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Translocal Lives and Religion: Connections between Asia and Europe in the Late Modern World

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This field—particularly when it is focused on Europe—is marked by three compilations that Meyer characterises as "companion volumes" (257): they cover the nexus of religion and migration from anthropological, philosophical, and theological angles (Horstmann and Jung 2015; Mavelli and Wilson 2016; Schmiedel and Smith 2018). As co-editor of one of these volumes, I found the ethnographic explorations collected in this volume particularly helpful because they caution against theorisations of religion that abstract from the nitty-gritty encounters of everyday life, where public and political issues are lived out in manifold, material, and messy ways. The focus on the everyday, the ordinary rather than the extraordinary—exemplary in Alessandro Gusman's chapter on young Congolese refugees in Kampala and in Johara Berriane's chapter on African Pentecostal migrants in Morocco—is crucial for any account of religion in contemporary migration regimes. The ethnographic studies collected in this compilation offer more than illustrations of conceptual categories. They show the day-to-day practices of people on the move and of those who receive people on the move beyond crisis rhetoric, thus complicating clear-cut conceptual categories in thought-provoking ways. They are evidence that religion is, as Meyer argues, a force that transgresses boundaries. The role of boundary-transgressing religion in the ordinary ethics and the ordinary politics of encounters is crucial for a Europe that continues to be characterised by the arrival or attempted arrival of refugees, even if these arrivals rarely provoke headlines any more. For anyone who wants to go beyond the headline of a 'refugee crisis', this compilation offers important and instructive reading.

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This fascinating collection of essays, assembled and edited by Phillipe Bornet, is both theoretically challenging and descriptively rich across a variety of connections between Asia and Europe. Conceptualising a "connected religion" (10) framework, Bornet argues for employing a translocal lens in order to shift the focus away from time-honoured categories of analysis in the historiography of religions (4). This 'turn'—regarding history as entangled, fluid, and in some instances hybrid—allows

for close scrutiny of micro-historical narratives, employs multiple contextualisation, and is indicative of a "grassroot globalization" (see Appudurai 2000) paradigm. When applied to the study of religions, this approach opens a promising analytical space for examining historical entanglements between different regions and religions. Aspects such as the mobility of actors and the circulation of ideas (beyond real or imagined boundaries), situatedness, the fluidity of religions, the tension between the specific and the universal all become important points of reference.

According to Bornet, two levels of analysis suggest themselves. In the first, we can "re-evaluate the narrative of categories manufactured in metropolitan centres before globally spreading—more often than not along the lines of colonialism and Christian missions". The other follows "the circulation of religious currents, worldviews, [and] practices on a global scale, across traditional labels". (11) Introducing these concepts, Bornet argues for openness to different methods in historiography around religions. The work brings to mind earlier theorising by Thomas Tweed (2006) on translocal modes of living and religion. Unlike Tweed, Bornet and the contributors to this volume, perhaps wisely, do not venture into discussions about new definitions of religion. Enough is accomplished to suggest that this research orientation has great potential and much to offer for scholars of religions.

Without attempting an appreciation of each chapter in this short review—both the editor's Preface and an excellent Afterword by Professor Maya Burger achieve that more than adequately, there are particular themes emerging, consideration of which will convey a sense of the range and quality of the collection. Before embarking on that discussion it should be noted that each of the essays presented is excellent in its own right and the combined effect is to make for a strong and 'connected' volume. The principle of multiple contextualisation is well observed throughout. Impressive also is the diversity of subjects covered and of the participating contributors, all excellent scholars with a wide variety of experiences and interests.

A common focus throughout the volume is a deep examination of the lives of figures in some cases now quite obscure. All were religious entrepreneurs or reformers whose stories have been to a greater or lesser extent elided. Some essays catalogue a tendency towards "changing names and fluid identities" (175). Readers are introduced to the contributions of a "transcultural subaltern" (35), a "non-conformist, anti-clerical religious" individualist (123), a "Christian–Hindu Apostle" on a reverse mission tour of Switzerland (219), and the first Buddhist missionary in the West (171). All provide exemplary research possibilities. There is deep analysis of movements within Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, across India, Ireland, Great Britain, Switzerland, Japan, and Germany, between Taiwan and the United States—Buddhist practice "always on the move" (253)—and a fascinating exploration of "China's Indology" (149). Carefully self-constructed life stories are unpicked and myths debunked, for example, the popular trope that Sister Nivedita's (Margaret Noble, one of Swami Vivekanada's pre-eminent Western disciples) passionate promotion of the independence of India was informed by her own Irish experience (57). Pertinent questions are formulated, pointing to areas of further exploration and imagining ever broader possibilities for this type of study (xv, Chapter 7). As Burger remarks, "life stories are a central focus for connected histories" (271) and such is the quality of the presentations that one can easily read these micro-stories against "global debates or large-scale phenomena" (275).

If multiple contextualisation is highlighted as important, so also is the argument made for re-contextualisation. A prime example is offered by Bornet himself in his treatment on the great Orientalist scholar, Friedrich Max Müller. Utilising the methodological framework of connected history, Bornet contends that Müller "appears as an important node in the connected history of religion(s) between Asia and Europe" (20). He acknowledges an imbalance in relationships and that Müller (an 'armchair traveller') was in a "more powerful position to impose his views on his interlocutors" (20). However, even acknowledging power dynamics and foregrounding "situational constellations of power" (ibid), this case study begs further consideration.

One concern is whether this reading takes requisite account of the milieu in which Müller was operating and the profound influence of colonialist and Orientalist strands of thinking on his *oeuvre*. Should this 'entanglement' reflect more closely on Müller's inclination to fashion a new theodicy out of which some form of super-Christianity would emerge and his efforts (in effect) to 'protestantise' the nascent discipline of the study of religions? (See e.g. King 1999; Storm 2017; McNamara 2021) It may be that more contextualisation is required before we can sit easily with Müller in his re-contextualised iteration. Without such we may tilt the balance from illustrating a 'connected history' to articulating a 'history of connections', a distinction made by Burger in her illuminating afterword (277).

An evident strength of this edited collection is how challenging it is to capture its complexity, nuance, and substance in this short review. There is so much that points to further research and discussion. This volume is a fine contribution and insightfully highlights the impact a focus on translocal lives and "religious exchanges" (xv) can have on the study of religion(s).

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