions. As a documentarian on the edge of a subculture for years, the lives of the characters I met have come full circle -- almost repeating the same plot lines as the teachers that fell decades before them. I've tried Iyengar, Ashtanga, Jivamukti, Kundalini, Anusara, and met the founders, inventors, entrepreneurs, and gurus in many traditions. I've also chanted (reluctantly and enthusiastically), set intentions, retained breath, hugged a saint -- or rather got hugged by one, received blessings, blessed, fasted, veg'd out, finished a first series, kriya-ed, flossed my nose, taken pilgrimages, avoided dysentery, bathed in the

royal baths, found moments of deep tranquility, gave in to temptation, restrained it, fluctuated mentally, and even saw a most surreal event called an International Yoga Competition. I've said 'No, it's Vikram with a V' more than any other phrase these past few years. I learned from this, that practice never makes anyone perfect. We are all the same -- flawed, yet capable of greatness.

Trailer:

I'd always wanted to make a movie about 'us' -- about our inner, "spiritual" lives. I've watched so many movies about 'them' -- the backwards people of the others and even, the fundamentalist right-wingers. What about us? Why don't we turn our gaze back on ourselves? I figured: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. So, I impersonated a wise guru from the East named Kumaré and started a following of real people in the West.

The character Kumaré was the center of a social experiment testing what we coined "The Spiritual Placebo Effect." Can a fake religion and religious leader have the same effect as a real one? If the facts are not real, does it make the experience any less real? Some people were appalled, offended at the idea. It's easy not to question what feels right -- people think you're being a downer, a bummer, or a cynic. But to me, asking questions, breaking down icons and idols, and destroying the illusions our society is built on are highly 'spiritual' acts. And aren't the saviors of history the ones that decided to speak up and say something?

This film was my humble attempt to bring the spiritual heroes I learned about as a child to the real world. I studied Buddha, Shiva, Krishna, Jesus -- all the big ones but it took the form a bearded barefoot man who carried a trident and spoke like my grandmother.

It was not a matter of fooling people -- everyone from the footsteps of the Himalayas to the Mexican Border believed in Kumaré. I suspect this is not because I am a great actor, but because Kumaré is a

dream worth believing in. Being a fictional spiritual leader has a lot more rules than being a real a guru. No money can be earned. No temptation can be acted upon. My character only saw the highest in people, his 'motivation' was to make them happy -- to trick people to be happy.

At Q&A's, people ask me if I'm still as critical of spiritual leaders as I was when I started. I can say now that I understand why we have spiritual leaders, and how slippery the slope is from hero to villain, when one takes on that role. I may be more sympathetic now, but I still always think back to something Kumaré once said: "It is you real gurus that make us fake gurus so necessary."

So there are several questions that are raised here: Are people free to choose? Are the devotees being duped by the clever ad-guru (literally)? Is this Guru, in creating these rituals, creating some process of healing for devotees who are hurting in some inner psycho-spiritual realm? Is religion itself something we need to question? Starting with the background of the recent media focus on several gurus engaged in rape, murder, financial embezzlement, cheating political impropriety and various other abominations in India, it would be interesting to look at how, building on the legacy of the mystical and spiritual authority of the East, and having had the way paved by Vivekananda, today's New Age Indian gurus, even those who rarely leave India, negotiate their charismatic spiritual authority through global networks. Scholarly literature on Indian gurus has engaged discourses across the academic disciplines to address theoretical topics such as cosmopolitanism, diaspora, globalization, religious pluralism, and gender, and this literature has contributed to our understandings of social realities of Hindu Nationalism and the Indian middle class. As Angela Rudert points out, "These scholarly conversations are by no means complete, and more attention to Indian gurus, especially multi-sited studies of guru-led movements at various stages of development, will benefit its continuation. However, new conversations need to begin as well, and this essay suggests that new enquiries on contemporary Indian gurus

should begin to address the term 'New Age' and what this means in various contexts as it applies to guru-led movements. Particularly, we should be asking what 'New Age' means for Indian gurus themselves and for their constituencies in India and around the globe. The already messy modifier, 'New Age' undergoes its own transformations as it traverses transnational terrain, religious sensibilities, histories and worldviews around the figure of the New Age guru"².

Asaram Bapu, the latest in a list of miscreant Gurus, when he was arrested for allegedly raping a sixteen year-old girl, saw in the Indian media an O. J. Simpson kind chase drama being played out. For days on end people watched transfixed, as this "drama" unfolded through myriad of intrigues of now seen and now gone. Perhaps George Orwell was on to something when he said that "saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent", for no all-too-human godman can ever live up to the qualities of godliness. Perhaps the wise course to take is to reflect upon the tragedy of overweening human ambition of these fallen gurus and move on.

Yet, if one pauses to think about it, Asaram's arrest is not just a matter of one more godman's personal failings. Rather, this episode dramatises the thin line between faith and blind faith, and the near complete merger of faith, politics and money in contemporary Indian society. Hundreds of thousands of his followers still stand by him steadfastly for he has touched them in some way in the past.

A few months ago another Baba, who calls himself "Nirmal Baba" (untainted, virtuous, pure) was arrested and put into prison for having cheated his flock. Sai Baba, one of the most popular of the Gurus in the last 3 decades left behind a messy inheritance, when it was found, on his death that his personal wealth amounted to 16 billion dollars. Ramdev Baba one of the most popular of them all in the recent past has been the target of several inquiries for misappropriation of finances and several other charges. Whether any of these charges are true or

false is not my concern here. What intrigues me is that in spite of such public outrage, charges, counter-charges and humiliation, millions of people still steadfastly follow them. After all they are their Gurus. What is the social space that they inhabit? Who gives them this space and why is this kind of supposed blind faith allowed in a modern 21st. century nation/world? In fact, a large number of their followers are from different parts of the world and not Indians.

So then what or who is a Guru? According to the *Hindu Primer* written by *Shukavaka N. Dasa*, “The word *guru* means “heavy” or “deep,” thus a guru is a person “heavy” or “deep” in knowledge. In this sense a school-teacher is a guru, a coach or athletic instructor is a guru, a fine-arts or even a dance teacher is a guru. One’s parents are also gurus.”³ According to the *Brahmanda Puran a guru is*

“Guru is Shiva sans his three eyes,
Vishnu sans his four arms
Brahma sans his four heads.
He is *parama* Shiva himself in human form”

Guru is the God, says the scriptures. Indeed, the ‘guru’ in Vedic tradition is looked upon as one no less than a God. ‘Guru’ is a honorific designation of a preceptor as defined and explained variously in the scriptures and ancient literary works including epics. The English word ‘guru’ has its etymological origin in the Sanskrit term. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* defines it as “Hindu spiritual teacher or head of religious sect; influential teacher; revered mentor”.

In this sense, the guru is more real than the gods. Basically the guru is a spiritual teacher leading the disciple on the path of “god-realization”. In essence, the guru is considered a respected person with saintly qualities who enlightens the mind of his disciple, an educator from whom one receives the initiatory mantra, and one who instructs in rituals and religious ceremonies. The *Vishnu Smriti* and *Manu Smriti* regards the *Acharya* (teacher), along with the mother and the father as

the most venerable gurus of an individual. According to *Deval Smriti* there can be eleven kinds of gurus and according to *Nama Chintamani* ten. According to his functions he is categorized as *rishi*, *acharyam*, *upadhyaya*, *kulapati* or *mantravetta*.

Thus to have a guru who acts as the master is an essential part of spiritual growth and so to feel respect for and to want to honor one’s guru is natural and healthy. However, there is a tendency now days “for the development of guru “cults” where the worship of guru supersedes the worship of God. This generally takes place when the original idea of guru as teacher becomes diminished and is replaced by the idea of guru as “blesser.” To be blessed by a guru is considered the greatest thing, but people forget that the real blessing of a guru comes in the form of study, discipline, and hard work that leads to knowledge and wisdom and not just with the touch of a hand. The idea of guru as blesser is a debasement of the true role of a guru”.⁴ So if the role of the Guru has been somehow debased, then what really is going on? Why are there so many gurus today and why are there so many people following these numerous gurus?

Sudhir Kakar in his excellent study, *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors – A Psychological Enquiry into India and its Healing Traditions*⁵, seems to suggest that apart from the various practitioners of different healing traditions such as *hakims*, *vaidas*, there are also palmists, horoscope specialists, herbalists, deviners, sorcerers and a variety of shamans whose therapeutic efforts combine classical Indian astrology, medicine, alchemy and magic with beliefs and practices from folk and popular traditions. Apart from these, “we have the ubiquitous *sadhus*, *swamis*, *maharajas*, *babas*, *matas* and *bhagwans* who trace their lineage in some fashion to the mystical spiritual traditions of Indian antiquity and claim to specialize in ‘soul health’, the restoration of moral and spiritual well being”⁶.

Unlike Western psychotherapy, where introspection has significant bearing on the concept of “true self”, the meditative procedures of Indian psycho-philosophical schools of ‘self-realization’ are of a

different nature and follow radically different goals. The Indian injunction, 'know thy-self', is related to a self other than the one referred to by Socrates. "It is a self uncontaminated by time and space and thus without the life-historical dimension which is the focus of psychoanalysis and Western romantic literature. This inherent belief in the supra-historical self is shared by almost all traditional as well as modern religious cults in India"⁷

Professor Kakar also draws interesting contrasts between the Indian and the Western views of the 'person' with regard to the problem of human freedom. This difference in the interpretation of the meaning of human freedom in Western and Indian religio-mystic traditions as well as conceptualization of this term in post-independence cults of modern godmen in India is also of vital importance in understanding the divergent approach of these traditions in tackling the various ailments and the problem of human happiness. This would mean that one is able to, through some ritual practices or exercises, experience various inner states of consciousness by associating with different gods and goddesses at the same time having the external constant or unchanging.

This method of inducing a dissociated state – rhythmic music, dance, over-breathing and stimulation of the semi-circular canals by rotation of the head may vary. How dissociation actually works in healing, as Professor Kakar points out is still a mystery though there are a few speculations. As suggested these dissociation techniques are not solely the prerogative of shamans and other healers. They have in fact, been very effectively used by modern Gurus. Almost all Gurus today use some form of the dissociation techniques in the ritual initiation into the cult, where dance, rhythmic music and variation in lighting is masterfully combined to create the desired effect.

Thus human freedom in the traditional Indian context seems to imply an increase in the potential to experience different inner states while limiting action in the outer world to stereotypes and unquestioned adaptation. The Indian emphasis has been on the pursuit of an inner differentiation while keeping the outer world constant. In contrast the

notion of freedom in the West is related to an increase in the potential for acting in the outer world and enlarging the sphere of choices, while keeping the inner state constant to that of a rational, waking consciousness from which other modes of inner experience have been excluded as deviations.

In the Indian culture, where the fear of separation and loss is considered as the most legitimate of human anxieties, and where the ideal model of learning and personal transformation stressed identification – the student being proud to be even a poor copy of the preceptor – it is precisely these aspects that are seen as limitations of the *guru-shishya parampara* or model that are seen as its virtues. It is therefore not surprising that some Indian psychiatrists consider the *guru-shishya parampara* as the most acceptable model of psychotherapy in the Indian setting.

The prolific growth of the religio-mystical cults like ISKCON, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Rajneesh, Sai Baba, Asharam Bapu, Baba Ramdev, Sri Sri Ravishankar and many more should be viewed in the context of a the emergence of a homogenized world and the middle and upper classes; a homogenized set of aspirations that are being created and sold to all across boundaries. As Bertram Gross put it, "In today's first world, oppression takes many different forms. It is rooted in the frustration of rising aspirations, in the anguish of old crises in new forms, in the new environmental crisis and in the erosion of authority. Above all the impact of tendencies towards extended professionalism accentuates fragmentation, anxiety and alienation. The bi-products of accelerated consumption are boredom apathy and tension. The slow growth of concentrated elite power builds up repressed aggressiveness and despair at all levels"⁸ (*A Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America*, M. Evans, New York, 1980). This situation according to Gross, generates a huge and desperate demand for something to belong to and believe in.

Now to take a different track altogether, that of ritual. To both ethnologists and neurologists, ritual is central to both behavior and brain structure/function. While Kakar locates the ritual form in the dislocation of the external and the internal, Victor Turner locates ritual

“betwixt-and-between,” in cultural creases and margins, making it more like “play” than anything else. The ritual process is liminal-limnoid, unauthorized, anti-structural subjective (“if”), and subversive. The contradiction also expresses the difference between Turner’s social perspective and the ethnologist’s-neurologist’s biological one. The difference is a version of an old, insoluble argument between determinists and those who assert that humans are free to make their own destinies.

Turner saw the ritual process as analogous to the training-workshop-rehearsal process where accepted or readymade texts and accepted ways of using the body and feelings are deconstructed or broken down into small usable bits of behavior, feeling, thought and text and then reconstructed in new ways, sometimes to be offered as public performances. In traditional genres such as Kathakali, Kallaripattu, ballet or Noh theatre, people start their training early in life. This training involves new ways of speaking, gesturing, moving maybe even new ways of thinking and feeling. New for the trainee but well known in the tradition of the respective forms of performance. Just as in initiation rights, the mind and body of each performer are returned towards a state of *tabula rasa*, ready to be written on in the language of the form being learned. When finished with training, the performer can speak ‘kathakali’, ‘kalaripattu’, ‘noh’, ‘kumara’ or ‘Baba Ramdev’: he/she is truly “incorporated” into the tradition. The violence of scarring or circumcision is absent – but deep permanent psychological changes are wrought.

It is precisely when the creative and/or subversive function of ritual dominates, spills over its usually well defined boundaries that art separates from – and sometimes opposes – religion. The makers of carnival, Hopi mudhead clowns, are also anti structural, but always in the service of ultimately of reinforcing traditional ways of doing and thinking. A period of licence is permitted, even required. Things are done “backwards,” excesses are celebrated, promiscuous sexuality and drunkenness flourish. But then Ash Wednesday terminates carnival and the subversive shenanigans of Mardi Gras are put away for another year.⁹

This is exactly what happens in the Ramlila and the Dushehra/Durga puja, Holi and Diwali in India. The demon is destroyed and all is brought back to peace. People know exactly what to expect and what the actions represent. However in art, things are different. The subversion is continuous. As Schechner so eloquently put it, “The avante garde is art’s permanent revolution”.

The violence acted out in performance is no longer “symbol”, sapped of its ability to wound, frighten or astonish. Even if there is no apparent violence, there is a real danger and risk involved in it. This danger is a “mortgaged actuality indefinitely postponing catastrophe”¹⁰. Ritual violence is not a remembrance of things past. The present moment is always a negotiation between a wished-for future and rehearsable, and therefore, changeable past. History is always in flux; that is what makes it so like a performance. The mortgaged future is always death; the past is always life as-remembered or restaged. Individuals, all of who will die are assimilated into families, groups, religions and ideologies which are putatively immortal. The stories these groups tell, their ritual enactments concern temporary and uneasy triumphs over death.

Thus all devotees of all babas/gurus are in a perpetual play where their lives are mortgaged to a restaged past. And this is why in some sense, the devotees are not able to see the disjuncture in the reality when their babas or gurus are arrested or go to jail or commit larceny or rape or fraud. This is also why, Political parties with extreme ideologies are able to use these babas and their congregations for their own benefit. This is theatre. We are evolved into a complex network of games, contingencies and scenarios played out in various “theatres”.

At a certain deep level of dreaming – a level that is as much cultural as it is individual – strong links connect tragedy, violence sexuality and farce. Milan Kundera nicely invokes this progression from laughter to arousal to violence:

There she stood in front of the mirror (they always stood in front of the mirror while she undressed), watching

themselves. She stripped to her underwear but still had the (bowler) hat on her head. And all at once she realized they were both excited by what they saw in the mirror. What could have excited them so? A moment before, the hat on her head had seemed nothing but a joke. Was excitement really a mere step away from laughter? Yes, when they looked at each other in the mirror that time, all she saw for the first few seconds was a comic situation. But suddenly the comic became veiled by excitement, the bowler hat no longer signified a joke, it signified violence." (Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Harper, New York, 1985, pp. 86)

After all what is a human being if not a dreaming organism? When dreams were first performed – not only dreamed and remembered, but spoken danced sung and acted out – a definite threshold was crossed. Performing a dream actualizes what can never be shown. A dream is experienced first hand only by the dreamer; like the violence of Greek tragedy, it is forever offstage, shared only in so far as it can be represented. Babas or Gurus of the new age are “dream-trained”. They can focus their dreams, retain and retell them. This retelling can be in any medium, words, actions, pictures, sounds. These dream-trained people can also freely combine their dreams with what they get from the outside world, from ordinary life, from tradition or any other source. Is this what Prof Kakar talked about when he talked about dissociation of the external and the internal? Is this what Kumare has ultimately achieved—the most effective play most exhaustively rehearsed?

Appendix 1

Kumare Review

Vikram Gandhi was a disillusioned religion student who went seeking spiritual leaders and discovered that most of them are unnecessary con men bilking needy people out of a need to assuage their own egos or to

score desperate tail. He wanted to prove to people that they did not need some guru to open up their better selves — that religion and sensibility are within everyone. So he got together a yoga instructor and a publicist and transformed himself into the spiritual guru Kumare, a faux yogi who was there to take in people easily lured by the billion dollar spiritual guidance industry and show them that they didn't need anyone else to be amazing. The social experiment seems cruel, and as he lures in followers and finds people with genuine problems opening up to him in the process, Gandhi himself changes as a person. What starts as a *Borat*-style parody that demonstrates the foolishness and gullibility of the devotees of various self-help and spiritualist movements, like Law of Attraction and yoga enthusiasts, quickly develops into a fascinating study on what it means to have faith. Belief is an incredibly strong emotion, something that will drive people to lengths and breadths that they never thought themselves capable. *Kumare* could easily have been a cruel movie, making fun of these clingy suckers who'll absorb any sap you splash on them, but instead takes the difficult high road and becomes incredibly poignant. Even as you wince and chuckle at the characters, you find yourself caring about them as much as Gandhi eventually does. And that's what elevates the documentary beyond mere mockery.

Vikram Gandhi, a native of New Jersey who narrates the documentary in a clear as a bell voiceover, grows out his hair and beard and adopts the more traditional mutter of his grandmother to become Kumare. Kumare is a likable fellow, a continuously happy guru, clutching what's essentially a trident with a testicle shaped character at the top, and with a silent open-mouthed laugh. Gandhi dons the orange robes and loincloths that we expect from a Central Casting swami. He learns yoga, and then develops a routine of various yoga-like moves that are meant to be ridiculous to see what he could get people to fall for. Because he looks and sounds the part, he's able to convince a yoga class to do a motion that resembles people doing power strums on air guitar or to grunt and strain like panting dogs. He gets them to chant nonsensical sounds or to say “Be All That You Can Be” in Hindi. With

the help of two willing assistants, a publicist and a yoga instructor, he's able to quickly permeate the yoga community of Arizona.

While hilariously exposing how people will pretty much buy anything if they think it comes from an authentic source, the film begins to take a turn as we dip into the lives of the core group of Kumare devotees. These are people with genuine problems and concerns who are clinging to Kumare to save them. It would have been a very different and less effective film if Gandhi were playing everything for laughs. It would be *Borat*, which was just as instrumental at exposing the hypocrisy of the average citizen. Gandhi's thesis from the very start was to start a religious movement that helped people to learn that they didn't need religious movements. He's constantly telling people that he's fake, that he's not what they think he is, and they so want to believe him that it becomes painful. You can see throughout the film how uncomfortable and pained Gandhi is beneath his playful Kumare exterior. He realizes that he might completely destroy these people who only wanted help and that he is genuinely trying to help. The film actually opens with scenes just before he's about to initiate the "Great Unveiling." Gandhi stares at himself in a mirror, with a mortified look on his face, shaking and about to dry heave. He never intends to hurt anyone, and that's kind of what permits us to laugh along and prevents the film from dipping into cruelty and callousness, which elevates it to such a moving experience.

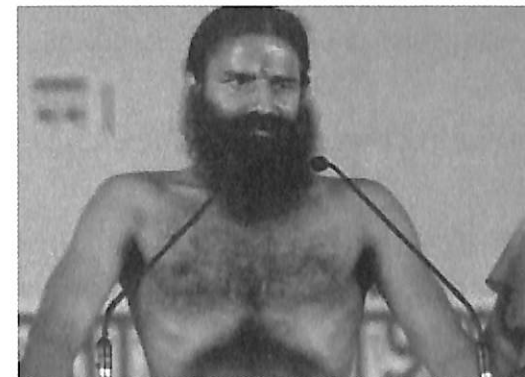
Of course, this all might be bullshit. The very film *Kumare* is about a con man, and Gandhi might just be manufacturing his own sentimentality. **POSSIBLE SPOILER ALERT:** When he does reveal himself to be a regular person, there are plenty of folks who simply walk away or are grievously pained by his deception. Those that forgive him end up bettering themselves. We don't hear from those who were disillusioned. So by nature of the documentarian, he's probably spinning everything to look less the dickhole. But I'm fine with that. **ENDETH SPOILERS.**

Kumare is a daring social experiment in what it means to have faith. Gandhi is not preaching the gospel of the fallacy of organized religion.

He's merely stating that most people are capable of achieving that without paying money to some evangelist, whether he sports a fake tan and a shiny diamond crucifix tie tack or a scraggly beard and bare feet. I found the film to be incredibly moving — I got a little teary-eyed towards the end — because I wanted these people to find what they were looking for. And that's the heart of *Kumare*, there seems to be a genuine and heartwarming effort to help people find the help they need and to turn their faith in on themselves.

Kumare is screening in the documentary competition at the SXSW 2011 Film Festival.

Appendix 2 The Holy Men of India



ENDNOTES

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The Methods of Dhamma Preaching in Lanna

Ven. P.B. Saneh Nānamedhī

The paper aims to examine the development of traditional Lanna preaching styles and to investigate the factors influencing their development. Qualitative research was conducted, content analysis, the transcript from Dhamma preaching tape records as well as in-depth interviews were used as data collection methods.

The findings revealed that Dhamma preaching in Traditional Lanna style has a specific form. The preaching monk has to sit on a high throne, reading scriptures recorded on the palm leaf with a local rhythm. While the audience sit calmly and properly with two hands put together in a lotus shape. The audience behavior shows high respect towards the Dhamma which represents the Buddha verse. It is believed that listening to Dhamma not only brings great wisdom, increases faith to the Triple Gem among audience, but also brings significant merit and allows the audience to greatly spread this merit to their ancestors.

After the Lanna Kingdom was dissolved and became part of the northern region of Thailand in 1899, rules, regulations, as well as the education system in Lanna were reformed by the Central Thai. This resulted in the Lanna people becoming fluent in speaking, reading, writing and listening in Thai language. While Lanna language became less important and was never promoted since then. Hence the new generation of Lanna people especially monks were unable to read and write in the Lanna language. This is why today's scriptures are mostly adapted and recorded in Thai language and printed on the folded hard paper replicating the palm leaf style for more convenience. Furthermore, the impromptu rhetoric preaching style from a preaching monk from Central Thai also spread to Lanna.

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The significant characteristics of the impromptu rhetoric preaching style is the way a preaching monk sitting on a lower open seat with two hands holding the scripture at his chest level simply preaches without reading from the scripture. This preaching style is called the impromptu rhetoric preaching style or oral Dhamma preaching.

The venerable Phra Napeeseephisalkhun (Phramaha Kamping Gunākarō), the first Lanna monk who converted to Dhammayuthi order at Wat Bovorn Nivet Viharn was ordered by Somedj Phra Maha Samanachao Prince Vachirayanvaroros to reform the Lanna Buddhist Sangha. That reform was the first time the impromptu rhetoric preaching style was introduced. Later on in 1948, the venerable Phra Dhammakosajarn (Buddhadasa Bhikku) and the venerable Phrabrammaggalajarn (Paññanada Bihikku) came to preach Buddhists in Chiang Mai province. The way they preached was by standing in the public instead of sitting on a throne or on a seat. This led to three new different ways of preaching that Lanna Buddhist monks developed by harmonizing new and traditional Lanna ways together.

Three new preaching styles were developed as follows:

- 1. The impromptu rhetoric preaching style mixed with a Central Thai preaching monk style. Firstly preaching monks, it is called "The Trio Preaching". However, the expression and its story lines are delivered within the Lanna context.*
- 2. The impromptu rhetoric preaching mixed with traditional Lanna style.*
- 3. The speech-based preaching style.*

Factors influencing the development of Dhamma preaching in Lanna are as follows:

- 1. The social and cultural changes*
- 2. The educational and attitudinal changes among Lanna Buddhist monks*

- 3. The attitudinal change and change in needs of the Dhamma listeners in Lanna.*

The development of Dhamma preaching styles in Lanna led to the modern and up to date way of Dhamma preaching. This helps Lanna people gain more knowledge, understanding and become more interested in listening to Dhamma preaching. While the traditional Lanna preaching style remains only a part of the Buddhist ceremony.

1. The Development of New Pattern for Dhamma Teaching in Lanna Region

The result revealed that Buddhism has firmly established in the Lanna region since Queen Jāmmadevī (AD 1747). She ruled over Haripuchai or Lamphun province and Buddhism was first introduced in this region. Later, Buddhism has made a re-propagation twice until it became well-founded and as a center of Buddhist studies for the neighboring countries of Mekong Region viz. Keng Tung, Xishuang Banna and Luang Prabang, etc.

Traditionally, the propagation of Buddhism in Lanna region has used the scripture written on Lanna script on palm leaf, mainly expressed its content that the learned Buddhist man has composed and read with the enunciated local hymn. The Lanna Buddhists traditionally believed that the palm leaf manuscripts recorded only the Buddha's teachings and considered it as an object of worship. The palm leaf manuscripts must be treated in good manner such as not trampling over, should not be coughed at, and refraining from standing or walking while listening to the sermon. Moreover, the palm leaf manuscripts were handed down from Sri Lanka after the 5th Buddhist Rehearsal. After the 5th Buddhist Rehearsal was completed, the Doctrines and Discipline were written on the palm leaves and were considered as the first of the recordings of the Buddha's teachings. After Buddhism was introduced in the Lanna region, the way of writing the Buddha's teachings on the palm leaves had been the tradition of propagating Buddhism in the Lanna region.

In the old days, the Lanna Buddhists have favored to pay attention on the sermons in various occasions for their intellectual enrichment and to strengthen their faith in the Triple Gem. They believed that listening to the sermon is the way to collect the Pāramī or Perfection and devoting all the meritorious deeds to their ancestors. Therefore, the traditional Dhamma preaching is very important for conducting attitude, faith and worldview to the Lanna people and also developed the outstanding arts and culture.

Even though the traditional Dhamma preaching was focused on reading based on the idea of Buddhist philosophers in the past, it made the preacher focused on its content and without irony to others. However, the weaknesses of traditional Dhamma preaching are the preacher's lack of doctrinal skills and inability to create personal identity.

Later when the Lanna kingdom came the northern part of the Kingdom of Thailand, the pattern of Lanna Dhamma preaching has changed from reading the palm leaves to the impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching. There are two milestones that led to the evolution:

Political Reform

The Siamese government has made the political reform in the Lanna region. The central power was in Bangkok and the senior government officials were sent from Bangkok. While the Lanna Buddhist monastic order was also reformed by the Snagha or the monastic order from Bangkok, the Lanna society has rapidly changed not only the political but also the educational system. The policies were focused on the educational reform by encouraging the Lanna people to listen, speak and read the Thai Language fluently. This resulted to a young generation, such as Buddhist monks, who are not using the Lanna language. They attended to study Thai Language as the official language for their profession and communication.

Later in AD 1940, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram has announced the policy called 'State Convention No. 9', which focused on Thai Language and civic duty. The Lanna people have abandoned their language and a

number of people who know the Lanna language steadily decreased. The Lanna Buddhist monks, unable to write and read the Lanna script and the palm leaves manuscript have changed its form to a folded brown cardboard printed with Thai script with Lanna pronunciations.

Regarding the impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching, it was reformed by Venerable Vajirañāna or King Rama IV and was first introduced to Chiang Mai province by a Dhammayut monk—Venerable Phra Napeeseephisalkhum (Phramaha Kamping Gunākaro). He has been favored by the princes of the north. Later the curriculum of Dhamma scholar has been taught systematically and the subject called 'Dhamma Essay' was considered as the basic of the impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching. The Buddhist monk who completed the advanced level of Dhamma scholar is able to perform the impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching.

After the high ecclesiastical officials in Bangkok did not support the study of Lanna language and traditional Dhamma preaching with the Lanna Buddhist monks who were promoted to be the ecclesiastical administrative officers, the Buddhist monks often performed the impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching to the regent from Bangkok and the Princes of the North or the Bangkokians who lived in Chiang Mai. Those monks have changed their attitude by encouraging the study of impromptu rhetoric or oral preaching to junior monks. This event became the major turning point of Lanna Buddhist Monastic Order.

II. The Period of Dhamma Proclamation of Buddhadasa Bhikku and Paññanada Bhikkhu in Chiang Mai Province.

In AD 1948 Chao Chuen Sirosos, the founder of Suan Buddhaddamma of Wat Umong, favored the style of Dhamma preaching of Buddhadasa Bhikku. He gave his Dhamma talk to the public by standing on the podium. Venerable Phra Dhammakosajarn (Buddhadasa Bhikku) and Venerable Phrabrammamaggalajarn (Paññanada Bhikku) were invited by Chao Chuen Sirosos to preach Dhamma in Chiang Mai.

Both focused on the true Dhamma of the Buddha and rejected the doctrines outside Buddhism and they became famous in a short span of time. The people of Chiang Mai who were able to listen to their Dhamma talks were divided in two parties. The first group agreed with them while the second group did not. The first group was composed of sophisticated people and the elites while the other group disagreed about overthrowing of the local tradition. Because they did not hold the Dhamma manuscript, they did not recite the salutation to the Buddha and because of that they were considered as not preaching Dhamma. It was just only the expression of the idea of the speakers and looked like the oration of the holy.

While the Chiang Mai people was divided into two parties, there were some northern monks who made a combination between the traditional Dhamma preaching and the impromptu rhetoric preaching in order to make a compromise between the old and new styles. The traditional Dhamma preaching will be summarized before being performed before the audience.

There were some monks who made a summarization after the traditional Dhamma preaching was finished. The impromptu rhetoric preaching was performed by inserting the content of each Buddhist Scriptures and it made a reputation to the preachers. The political reformation in the Lanna region in AD 1899 and the coming of Venerable Phra Dhammakosajarn (Buddhadasa Bhikku) and Venerable Phrabrammamaggalajarn (Paññanada Bhikku) in AD 1948 signaled the new style of Dhamma propagation. The Buddhist monks changed their attitude of communicating Dhamma to the modern day people.

III. The New Pattern of Dhamma Preaching in the Lanna Region

Venerable Phrakru Sophonboonyaphron (Boonthong Suwarno) of Wat Sophanaram, Don Kaeo, Sub District, Mea Rim District, Chiang Mai Province, the outstanding Dhamma preacher has a contemporary life with Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikku and Venerable Paññanada Bhikkhu. He was favored by the Lanna people and was popularly known as Tu

Chao Thong, Tu Jok, Tu Choo Chok. His Dhamma talks were recorded in cassettes and sold out for 20 volumes as 'Dhamma Applied'. Now we can sum up the pattern of Dhamma preaching which was influenced from the impromptu rhetoric Dhamma preaching and Dhamma lecturing into three patterns as follows:

The Development of Impromptu Rhetoric Dhamma Preaching

The Dhamma preaching is considered as a pattern of Buddhist propagation, which a monk performs the teachings of the Buddha and probably called a 'solo sermon', 'mono pulpit' or 'a sermon delivered on one pulpit'. The ways to perform the Dhamma preaching as mentioned above can be described as follows: one monk sits on the pulpit holding the Dhamma manuscript on his hand between the chest, giving an impromptu rhetoric Dhamma preaching. He has to recite the salutation or 'Namo' to the Buddha which is considered as the technique of Dhamma preaching that can be found in central Thailand. This pattern has been applied by Venerable Phrakru Sophonboonyaphorn as he inserted the Lanna sense of humor and mainly used Lanna dialect.

The Development of Impromptu Rhetoric Dhamma Preaching from the Traditional Lanna Dhamma Preaching

Venerable Phrakru Sophonboonyaphorn was trained and experienced in the traditional Lanna Dhamma preaching, especially in the Vessantara Jātaka (a sermon on the ten previous lives fo the Buddha). He applied the technique of impromptu rhetoric and Dhamma lecturing for the appropriate era with a combination between the traditional and impromptu rhetoric and its fundamental Dhamma preaching.

The Development of the Impromptu Rhetoric Gained from the Dhamma Lecturing

Dhamma lecturing is considered as a form of the Dhamma propagation, it is focused on speaking to the public by standing on the

podium, not a ritual, not sitting on a pulpit, without reciting the salutation and holding a manuscript with a friendly atmosphere. Venerable Phrakru Sophonboonyaphorn often talked and listened to the Dhamma lecture from Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikku and Venerable Paññanada Bhikku.

He was able to apply the style of Dhamma from both venerables. The Dhamma lecture of Venerable Phrakru Sophonboonyaphorn can be defined as the introduction of its content and summarization. It is similar to public speaking which shows Lanna identity by inserting Lanna sense of humor and Lanna social circumstances.

In addition, there were many northern monks who can perform the impromptu rhetoric Dhamma preaching like Venerable Phrabuddavajanavaraphorn (Jan Kusalo), Venerable Phradhammasithajarn (Nuu Thavaro), Venerable Phrasidhammanides (Kamon Jotimanto), Venerable Phrasrisinsunthornvathi (Silp Sikhasalo) and Venerable Phrakruanusornsilakan (Anan Dhammadaro) and so on.

At present, the traditional Dhamma preaching still plays an important role in the Lanna region. Most of Dhamma audiences listen to the sermon in order to gain *the meritorious thought* and not for *Intellectual*. The preacher reads his manuscript of only two pages: an introduction and conclusion. The traditional Dhamma preaching usually performed in various ceremonies are: Death Ceremony, House Warming Ceremony, and Longevity Ritual.

1. Factors affecting the development of Lanna Traditional Dhamma Teaching to the Impromptu Rhetoric Dhamma Preaching are as follows:

a. Social and Cultural Changes

After the Lanna Kingdom was dominated by the Kingdom of Thailand, all the traditions were changed and became less important.

b. Changes in education and the attitude of the Lanna Buddhist monks

- (a) The traditional Lanna Dhamma preaching became less important because the northern monks received the way of Dhamma preaching from central Thailand.
- (b) The need of Dhamma propagation in Lanna social context. The Lanna Buddhist monks desired to propagate Dhamma with the methods of impromptu rhetoric and Dhamma lecturing and explaining of the Lanna world outlook based on Buddhism.

2. Changing Attitudes and Needs of the Audience

The modern Lanna people do not understand the meaning of Dhamma that appeared in the manuscript so they do not pay much attention during sermons. The traditional Lanna Dhamma preaching contained the ancient dialect, idioms, and does not comply with the requirements and conditions of society. The Lanna people were interested in listening to the impromptu rhetoric Dhamma preaching and Dhamma lecturing because of modernity.

Even though the Lanna Dhamma preaching has changed its form but the most important is that propagation of the teachings of the Buddha focusing on the benefit of the people to understand the essence of Buddhism and to observe practices to be free from suffering.

If the preachers still maintain the purposes, they would understand and perform their Dhamma preaching to the people with the appropriate methods and situations. They must uphold the Buddha's method of Dhamma preaching as guideline. If they can do this, any methods of Dhamma preaching will be a success and gain the highest benefits.

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Sufism: Religious Change in the Medieval Deccan (India)
Jagadeesh Kivudanavar

Introduction

The Medieval Deccan was ruled by the Bahmani Dynasty and their clans of Shahi Sultans. At the same time, the south was ruled by the Vijayanagara Dynasties. These two followed different religions and cultures. But the Deccan was naturally in the influence of the Islamic culture. The *Haridas* movement in the Vijayanagara and the Sufi movement in the Bahmani-Shahi Kingdoms occurred at a common point of time in the history, had a common content and served a common purpose. Their forms however were different though Hinduism and Islam were contributing a lot to the mystical aspects of Sufism. The *Bhakti* movement also gained respect due to the popularity of mysticism spreading through India. The *Bhakti* movement was a regional revival of Hinduism linking language, geography, and cultural identities through devotional deity worship. This concept of *Bhakti* appeared in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the first sects emerged from south India from the seventj century A.D. Its practices and theological concepts were very similar to Sufism. *Bhakti* devotees linked *Pooja* with songs on gods, saints and theories of life; they would meet often to sing and worship. The *Bhaktis* developed mystical philosophies similar to those advocated by Sufi saints. For example, the *Bhaktis* believed that there is a special reality beneath the illusion of life; this reality needs to be recognized to escape the cycle of reincarnation. Moreover, liberation from earth (*moksha*) is the ultimate goal in Hinduism. These teachings run nearly parallel to Sufi concepts. Their aim was to purify the society by eradicating the religious and social prejudices and wrong practices.

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Sufism- Religious Change

All mysticism is born in religion. Sufism was born in the bosom of Islamabad and the *Bhakti* in the *Gita*. Among the *Sahabah* (the companions of the Prophet), there were, at the very beginning, people who despised the world and led an austere life. This tendency, common to all religions, affirmed itself among the Muslims when Islam was rapidly expanding in the first century of the *Hizari* assured to its adherents political supremacy from Spain to the Indus. The Muslim mystics or the Sufis of the first two centuries of the *Hizari* were ascetics, men of deep religious feeling, who laid great stress on the principles of *Tauba* (repentance) and *Tawakkal* (trust in God). These early mystics of Islam were fundamentally inspired by the *Quranic* conception of a transcendent God. Their contemplation remained confined within the limits of the *Quran* and the practice of the Prophet. Then Sufism had become a monotheistic theosophy, of which the fear of god and the Day of Judgement were the dominant features, but the element of loving adoration was not altogether absent. Rabia, the woman mystic of the second century *Hizari*, says 'Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor hate of any other thing remains in my heart.' In her verses also she uses the symbolical language of human love to describe the relations between the mystic and his Divine Beloved, a practice, which become popular in the later centuries, both in the Arabic and Persian languages.¹

The erotic imagery used by Dhul Nun Misri in his verses is full of passionate devotion to the Divine Being. In fact, the nature of love is such that it tends to resolve all differences between the lover and the beloved in to one simple unity. In later centuries the allegory of love became a prominent characteristic of Sufi literature.

The asceticism of the early Sufis gave birth to the regular movement of *Tasawwuf* in the third century of the *Hizari*, aiming at the loving devotion to God and a discipline of the individual soul. At Baghdad, under the Abbasids, the Sufi theosophy attained its perfection. The influence of Greek thought had shaken the very foundations of Islamic

faith, and scepticism had become the order of the day. To meet this situation, the Muslim theologians had to justify their faith and dogma by logical disputations. This was a very favourable moment for the incubation of mystical doctrines, likely to give a spiritual satisfaction to troubled souls who cared more for the inner light than external rituals, however ingeniously sought to be justified by argumentation.²

The man who played an important and decisive role in the history of Sufism was a Persian, the celebrated Bayazid Bustami, a contemporary of Dhul Nun Misri, who gave a definite turn to *Tasawwuf* by introducing in to it the element of ecstasy and the mystic doctrine of the immanence of God, which is Islamic mysticism has invariably implied that "all is in God" and "not that all is God", as is sometimes erroneously believed. He was banished from his native town for having made heterodox declarations which shocked the orthodox Ulema. He said, "Beneath the cloak of mine there is nothing but God. Glory to me! How great is my Majesty" (*Tazkiratul Auliya*).

Bayazid died on 875 A.D. His school took the name of "Taifurian". He was the Islamic mystic to employ the word "*Fana*", the annihilation of self, which later became the base of Sufi theology. It implies that human attributes are annihilated through union with God, a state in which the mystic finds eternal life (*Baqa*).

After the Muslim conquest in India, various Sufi orders were established. In particular, the Chisti and the Suhrawardy orders took root in different parts of the country including the Deccan. The other Sufi orders like Qudri, Naqshbandi, Shuttari and Madari, etc., were also represented and functioned on more or less the same lines.³ Sayyid Mohammed Hussain Bandanawaz Gisudaraz, the best known Sufi in the court of the Bahmanis. He belonged to the Chisti tradition of Sufism. The doctrine opposed the Ulema or Islamic orthodoxy, which said that nothing existed but God, with the argument that all reality was a borrowed fragment from the being of God, quite similar to the Vaishnavism that Ramanuja put forward or the *Dvaita* of Madhva.

However, Bandanawaz's compromise with the court made his positions highly orthodox. The Qadri and Suttari Sufi orders taking on from their origins in Ajmer and Arab countries failed to sustain their independence from the court and by the fifteenth century reverted to positions put forward by orthodox Islam, thus paling out.

Ibrahim Adil Shah II (1580-1627 A.D.) was honoured with the title *Jagadguru* and the period was mixer of the both Hindu and Muslim cultures. He revived the various Sufi sects. The Qadri and Suttari sects moved to Bijapur and tried to bring reform in the royal court of its so called un-Islamic practices. The Chisti Sufis, however, like the *Dasakuta*, moved out of the financial patronage of the court and took the movement among the urban and rural masses, Muslim, as well as non-Muslim. It must be remembered that the Chistis were composed basically of Deccani Muslims, while the Suttari and Qadri sects retained the Ajmeri and Arab lineages.

"The essence of the doctrine taught by the Adil Shahi's Chisti Sufis; Eaton writes "was that there exists between man and God a hidden spiritual path (*rah*) along which the seeker (*talib*) or traveller (*salik*) journey's on his life's quest to reach the divine. Two conditions were required of the prospective traveller: one was that he be a Muslim or become a Muslim and the other that he entrusts himself to the guidance of a learned *Pir* (*guru*) who would lead him from one stage to the next.....⁴

The relationship achieved in the final stage, God as lover or friend, finds a parallel in the *Bhakti* ideal of a personal deity actively concerned with his devotees, characteristic of both the Lingayat and Vithoba traditions of the Deccan. On occasion, Bijapuri Chistis drew directly from the *Bhakti* tradition to illustrate their doctrines. While Burhan al-Din went far in incorporating aspects of Hindu cosmology and nomenclature in to his theosophy, and while many parallels can be found between Sufi devotionalism and *Bhakti* thought, it would be dangerous from this to generalise about the relations between Sufis and Hindus as a whole. For one thing, the central ideas expressed by these Sufis remained thoroughly within the framework of the Islamic tradition.....⁵

In Indian religions, music is common and has always been present as a rich tradition. As an influential medium to disperse ideas, music has appealed to people for generations. The audience in India was already familiar with hymns in local languages. Thus Sufi devotional singing was instantly successful among the populations. Music transmitted Sufi ideals seamlessly. In Sufism, the term music is called *Sama* or literary audition. This is where poetry would be sung to instrumental music; this ritual would often put Sufis into spiritual ecstasy. The common depictions of whirling dervishes dressed in white cloaks come to picture when paired with *Sama*.⁶ Many Sufi traditions encouraged poetry and music as part of education. Sufism spread widely with their teachings packaged in popular songs accessing mass demographics. Women were especially affected; often used to sing Sufi songs during the day and in female gatherings. Sufi gatherings called as *Qawwalis*. One of the biggest contributors to the musical Sufi tradition was Amir Khusru (1325 A.D.) known as a disciple of Nizamuddin Chishti, he was a most talented musical poet in the early Muslim period of India. He is considered the founder of Indo-Muslim devotional music traditions. Nicknamed "Parrot of India," Amir Khusru furthered the Chishti affiliation through this rising Sufi pop culture within India.⁷ (Abidi, S.A.H. (1992). *Sufism in India*. New Delhi: Wishwa Prakashan).

The Sufi philosophy 'devotion to God and respect for one's *Pir*' are the common themes. Just as the *Kirtanas* of the *Haridasas* and the *Vachanas* of *Saranas*, the Sufis adopted forms common among the peasantry in which they composed their songs. The *Chakki-nama* (sung while turning the grindstone), *Charaka-nama* (sung while spinning thread) *Lori-nama* (lullaby) and *Suhagan-nama* (wedding song) were forms in which they made their compositions and which were carried to and repeated by the masses, generally these compositions made for the Deccani women.⁸

In almost all parts of the country, the Sufis had established their hospices (*Khanqahs*) where spiritual congregations were held under the presidency of the mystic preceptor (*pir*), who prescribed the mystic

discipline for his followers. Music was generally patronised in the hospices of the Chisti and Suhrawardy orders and *Qawwals* (singers) sang Persian songs. Some times, the above said songs were also sung in Hindi. References to such congregations of *Qawwali* found in the *Akbar Akhyar*, *Badauni*, *Amali Saleh*, *Haft Aqlin* and other works in the medieval Indian history.

The mystic discipline through the hospices continued to progress till the end of the seventeenth century, after which deterioration set in. But even in the eighteenth century. Some of these hospices were centres of spiritual culture. For instance the *Khanqah* of Khwaja Mir Dard was one such center.

The Sufis in India, as elsewhere, attached an esoteric significance to the teachings of the *Quran*. To them it had deeper and more inward sense, but they did not claim any exclusive knowledge of mysteries of existence. They, however, propounded a scheme of life within the limits set by the law of Islam (*Shariat*) which they considered formed the true path (*Tariqat*) to the ultimate goal of attaching nearness to God. They preached inward light as against the dogmatic formalism of the ecclesiastics and the legists, and their exalted idealism brought spiritual solace and comfort to many a heart tossed on the sea of uncertainty and doubt.⁹

Prominent Sufi Saints in the Deccan

Sufism is nothing other than Islamic mysticism. The saints who preached the principles of Sufism are called Sufi saints. Deccan in general and Karnataka in particular there are four hundred and twenty five references to Sufi saints' *darghas* are found.¹⁰ The advent of Sufi saints would have been from the very inception of Islam in the beginning of the 7th century A.D. in South India. Trade and commerce carried out by the Arabs paved a way for Islam and later for Sufism entered in to Karnataka.

Sufism first entered the Western Coast along with the Arab merchants who have been mentioned in inscriptions as *Tajjikas*.¹¹ The earliest reference to a Sufi saint in Karnataka can be traced back to 1301 A.D. Hazrat Sayyid Shah Hisamud-din-Teighbarana was the first saint to come to Gulbarga. At present his tomb is located in the fort near Jagath Talab in Gulbarga.¹² Another reference is of Nurulla Qadiri lived during the Vijayanagara period (1336 A.D. to 1565 A.D.). The tomb at Kadirampura at Hampi was erected in honour of him.¹³ It shows that the Sufism also influenced the Vijayanagara. Karnataka was ruled by many Muslim dynasties. In the Deccan, The Bahamanis, the first Muslim dynasty was ruled in the northern parts of Karnataka (1347 A.D. to 1538 A.D.), and later the Adil Shahis (1489-1686 A.D.) After them, North Karnataka was under the rule of the Nawabs of Savanur, the Moghals, the Barid Shahis of Bidar and the Nizams of Hyderabad. The southern part of Karnataka was under the reign of Haider Ali and his son Tipu Sultan (1761 A.D. to 1799 A.D.). During the Muslim reign, the Sufis had found an amicable geographical and cultural abode in Karnataka for Sufi flourishing and popularity. The kings and queens of Karnataka like the common people promoted Sufism. The Sufi saints who came from North India as well as from Persia, Arabia and Baghdad settled here because of its amicability and great concern of the people. There were different types of Sufis living in Karnataka, like the landed elites, warriors, reformists, literates and *dervishes*. Sufism has been variedly ordered and institutionalised. It has the practice of taking the pupil into the order (*Silsilah*) and the concept of *pir* (*Guru*) and *perzad* (pupil). In India, there prevailed six orders and four orders in Karnataka, namely Chisti, Qadiri, Sattariya and Suhrawardia.¹⁴

The Bahmanis ruled Gulbarga from 1347 to 1424 A.D. and Bidar from 1424 to 1538 A.D. During their period many Sufi saints lived. The most important among them are Shiak Sirajud-din-Junaidi, Gesu Daraz (Bande Nawaz) in Gulbarga and Syed Tajuddin in Bidar was the most important Sufi saints. The Bahmani rulers from the very beginning of their rule in Karnataka gained the goodwill and co-operation of the Sufi saints. Hazrat Shaikh Saad Zanjani Rahimatullah Aulia came to

Gulbarga in 1351 A.D. Then Hazrat Shaikh Minajjuddin Tamim-ul-Ansari came to Gulbarga from Daulatabad in 1352 A.D. At present his *dargah* is located in Kirana *Bazaar* near fort road at Gulbarga. Hazrat Shah Ruknud-din Tola of Qadiri order is said to have come to Gulbarga before Gesu Daraz during the period of King Firuz Shah Bahman. His *dargah* at present is located near Chor Gumbaz in Gulbarga.¹⁵

One of the most prominent figures in the early history of Islamic mysticism in Gulbarga was Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz (1321-1422 AD). He was of the Chishti order that had created a centre of Sufi culture at Gulbarga. He was the disciple of Chishti saint Shaikh Nasirud-din Chirag.¹⁶ A profound scholar, with a keen and penetrating insight into the religious sciences, Gesu Daraz gave a new fillip to religious studies in Karnataka. He has written a commentary on the *Quran* and another on the *Mashariq-al-Anwar* (a famous collection of the Traditions of the Prophet). He had studied Hindu mythology and was conversant with the Sanskrit language also. Other than these famous Sufi saints, there are some more references for Sufi saints who lived in Gulbarga during the 15th century A.D. They are., Hazrat Shah Bahaud-din Langot Band Rehamathullah Aulia , Hazrat Moulana Hafeez , Moulana Qadar, Moulana Iftiqaruddin, , Moulana Kamal Girayan, Hazrat Pir Bangdhi , and Bahaman Shah Sahib.¹⁷ Syed Tajuddin is said to have played a vital role in bringing the social and cultural synthesis in Bidar. He was popularly called "Raja Bagh Sawar" of Kalyana (Bidar) and was also one of the prominent followers of Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga.¹⁸ He was also respected by the Bahamani King Alaud-din II (1435-1457 A.D). Syed Ismail Qadiri held a distinguished place in the Bahamani kingdom and appears to have been a favourite of King Alaud-din II. The *urus* of this saint is celebrated with great pomp and pleasure by both the Hindus and the Muslims even today.¹⁹ During and after the reign of King Ahmad I, several saints of the Qadiri order arrived at Bidar from Multan, Mahan and Kirman (Persia). The present existing *dargahs* of the Sufi Saints of the Bahamani period in Bidar, speak of the Sufi saints who lived during Bahamani period in and around Bidar.²⁰ Hazrat Shah Abul- Faid, Hazrat Shah Ali, Hazrat Shah Abul-Hasan,

Hazrat Sayyid Amir Hamza Qadiri, Banda Ali Shah Majdhub, Hazrat Nur Samnani, Shaikh Badr-Ud-Din Qadiri, Hazrat Makdhum Qadiri, and Hazrat Sayyid-Us-Sadat and other Sufi saints popularized Sufism in the Deccan.

In Bidar, there are nine Khanqahs of the Sufi saints. Among these, the *khanqah* of Hazrat Shah Abul-Faid is the most important one. Hazrat Shah Abul-Faid (1408 A.D. to 1474 A.D.) was a contemporary of Kings Ahmad I, Alaud-din Ahamad, Humayun and Nizam Shah Bahamani. These kings had great respect for him. The study of the Sufis saints of the Bahamani period shows that they were popular among the kings and the masses alike in bringing welfare and social harmony.

During the Adil Shahi period, Sufi saints migrated to Bijapur from various places like Baghdad, Arabia, Persia, Sindh, and from other places in North and South India like Daulatabad, Ahmadabad, Gujarat, Broach, Bidar and Gulbarga. About twenty-seven Sufi saints were living during the period of King Ibrahim II, about eleven of them were in the period of King Muhammad and four were in the period of King Ali II. Single references to the Sufi saints are recorded in the period of Kings Yusuf, Ibrahim I and Ali I. Bijapur remained relatively barren as a centre for Sufism prior to the reign of Ibrahim II but the post 1583 period saw Sufism flourish in Bijapur to a significant degree.²¹ Sayyid Chanda Husaini joined the cavalry of King Yusuf Adil Khan. Shaikh Shamsal-Din Zinda Dil was the only Sufi saint of the Shattari order, who came from Shiraz (Persia) to Ahmedabad and then to Bijapur during the period of King Ali Adil Shah I. Shah Miranji Shamsal-Ushashaq of the Chisti order came from Mecca. Shah Nur al-Din Safawi, Shah Abul-Hasan Qadiri lived during the period of Ibrahim II and Muhammad, Shah Sibghat Allah, Shah Hashim Alawi, popularly remembered as Hashim Gujarati, or Hashim Pir, Abul Hasan, Shah Mustafa Qadiri, Shah Qasim Qadiri, Shaikh Abd Allah Aidarus (1631-32 A.D.) were most prominent saints.²²

In the reign of Sultan Muhammad, majority of Sufis came directly from Arabia, Egypt, Baghdad, and other parts of India like Bidar, Gulbarga, Burhanpur, and Gujarat to Bijapur. Abd al-Samad Kanani (from Egypt), Ismail Qadiri bin Hasan (from Baghdad), Abu Bakrbal-Faqih (from Arabia), Ahmad Nazir, Saiyid (from Arabia), Jafar Saqqaf, Saiyid (from Arabia),

From the fourteenth century onwards, there are many references about women Sufi saints. These female Sufi saints not only involved themselves in spiritual teachings but also their main role in the society as mothers, sisters, wives are really noteworthy. They were also supporting their husbands in spreading Sufi principles. There are nine references found to female Sufi saints in Karnataka. The earliest happens to be of Hazrat Masaheba Ashrafe Dojahan²³ who came from Arabia or Baghdad to Kudchi in Raybag *taluk* of Belgaum district, and second Kunja Maa Bee (the daughter of king Muhammad Shah I, lived in 1358 A.D. to 1375 A.D.).²⁴ Hazrata Amina Bibi Dadi Ma Sahiba and Mastana Bibi, Syedani Bibi, Tawakkal Mastan Bibi, Hazrat Saiyida Amma Jaan and Saidani Bibi were the other women played an important role as Sufi saints in teaching and propagation of the Sufi philosophy.²⁵

The Sufi saints were very generous and tried to eradicate inequalities in the society. They called to give up evil practices were existing in the both Hindu and Muslims. They received all men from different social strata, rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim, free born and slaves in the same way. They served as socio-religious reformers. One of their great achievements was that they brought the Muslim aristocracy into touch with the Hindus. The Sufis could attract large masses towards them in Karnataka because of their simple life. They served the poor, the distressed and the down-trodden. As Sufism was based on liberal principle it attained fame among the Hindu religionists and Sufi saints became equally respectable to the Hindus and the Muslims. They established *khanqhas* (monasteries) which played a key role in maintaining the moral balance of the society in Karnataka.

Conclusion

Bhakti and Sufi movements were tried to synchronise the Hindu and Muslims and contributed to a growth of stability, vernacular literature, and devotional music in India. Socio-religious life in the medieval period was peaceful despite the camaraderie between Sufi saints and the followers of *Bhakti*.

The massive geographic presence of Islam in India can be explained by the tireless activity of Sufi preachers. Sufism had left a prevailing impact on religious, cultural, and social life in South Asia. The introduction of the mystical form of Islam was done by Sufi saints. Sufi scholars travelling from all over continental Asia were instrumental in the social, economic, and philosophic development of India. Besides preaching in major cities and centres of intellectual thoughts, Sufis reached out to poor and marginalised rural communities and preached in local dialects. Sufism emerged as a "moral and comprehensive socio-religious force" that even influenced other religious traditions. Their traditions of devotional practices and modest living attracted all people. Their teachings of humanity, love for God and Prophet continue to be surrounded by mystical tales and folk songs today. Sufis were firm in abstaining from religious and communal conflict and strived to be peaceful elements of civil society. Many of Sufi saints exercised considerable influence on kings, administrators, nobles and well-to-do persons. They advised the officials of high status to help the weak, the indigent and the needy persons. They gave correct guidance and did not hesitate to express their disapprobation of some of the misdeeds and evil practices of rulers and aristocrats and the masses.

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REPORTS**Religion at the 2013 International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Conference in Dublin**

The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) Conference for 2013 was held from June 25 to June 29, 2013 at the Dublin City University. More than 1000 participants were assembled to discuss "Crises, 'Creative Destruction' and the Global Power and Communication Orders." Already 20 years ago in 1993, IAMCR assembled at the same university. This time "an unprecedented number of abstracts" were submitted, as president Janet Wasko stated in her welcome address. This is probably also an indication for a growing number of students entering into the field. One additional reason might also be the fact that the organization has a long tradition as a leader in international exchanges and quite a number of sections and working groups. A similar development was also experienced by the "Asian Media Information and Communication Centre" (AMIC) which met a few days later beginning of July 2013 in Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

Already since the years of the late James Halloran the IAMCR has a working group on Religion with quite some active members. Also in Dublin the presentations of the group were well attended and some 40 papers were scheduled for presentation in this section under headings like "Religion, Media and Culture" or subsections on "Religious identity, Agenda setting, Religious organization in a digital age, religious Journalism, Mission, Theology" but also the "clash of Cultures" with case studies on Islam though there exists within IAMCR also a special group on "Islam and Media" which was established after September 9/11. Within IAMCR, there are also further groupings on fields like Ethics and Intercultural Communication which can be related to Religion as well.

Presenters in the Religion group came from countries like Australia, Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Indonesia,

Saudi Arabia, Israel but also from the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, Italy and Brazil.

After a lively discussion in the Business session of the group it was decided to change the existing name and re-name the group into "Religion, (social) Communication and Culture". In the discussion it was pointed out that beside the fact that the existing name is also taken by other groupings there is also the fact that the field of Religion and Communication has changed from a more technical media approach to a broader concept and experience of communication in society ("social"!) like e.g. with Social Networks and similar developments coming up and develop. In addition it was felt that studies in the field were in the past often just determined by sociological considerations but did not sufficiently consider and study the theology of Religions as well as cultural perspectives of religious communication which are expressed e.g. in a ritual communication which goes far beyond media. This can be also said in a special way about the rich communication heritage and practice of Religions in the Asian continent, from where almost all world Religions originated. Thus the new name of the IAMCR working group will be: "Religion, (social) Communication and Culture".

Because of the growing number of students and scholars interested in the field as was reflected already in 2011 at the IAMCR Conference in Istanbul with some 50 papers it was already proposed to develop the "Working Group" into a special "Section" within the IAMCR structure which has apparently not been done yet. The actual participation of members in the conferences does, however, also depend a little bit on the place of the conference. With Hyderabad in India for 2014 the gathering will be a special challenge for scholars and students from Asia with its rich religious heritage.

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

**“Religion and Social Communication in the
Changing Cultures of Asia”**

6th International Roundtable of the
Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication
Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University (MCU)
Chiang Mai, Thailand
October 21 to 24, 2013

Amidst changing Asian cultures – resulting from economic, political as well as technological developments – the 6th ARC Roundtable 2013 was organized to study the impact of such changes in religions and religious practices in the region. In a “Call for Papers” released before the conference, the following questions were posed:

1. How are traditional ways of communication of and in Religion changed through such developments?
2. How do Religions respond to these developments?
3. Is the internal communication *within* Religions but also their communication to the *outside* influenced and changes? How?
4. Do such situations also have an effect on religious practices (e.g. pilgrimages) and rituals (e.g. devotional practices) of members? How? When? Where?
5. Do developments in digital technology enter into religious practices? When, Where, How? With what effect?
6. What do these developments mean for intercultural communication within and between Religions? “Interreligious Dialogue”?

In response, some 20 invited scholars representing Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Jainism gathered, along with two observers from Lux Mundi College and the Catholic Social Communications office in Bangkok, at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University (MCU) in Chiangmai, northern Thailand from October 21 to 24, 2013.

After arrival on October 21, the formal opening followed in the morning of October 22, in the presence of some 100 officials, professorial staff and students of the university. A venerable monk chanted a prayer and lighted the incense signaling the commencement in the traditional way of Theravada Buddhism.

Former ARC Director, Chainarong Monthienvichienchai, then welcomed the participants and guests. He explained the history of ARC, dating back to the first Roundtable in 1999 organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences – Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC). He also mentioned the themes of succeeding four Roundtables held in 2005, 2010, 2011 and 2012. As lead organizer of this year’s Roundtable in Thailand itself, Dr. Monthienvichienchai also introduced the participants to the guests from MCU and then gave the audience a rundown of the two-and-a-half day program.

In his keynote address, ARC Director Franz-Josef Eilers explained the concept “social communication” which is the key concern of the Center, particularly its relation with religion. Dr. Eilers also distinguished three dimensions of social communication, namely: (1) Interpersonal/Cultural Communication; (2) Media; and (3) Social Networks.

A brief showcase of traditional Lanna (Northern Thailand) dances featuring young people followed. Then the program proceeded to the presentation of research works. Here is a list of the 14 papers presented:

	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Affiliation/Origin</i>
1	Religion and Social Communication in Changing Cultures of Asia: Anthropological Perspective	Dr. S.M. Michael, svd	<i>Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai (India)</i>

2	Feasibility of Establishing a Multi-Faith Web Network in a Rural Community in Luzon, Philippines	Prof. Ma. Stella C. Tirol	<i>University of the Philippines- Los Baños, Laguna</i>
3	Bridging Social Distance to Challenge Paternalism in Sri Lanka	Dr. Sajeeva Samaranayake	<i>Colombo, Sri Lanka</i>
4	Silence: Communication for Evangelization in Digital Culture	Dr. Min-soo Kim	<i>Catholic University, Seoul (Korea)</i>
5	Dimensions of Bonding and Bridging in Religious Communication through Internet: A Study Based on an Empirical Research with College Students in Chennai	Dr. Gnana Patrick	<i>Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras (India)</i>
6	Influences of Religious Telecast in a Multi-religious India: An Analysis of Hindu and Muslim Television Viewers	Dr. Binod Agrawal	<i>Taleem Research Foundation, Ahmedabad (India)</i>
7	Mythology and Society Continuum: Study of an Indian Television Serial	Dr. Arbind Sinha	<i>Mudra Institute of Communications Ahmedabad (India)</i>

8	Judaism and the Digital Culture	Dr. Yohel Cohen	<i>School of Communications, Ariel University, Jerusalem</i>
9	Communication Technology Impacts Thai Culture and Buddhist Way of Life	Dr. Samran Khansamrong	<i>Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Chiangmai</i>
10	Methods of Dhamma Preaching in Lanna	Ven. Dr. Saneh Pamuangmoon	<i>Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, Chiangmai</i>
11	Challenges for Religious Communication in New Social Structures and Cultural Forms of Modern Society in the Vietnamese Context	Prof. Anh Vu Ta	<i>Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, Manila</i>
12	An Act of Faith: From the Spiritual to the Ritual	Dr. Chandrabhanu Pattanayak	<i>CCTE & University of Hawai'i, Manoa – India Programs</i>
13	Religion, Culture and the 'New' Social Media in India: Critical Perspectives	Dr. Keval Kumar	<i>Mudra Institute of Communications Ahmedabad (India)</i>
14	God in Facebook, Like it or Not: Filipino Youth Response to Socially Mediated Religious Messages (research proposal)	Prof. Anthony Roman	<i>FABC-Office of Social Communication/ Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, Manila</i>

Another paper submitted for the conference is entitled **“Influence of ICT on Cultural and Religious Practices in Pakistan.”** Unfortunately, the proponents Drs. Anjum Zia and Munzir Elahi from the “Communications & Media Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund” in Islamabad could not attend. The same was the case of Prof. Mi Shen from mainland China. Based in Manila, his paper is entitled **“Christianity in a Changing Culture in China from Cultural Revolution to the Present.”**

After each presentation, a succeeding Q&A session gave room for clarification and reflection by the participants. Highlights of the presentations, spurring lengthened discussion and critical thinking, include the anthropological discourse on “Religion and Social Communication in Changing Cultures of Asia” by Dr. S.M. Michael, svd from the Institute of Indian Culture in Mumbai (India). Dr. Chandrabhanu Pattanayak’s (CCTE & University of Hawai’I, Manoa – India Programs) forward-looking case study entitled “An Act of Faith: From the Spiritual to the Ritual” about a modern-day, tech-savvy guru based in the United States was much appreciated.

Dr. Kim Min-Soo’s (Catholic University, Seoul) “Silence: Communication for Evangelization in Digital Culture,” as well as Dr. Sajeeva Samaranayake’s “Bridging Social Distance to Challenge Paternalism in Sri Lanka” were also notable contributions along with “Judaism and the Digital Culture” from Prof. Yohel Cohen, the first-ever Judaism representative in the history of ARC Roundtables. Ven.P.B. Dr.Saneh Pamuangmoon’s (MCU Chiang Mai) “Methods of Dhamma Preaching in Lanna” acquainted the participants to the evolution of preaching styles adopting to changing environments and technological developments in Northern Thailand.

Overall, an atmosphere of mutual friendship and dialogue was built, with researchers representing different religions sharing insights and views about varying socio-cultural and religious realities from their own perspective.

The host-venue is one of 15 provincial campuses of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Buddhist University (MCU), an institution for higher learning catering to Buddhist monks, novices and laypeople. The university was founded in 1887 by His Majesty King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the fifth King of the Chakri Dynasty. Its main campus is located at *Wang Noi*, Thailand’s ancient capital Ayutthaya.

MCU Chiang Mai campus is organized into several academic units: Faculty of Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Program and a Graduate school.

Altogether the faculties offer 26 undergraduate programs, 10 master degree programs, two doctoral programs, and other academic training. Two of its master degree programs: Buddhist Studies and Philosophy, are internationally oriented and conducted in English. MCU additionally offers a PhD in Buddhist Studies (in English).

This year’s Roundtable was organized in cooperation with the former ARC Director and present Chancellor of Saint John’s University (SJU), one of Thailand’s two Catholic universities, along with MCU-Chiangmai’s Graduate School Faculty led by Ven. Phramaha Sanga Chaiwong and Asst. Prof. Dr. Samran Khansamrong.

The program included an educational tour to two famous Buddhist shrines:

1. *Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep*, the city’s most famous temple, standing on Doi Suthep hill on the northwest of the city. This temple dates from 1383; and
2. *Wat Phalard*, a forest “wat” (Buddhist temple in Thai) in the foothills of Doi Suthep, near Chiang Mai University. Wat Phalard is known for its unique, contemplative environment as it is situated in serene, wooded hills with meditation halls and nearby waterfalls.

The participants also visited Sacred Heart Cathedral, which houses a relic of Blessed Nicolas Bunkerd Kitbamrung, Thailand's first Catholic martyr beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2000. Chiangmai is the seat of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Chiangmai. The diocese itself has more than 40 Catholic Churches.

In the end of the two-and-a-half day discussion, the international participants expressed their appreciation to the organizers but especially to the host-university for the friendliness and hospitality that is genuinely "Thai." The local scholars from MCU itself were also grateful for the unique opportunity to present their recent research works but especially for hosting an event of this nature.

In the final plenary session, the following proposals were forwarded, beside others:

1. This year's Roundtable aimed at a wider geographical reach in terms of participation. A few invited scholars, however, were unable to come at the last stretch of the preparations. But the thrust will continue in succeeding Roundtables.
2. There is a progression in ARC Roundtables in terms of breadth and scope of themes as well as quality of presentations. This should continue in future conferences. A conscious effort is encouraged among the ARC researchers' network to identify gaps in previous works and to fill these in with their own research. This will produce a more cohesive body of knowledge that is specific for our continent.
3. As to the kind of research, it was suggested to explore other areas beyond institutional and/or elitist religion. ARC, however, is an institution concerned specifically with religion and social communication. By its mission, the center should not venture into generic fields like political communication or social/civic engagement, but their intersection with religion should be considered.

4. The papers presented in this Roundtable and in former ones have analyzed phenomena from a religion's point of view. Perhaps, it is feasible as well to look at what is happening in the grassroots that which have been traditionally marginalized but involves a large number of people, and the spirituality derived from those local/popular activities and events. In this case, we might re-align our thoughts about religion as an institution.
5. The planned "ARC Book Series" is in progress.
6. The ARC Journal, *Religion and Social Communication*, will continue as the center's flagship publication connecting scholars and providing them with a platform for further discussion. Contributors will retain their right to their submitted articles, but the issues in which they appear will be the sole property of ARC.
7. ARC will continue scouting and networking with scholars in the region to promote and encourage research in religion and social communication. The thrust is to go beyond Christianity and engage scholars from other religions, e.g. Islam, Confucianism and others, to explore the communication dimension of the faith and religious practices.

Next year's Roundtable may be held at Lux Mundi College Seminary in Samphan, in the outskirts of Bangkok (Thailand). The dates have been set to October 20-23, 2014. The theme will be "*Social Communication Dimension of Religions in Asian Cultures: An Exploration.*"

Anthony G. Roman

NOTES**ARC Roundtable 2014**

The seventh RoundTable Conference of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication (ARC) will take place from October 20 to 23, 2014 at the Saengtham College for Philosophy and Theology in Samphran, near Bangkok, Thailand. The College is related to the national Roman Catholic Seminary 'Lux Mundi' for priestly formation on the same campus. The participation in the considerations is by invitation only. All participants are expected to present a paper on the theme of the conference: " Social Communicatioon Dimensions of Religions in Asian Cultures".

*Call for Papers***7th ARC Roundtable**

October 20-23, 2014

Saengtham College for Philosophy and Theology
Samphran, Thailand

The **theme** of this year's roundtable of the Asian Research Center for Religion and Social Communication at St. John's University in Bangkok will be *Social Communication Dimensions of Religions in Asian Cultures. An Exploration*. One might in a similar way also formulate the other way around: Religious Dimensions of Social Communication in Asian Cultures.

Every religion needs to express itself and its convictions in different communicative forms from simple teaching, living, to celebrations and rituals. There are no Asian cultures without religion as a strong and often essential element. These religions very often determine people's way of life. In studying this one needs beside others to distinguish between *intra-* and *intercommunication*: How do religions communicate within themselves and how does their communication take place with others,

including other religions, but especially within the settings of Asian culture? One might further question how such communication is influenced or even determined by modern technical developments.

Religion in Asia is not just wellness or nice feelings or the experience of the "numinous" in the description of Rudolf Otto (1917/1958). In reality religion often structures the way of life of people and societies like in Buddhism, Confucianism, in Hinduism or even Islam and Christianity. What are the communication consequences? In some cases the activities of religions - within themselves and to the outside - are hindered or restricted through political systems. What does this mean for their communication or their relation to politically determined approaches like Confucianism in China? How is Religion expressed or suppressed in such situations?

Some subjects for studies and papers for the roundtable could be:

- How are cultures and their communications determined, influenced or even maintained by or through Religion?
- How does communication (content and ways) within religions and/or religious communities affect the life of people? Which communicative forms are used for what?
- What do own members expect from the communication of religions or religious leaders?
- How far and how much are young people influenced by the communication of religious leaders? Why? Why not? How? When?
- Do cultures change through religious communication or communication of Religions? If yes how? When? Why?
- Does inter-religious dialogue have any influence in Asian Cultures? If yes: How? When? Where? Why?
- Does Communication technology influence and change religious practices and even teachings?
- What is the role of Social Networks and Religion in Asian Cultures and life: practices, possibilities and needs?

- What kind of communication competence is needed for religious leaders in modern and traditional society?
- Are traditional ways of communication of cultures maintained or changed by Religion or religious developments? How? When?
- What do developments in modern communication technology mean for intercultural communication within and between Religions?

Submission

Submission of *abstracts* (up to 300 words) is until May 30, 2014. While *full papers* are expected to be in on or before August 09, 2014.

Since ARC roundtables are limited to only 25 participants, the acceptance of a paper does *not* automatically mean a participation at the conference which is by invitation only. Accepted papers are, however, considered for publication in the journal of the Center: Religion and Social Communication.

Venue

The venue of the 7th ARC rountable will be at Saengtham College for Philosophy and Theology, the academic arm of the Roman Catholic National Seminary for Priestly Formation, *Lux Mundi*, Samphan, Thailand

For more information, queries may be sent to:

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Jewish Communication and Culture in Germany

The German quarterly *Communicatio Socialis* presents in issue 2/ 2013, (Volume 46) a special section on Jewish communication and culture in Germany. This academic publication on Religion and Social Communication with a title taken from the Vatican II Council Document *Inter Mirifica* is published since 1968. It presents five articles over 52 pages (138-192). The first one is an overview about the Jewish Press in Germany in general which is followed by a more detailed presentation of the Jewish weekly *Die juedische Allgemeine*, published since 1946 for Jewish communities. The publication is now considered as an institution and serves especially the German Jewish community which is third biggest in Europe. Actually historically there are Jewish publications in Germany since the 18th century. The paper is also available online and in social networks.

An extensive contribution about Jewish radio programs in the different public service broadcasting station of the country follows under the title "Music and Rituals". An analysis of the literary work of Benjamin Steins, one of a group of German-Jewish authors of the so called 'third generation' (born 1970) follows. A case study of the Catholic Academy Mainz in the city of Bingen presents a view on integration of Jewish migrants in a German city. The section concludes with a report of an initiative of the German Bishops' Conference to provide cooperators for the Yad Vashem Center in Jersualem.

Communicatio Socialis is probably the first and oldest periodical specialized for academic studies on Religion and Social Communication in Europe and beyond. The periodical is now published by the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt in Bavaria, Germany.

BOOK REVIEWS

Daniel A. Stout: Media and Religion. Foundations of an Emerging Field. New York (Routledge) 2012. 204 pages.

Daniel A. Stout is one of the leading scholars in the field of Religion and Media in the United States. With this new book he tries to present some basic concepts and experiences of the field for a basic "course" on Media studies and Religion. He is convinced that the "media play a central role in contemporary religion" but at the same time also that "religion is essential to understanding media's place in society". He considers his book as "an introduction to the subject" and wants to identify "issues and frameworks" in order to "lend credibility to the new field and encourage deeper and more thoughtful analysis"(Preface). With his new publication he wants to identify "relevant ideas, theories and concepts" for "a divergent and understudied area." He admits, however, also that with this "basic introduction" he treats the topic more in breath rather than depth". Because of these assumptions the book deserves a more extensive and critical review.

After the introduction (Chapter 1) the basic content of the volume is divided into 'key concepts' (Chapter 2) followed by: Physiology and mental states (3), World Religions and Denominations (4) Cultural Religion(5), Media Criticism (6), The Internet (7), Entertainment Media (8), The News (9) and Strategic Communication (10). The book concludes with a chapter for a stage play of the author. Every Chapter concludes with a list of "Key Terms" and "Questions to ponder" presented in a special box.

In the introduction Stout clarifies his understanding of Religion stating that theologians "base their work on a assumed deity"while academics approach the subject like any other, applying the same analytical methods that they use in the study of history, social science, and the humanities. The media and religion is an academic subject much like political communication or media ethics; its goal is not to advocate spirituality or any particular worldview."(p.4) Does this

imply that Theology is not academic and only the sociology of Religion is worth studying under a media perspective? Should not also here already a distinction be made between Communication and Media Studies as it is done in the catalogue of the same publishing house (Routledge) which divides its listing of books into these two sections?

Stout seems to distinguish between 'structured' and 'unstructured' Religion and writes that "religion or more broadly, the numinous can be experienced any time at any place through the use of media". Already in his introduction he talks about 1." Organized Religion...and 2. Elements of Religion .." (p.2) which he calls in reference to Rudolph Otto's " Idea of the Holy" the "numinous". Otto actually did not make a study on Religion as such when he first published his seminal book in 1917 (first English edition 1923!) but a 'study on the Holy' where he beside others "were to investigate the non-rational elements in the idea of the Divine." This is in Otto's chapter VIII on " The Holy as a category of value" to be followed by "Means of expression of the numinous" (Chapter IX) where he distinguishes between direct and indirect means. He does see the 'numinous' as "basis and background to religion which can only be induced, incited and aroused" (p.60, Oxford Edition 1958). Stout, however, maintains that "...by using both the terms religion and numinous a wider net to cast in our analysis" is created, " to explore media studies from a multifaceted perspective" (Intro, p.7), which he also bases on a definition of Johnstone (p.3).

The concept of Religion probably needs to be studied in more depth and detail if – following Otto – one maintains that the 'numinous' is part but not a substitute for Religion. Stout sees as 'numinous' elements: deep feeling (affect), belief (cognition), ritual (behavior), and congregation (community) which are present in "an experience with the media."(p.6).

In his chapter on "Key Concepts" the author presents historical insights from Pre-history, Ancient Egypt, Greece and the oral tradition (p.13 ff.) but from there jumps immediately to "the Reformation" which means 1,500 years of Christianity before the Reformation seems not to exist!

In the section on “Media and Religion today” (p.20 ff.) of the new concepts he refers to “related fields for ideas and theoretical directions” of the new concepts he refers to Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Ecology and Literature studies but Philosophy and Theology seem not to exist!

After a chapter on Physiology and Mental States which he himself calls “ a highly speculative area” the author goes to his chapter on “World Religions and Denominations” (p. 33 ff.) where he lists under “Religious organizations and the media audience”: Catholics, mainline Protestants, conservative Protestants and Mormons – the author himself is Mormon – and lists short Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist audiences. The chapter does not, however, go into different continents as the whole book is clearly based on and written for the North American ‘Market’. This become fully clear in the following chapter on “Cultural Religion” which here means simply “Popular Religion” or rather ‘popular North American Culture’ which has almost nothing to do with the general concept of Culture as basis and environment of any human society. The relation between Culture and communication which must be considered as essential element for any human culture which is evident in a continent like Asia: Religion is an essential element of all Asian cultures!

The chapter on “Media Criticism” (6) deals with “portrayals” of Religion across media. It lists didactic, audience response , formalism as “analysis of storytelling devices “ and marxist-critical analyss. The chapter is concerned about “critical skills to assess religious messages wherever they appear”. This refers e.g. to “media outlets for the numinous” which includes – according to Stout – also televised sport events where “fans engage in ritual behavior”. (p.66)

The chapter on the Internet (71 ff) states that it has “as a synthesis of several media a great capacity for numinous experience”. It contributes to community building through social networking and “users engage in rituals and other sacred behaviors online” (74). The role of “online

proselytizing” is exemplified by the “online-only missionaries of the Mormons Blog which shows “ about 10 000 chats a week, with 3.500 people asking for in-person visits and 1.200 going on to hear the missionary lessons” (p.78).

An entertainment media chapter (8) follows as well as News (9)with Radio and Journalism, where according to the author “the numinous is a useful concept in thinking about Journalism in the context of contemporary religion”.

The final chapter - before the stage play – is on ‘strategic’ communication and deals also with religious advertising as “subject of strategic communication” and “branding” (p.113 f).

This ‘small’ book of Daniel Stout brings together quite a collection of many data and experiences but still seems to need a greater depth to be really a book of “Foundations” as the subtitle suggest. The foundations of a house must be strong enough to carry the whole building which definitely is not – yet – the case with the data presented here with more” breadth than depth” as the author himself says at the beginning of the book. Thus the “foundations’ should rather be called simply “elements” which contribute to the field. Some of the weaknesses of the publication can be summarized as follows:

- They confine themselves to the American ‘market’ without necessarily considering other continents, traditions and ‘cultures’;
- Quite some resources for the book are taken from the earlier “Routledge Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication, and Media” (2006/10) edited by Stout which does not necessarily guarantee quality of single contributions as can be shown for several cases like e.g. for the entry on Catholicism;
- Further the extension of “Religion” to everything “numinous” has to be questioned as well as the concept of “Media-Religion”;
- The boxes with “Key Terms” at the end of every chapter are

helpful to some extent but are not really “terms” in the strict sense but rather only key-words or key-expressions which are unfortunately often listed according the adjectives instead of listing the substantive to which the adjective later is added.

The present book of Daniel A. Stout is a good beginning but needs much more depth and clarity in many ways to become a standard publication in the field.

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

Knut Lundby (ed.): Religion Across Media. New York. Peter Lang Publishing. 2013. 215 pages.

This book is an important initiative in studying Religion across Media. After many years of concentrating on Media in many ways, especially technical means for transmission here finally comes the long needed broader approach which goes beyond technical means in a mainly sociological perspective and the instrumentality of these Media and their role in society. Already James Carey insisted to go beyond the transmission model of communication and to look into the ritual process which is not dependent or directly related to “Media”. In reading the different contributions of this volume, mainly written by contributors from or related to Scandinavia one might ask why there still seems to be insistence on “Media” in the title instead of talking about Religion or at least “Means” which would be a broader concept and avoid any fixation on technology.

Terje Stordalen, a professor of biblical theology shows us that already in ancient Hebrew religion there is a difference between “performative” and “textual” tradition. While the last one might be related to “Media” (p.26) the first one is not and could be grouped rather into “ways and means of communication” which goes far beyond Media. A religion scholar he asserts, “must consider material, technological, social, aesthetical and other characteristics” (p31) of symbolic systems.

He follows in this approach the first contribution in this volume by anthropologist Birgit Mayer for whom “ Religion involves a sense of ‘going beyond the ordinary’ that requires special forms of behavior, techniques of getting in touch and extraordinary sensibilities on the part of humans.”(p 7) She also asserts that the concept of “mediatization” in this perspective is limited (p.15)and one might ask here if the ‘media’ are really “agents of religious change” and prime movers even in the broad sense of ways and means of communicating.

Clearly communication involves much more than means if it is seen and related to Religion, where Theology, Philosophy but also Anthropology and Behavioral Studies come in. The document on communication of the Second Vatican Council (“Inter Mirifica”1963) has already in its title the expression “social communication” which should give a broader approach to a “communication *of* and *in* human society” at large. It includes all ways and means of communicating in human society which goes far beyond “Media” and even “Mediatization”. Stordalen rightly includes in his presentation of ancient Hebrew Religion music and dance because religion “was symbolized, performed and experienced “also through “musical-rhythmical” means (p. 25 f.). He distinguishes between a “visual sensory experience” and a “textual medium” which is reflected in written texts, including the Bible. The means of communication included in performative perspective: “ ritual, prayer, singing, dancing, music, recitation etc. which were embedded in construction of space or attached to artefacts that would function as religious media: a sanctuary or altar for a ritual, a city gate for music, a street for religious parades, domestic space for family cult etc. Some of them have been very common, due to their low demand of economy and technology”... others could be restricted to elite performances..”(p.30) Also religiously charged symbolizations or statements have to be added like e.g. “food, clothing, hair styles, pottery, furniture, coins, cultured landscape ... and a veritable host of pictorial means”(30).

The role and importance of writing in early Christianity is developed by Peter Horfield who this way extends his earlier publications on the subject.

After the challenging opening chapters of the book the following sections of the book can not hold the academic quality of the beginning. Some of them are more or less case studies which pretend to cover a whole field which is not always the case. Thus e.g. chapter four on 'manuscript' culture seems to confine itself just to one Syrian monastery without apparently realizing that all medieval monasteries had already in their architectural structure a *scriptorium*, a special place for copying books which was considered as a special obligation of the monks who also preserved the books in their libraries. There is quite some literature and documentation about this which seems to be unknown to the author. Thus e.g. the Bavarian historical center, *Haus der bayerischen Geschichte* Munich organized in 1994 a special exhibit on one of these monasteries: "Schreibkunst, Mittelalterliche Buchmalerei aus dem Kloster Seon"! This is only one example for a broader field of research.

The concept of "Mediatization" which is especially developed by Scandinavian scholars (Stig Hjarvard) comes up again and again and one might ask: are *all* communicative ways and means of communication also "mediatization" because they need a means to express themselves? The concept is helpful when one considers the different institutions which communicate Religion like the Churches or the media organizations. But are e.g. any expressions of human emotions also "mediatizations"? Editor Knut Lundby talks in a special concluding contribution about the transformation of Religion through Mediation (p.186) and about embedded and dis-embedded media technologies (P.192) He distinguishes between "Mediation" and "Mediatization". He quotes Andreas Hepp from his article in the same volume who describes "Mediatization" as "mediation of media communication". Lundby refers for the approach of this volume, however, to anthropologist Birgit Meyer's first chapter where mediation "encompasses the broad range of media". (p199). He concludes that "the mediation perspective gives priority to the forms of religion, while the 'mediatization' approach gives priority the forms of media..."(p.200).

Franz-Josef Eilers, svd

BOOK NOTES

Sundeeep R. Muppidi (ed.): Asian Communication Handbook. 6th Edition. Singapore: Asian Media Information and Communication Centre. 2012. 466 Pages

Also this 6th edition of the Asian Media Communication Information and Communication Centre is like earlier editions again divided into two sections: 1. Theoretical Perspectives and 2. "Mediascapes" with the report on the communication situation of 25 Asian countries and also of Australia. The 14 contributions on theoretical perspectives are devoted especially to social media and the digital landscape in Asia but also contain contributions to Development Communication and countries like India.

The presentations are opened with the thought provoking reflections of Georgette Wang on Media studies in the Digital Age which she presented at the annual AMIC conference in Hyderabad in 2011. "It is not to embrace the universality of existing concepts, theories and paradigms" she writes, "rather it is to challenge and enhance such universality through research, and develop new concepts, methods, theories and lines of Research in the process" (p.14). She is reflecting on new developments when she reports an example from Taiwan that "all major mobile communication operators on the island have now entered into some form of 'joint venture' with temples in providing Buddhist and Taoist users an 'm' of worshipping activities. In comparison to similar services to church goers in the West and Muslim users in Southeast Asia the Taiwanese version of m-worshipping is no longer just enriching, facilitating, or accommodating off-line religious activities, but is threatening to replace them, for the convenience of the user – at a price."

The fact of "modern, interactive multifunctional" media allow instant transmission of voice, text and visual images beyond general media access which allows civic movements like the 'Arab Spring' and 'Jasmine Revolution'. Here she also refers to "Mobile Worshipping" (M-worshipping) as exemplified by "Hauraa Arzuda Media" that

launched “the religious service Hauraa card in Indonesia, described as ‘a nice (and somewhat rare) fusion between technology and religion.’ What was left out of her comment was that the service is also good business. If this is the beginning of a trend, what are Asian religious activities – and indeed religions themselves – to become like?” she asks.

Beside the other contributions in this section of the handbook there is also one titled “New Media and Islam” (Alwi Dahlan) which deals with the “role of New Media in the Muslim World” only in its concluding section in three points: 1. “...today’s new media also breaks the control orthodox scholars on the interpretation of Islam, thus providing exposure to diversity and freedom...” 2. “The Internet brought together Muslims across geographies and ideologies around the world, helped them to transcend national boundaries and cultures and facilitated the development of an extensive number of social networks, which could become the basic fundamentals for a new cooperation in various fields...” 3. “New media haven opened opportunities for women to break up traditional constraints through virtual social media relationships in closed societies...”

John Fiske: Introduction to Communication Studies. 3rd edition. Routledge. London 2011

John Fiske: Understanding Popular Culture. 2nd Edition. Routledge. London 2010

The name John Fiske is and has since years been a ‘standard’ for many students in Communication. His *Introduction to Communication Studies* is since its first edition in 1982 has become if not the main book for entering and deepening the field. His distinction between the “process school” of communication which is based on the Shannon and Weaver model and the semiotic approach to communication is of special importance also for scholars from Asia. While the ‘process

school’ studies communication as transmission the semiotic approach is concerned about signs and symbols, signification and the codes which give in a special way access to a proper cultural approach which is of importance not only for Asian cultures and their life but also for religion and communication. Similar to James Carey’s concerns for ritual communication

Fiske presents the different elements and steps of a semiotic approach in a clear and convincing way which should enable students of Asian cultures to a deeper and more thorough approach beyond technology and “media” in the narrow sense. Also the concept of “social communication” goes into the same direction.

This third edition is introduced by Henry Jenkins with an overview of Fiske’s contributions to the field and further comments from Fiske students who are now teaching themselves in the field. Jenkins rightly calls Fiske’s book “cornerstone of a semiotic approach to Culture”(XXI).

The same introduction is also reprinted in the second edition (2010) of Fiske’s *Understanding Popular Culture* from 1989. Fiske himself calls this book an “outline” for “a theory of popular culture in capitalist societies.” The book moves “from theories to readings” and is based on the authors experiences in the United States, Britain and Australia whose cultures he calls “all white, patriarchic, capitalistic” which might not necessarily be the case anymore today.

Tobias Olsson (ed.) Producing the Internet. Critical Perspectives of Social Media. Goteborg (Nordicom) 2013. 259 pages

Usually we study and see the Internet as providing freedom to communicate with everybody everywhere. But seldom do we realize that this ‘freedom’ is based on technology and business: we need a provider and often a platform to be able to access and join a so called network. Especially “Web 2.0” with all its interactive possibilities needs a technical system (provider) and often a platform to make

communication possible. Platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and other open the door for seemingly unlimited access to others.

Quite some studies have been made on the ways 'users' of the Net act and interrelate but hardly anything has been studied about the 'providers' of technical systems and platforms for interaction themselves. This concern was the theme of a two-day symposium on "Organized Producers of Net Cultures" which was organized in May 2011 in Malmö, Sweden. The participants presented and discussed all in all 14 papers which responded to "the need to both critically discuss and investigate the supposedly transformative potential of emerging media culture" as an unpublished call for papers for this conference said (p.19).

The "Critical Perspectives of Social Media" as the subtitle of the book says, are presented in this publication and thus made available for further studies. They are grouped under the following headings: I. Producing Social Media, Platforms, Power and Organization. II Transforming Media Producers and III. Producers of communities/ communities of Producers with three contributions each to be followed by a section (IV) on "Producing the (un)civic web" with four contributions. The book concludes with biographical notes on the contributors.

Editor Tobias Olsson of Lund University places with his introduction (p.7-21) the contributions in perspective with an example of a Swedish jogging web platform. He refers to the original distinction of "Web 2.0" by Tom O'Reilly (2005) and asks in view of the new developments: "what happens with the well-worn notions of producers and users in the contexts offered by 'Web 2.0' today: who is actually the 'producer' today, and how should we understand the traditional 'user' when he or she also produces content? Is perhaps prosumer (Tofler 1980; Ritzer & Jurgensson 2010) a more relevant concept to capture the new circumstances? The fact that opportunities offered by the 'web 2.0' blur established distinctions between producers and users has – in turn – triggered theoretical debates around a number of additional

concepts. Central among these concepts is the very idea of *Social Media* that are based on various social networking platforms" which "offer opportunities for users' participation..." (p.11 f.)

The fact stays that there is a need for a technical and also in most cases a platform provider in order to enable individual and communal communication. Even if we speak about the producer and consumer in one person ("Pro-Sumer") we also should be aware of the "Provider-Consumer" ("Prosumer") needed in the process.

Linje Manyozo: People's Radio. Communicating Change across Africa. Sothbound Publishing. Penang, Malaysia 2012

This book is an excellent presentation of "Radio for Development and Community engagement" in Africa and beyond. The "three community engagement approaches: self-bottom up, linear-external and shared bottom-up" are linked to the "development radio reporting, rural radio forums, local rural/ community radio" (p.44) which are not only valid for Africa but also for other continents of the world.

Actually many of the insights of this book go back to the Development Communication concept of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños (UPLB) with Nora Quebral, Felix Librero and others as founders and promoters. In fact Librero brings to the book a "Manifesto for a Development Radio Broadcaster" (p. 291 ff) which refers in a special way also to the Asian approach for Development Communication. From his own experience over years as a development broadcaster, researcher and teacher he is convinced that as such a broadcaster is a visionary, the voice of the audience, the "best presenter of your production", a "researcher and interpreter of raw information" and somebody who knows how to make "refinements in your broadcasts according to the feedback you gather" and thus become an effective and creative producer".

The book and Librero call for “creativity as communicator” to really serve the community which is needed in a growing way. This actually holds not only for development broadcasters but also for any communicator also in view of Culture and Religion. The well edited book should be of help and is an example far beyond broadcasting in Africa in serving communities.

The publication has an extensive bibliography and Index, including key words related to religious broadcasters and their programming. The author is lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

Denise Solomon/Jennifer Theiss: Interpersonal Communication. Putting Theory into Practice. New York/London (Routledge) 2013. 444 Pages.

This textbook on interpersonal communication is a rich source for information, reflection and teaching. Though it is a book for undergraduate teaching it also helps any scholar beyond this level to see the richness and need for proper disposition and approaches in interpersonal communication. The book goes step by step, is very well organized and also in its graphic presentation very pleasant and animating the reader and student. It is also accompanied by a respective website available via the publisher.

The 444-page book is divided into four bigger sections: The first chapter is on ‘Foundations’ with material on culture, identity and perception in interpersonal communication. This is followed by a chapter on ‘Interaction’ with sections on language, non-verbal communication, emotions and listening. The third chapter on ‘Interpersonal Relating’ talks about relationships, intimacy and family. The fourth chapter on “Strategic Communication” presents data on Influence, conflict and “comfort and support” in interpersonal communication.

All presentations are backed up with respective research literature which makes the book also valuable beyond the undergrad teacher. All chapters indicate clearly their objectives but give also practical proposals. Ever and ever again the reader/student is reminded with specially colored texts to “pause and reflect”.

The publication is clearly for the US American market and does also in its definitions reflect US understandings e.g. of culture which will be quite different in Asia and other parts of the world. But considering the fact that interpersonal communication in general is a seldom addressed field, the book has its value also to some extent beyond the American market.

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MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY MAJOR IN SOCIAL/PASTORAL COMMUNICATION

The Master of Arts in Theology major in Social/Pastoral Communication (MAT-SPC) grew out of a felt need by a need by the Asian Church for proper communication formation but also a deeper search for its dimensions and challenges. The “new way of being Church” (Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences or FABC, Bandung 1990) as a communion of communities, a participatory, witnessing, dialoguing and prophetic Church can not be built without proper communication dispositions.

MAT-SPC is designed in such a way that it offers students insights into Communication Theology, Communication Spirituality, and the communication dimension of different pastoral ministries. It is not skills-oriented but rather tries to form and inform personal dispositions for proper communication in ministry, starting with interpersonal communication. Training and skills in media can be acquired in addition, according to the individual needs of the students.

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