

INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN (TRANSREGIONAL) ASIAN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

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Keynotes

Klein, Thoralf

The Politics of Knowledge Transfer: Christian Missionaries and Chinese Society, 1830–1930

Knowledge transfer never occurs in a vacuum and is rarely, if ever, disinterested. In this paper, I examine how political factors influenced Christian missionaries' in the production, dissemination and reception of knowledge in China and vice versa. I will place special emphasis on the relationship between religious and secular knowledge.

The paper follows a historical trajectory reaching from the eve of the Opium Wars to the aftermath of the Anti-Christian Movement of the 1920s. It distinguishes four periods: Before the First Opium War, some missionaries formed alliances with merchants and other secular actors to use the dissemination of Western knowledge in as well as the gathering of knowledge about China as a means of gaining a foothold in the inaccessible Qing Empire. Secular knowledge was thus placed at the service of religious knowledge. After 1842, information about China accumulated by missionaries was incorporated into what James Hevia has called the "imperial archive", while roughly at the same time, Chinese scholar-officials used the services of missionaries, among others, to acquire knowledge that they considered useful in their attempts to strengthen China. Following the disaster of the Boxer War of 1900/01, the Qing government's New Policy facilitated a partnership between Qing officials and social elites on the one hand and missionaries on the other to modernise Chinese society and culture. This union provided missionaries with an unprecedented opportunity to disseminate Christianity alongside secular knowledge. Finally, the anti-Christian agitation that emerged in the wake of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 drew a strict line between Western secular and religious knowledge, embracing the former but opposing the latter. The anti-Christian movement also attacked the missionaries' role in the Chinese education system, not only calling the status of missionaries as providers of knowledge into question but also shaping government policy for much of the 1920s and early 1930s.

Cho, Kwang

Woven Devotion: Korean Catholics and the Fabric of Social Transformation

This keynote explores how Korean Catholics in the late 18th and early 19th centuries actively reinterpreted Christian teachings through indigenous ethical frameworks, exemplifying what scholars refer to as religious agency. Rather than passively accepting Western doctrines, Korean believers creatively integrated Christian theology with Confucian values, particularly the virtue of filial piety (孝).

A representative example of this intercultural reinterpretation is the way Korean Christians described God as 大君大父 (Great Lord and Great Father), thereby aligning divine authority with Confucian ideals of rulership and parenthood. Reverence for God was expressed not through abstract theological speculation but through deeply rooted ethical obligations, such as 大忠大孝 (Great Loyalty and Great Filial Piety). This conceptual shift anchored Christian devotion in the Korean moral imagination, enabling believers to articulate their faith through culturally resonant language and values.

This process of cultural translation extended beyond doctrinal reformulation and catalyzed a reimagining of the human person. Grounded in their reinterpretation of divine authority and ethical responsibility, Korean Christians came to emphasize values such as dignity, equality, justice, and communal solidarity—principles that directly challenged the rigid hierarchies and exclusionary norms of Joseon society. In this context, faith became a resource for moral critique and social transformation.

The Korean case demonstrates that intercultural knowledge transfer in religious contexts is not unidirectional but rather involves hybrid reinterpretations and negotiated meaning. It offers a compelling example of hybridity in which received doctrines are not merely blended but reconstituted through ethical and spiritual creativity into historically grounded visions of justice and humanity. This keynote argues that the Korean Christian experience holds broader relevance for comparative reflection on religious transformation and cultural agency across East Asia.

Speziale, Fabrizio

Islamic Genealogies of Indic Professions: Reconsidering Persian Pseudonymous Texts in South Asia

This lecture explores the production of Persian pseudonymous texts and Muslim genealogies as devices for the Islamization of scientific and technical knowledge assimilated from Indian society. It challenges the conventional philological and historical tendency to dismiss pseudonymous texts as minor or unreliable due to their lack of authentic authorship. Instead, it argues that Persian pseudonymous texts incorporating religious narratives are unique sources for understanding professional and economic transformations within South Asian Muslim society. The discussion focuses on two texts that employ contiguous textual strategies and narratives. The first, *Haft aḥbāb* (Seven friends), is a Persian treatise on Indian alchemy (*rasaśāstra*) attributed to a group of Sufis and a yogi who converted to Islam. It was written between 1537 and 1683, at a time when *rasaśāstra* preparations had become lucrative commodities in Indian society, prompting Muslim scholars to assert their expertise in these profitable procedures. The second text, *Risāla-yi Kursī-nāma-yi Mahāwat-garī* (Treatise on the Genealogical Tree of Mahout Practice), is an illustrated work on elephants and the mahout (elephant keeper), a profession assimilated by Muslims from the Indian environment. This treatise claimed a sacred genealogy for the profession, tracing its origins to the age of the Islamic prophets. The text gained significant readership during the Mughal period (1526–1857), when the mahout occupation became influential and economically rewarding due to its close association with royal power.

Abstracts

Aoki, Chialin

Literati and Commentaries in the Tang dynasty from the perspective of the Old Japanese Manuscripts of Buddhist Scriptures

In recent years, Buddhist studies has increasingly relied on Japan's ancient sutra collections for textual criticism. These collections, dating from the Nara to Heian periods, rival the Dunhuang manuscripts in significance, comprising tens of thousands of extant scrolls. Of particular interest are texts and commentaries that no longer survive in China. One such work is Zhu Dabanniepan Jing, a commentary on the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra by Wei Shen, a Tang Dynasty magistrate of Daojiang County. Notably, Wei Shen was a lay official rather than a monk, raising important questions about the role of non-monastic figures in the production and interpretation of Buddhist scriptures during the Tang period.

I have previously published a philological study of volumes 2, 8, 12, and 22 of this commentary (The Philological Study of Wei Shen's Zhu Dabanniepan Jing, Hozokan, 2022). Recently, volume 13, held by a personal collector in Japan, was discovered. I intend to introduce this newly surfaced volume and its unique features—particularly how its sutra portion diverges from both the Northern and Southern textual traditions. While my research into Wei Shen's interpretive approach remains ongoing, sharing this rare material will make it accessible to a broader scholarly community for the first time. The discovery itself offers valuable insights into how Buddhist texts circulated, transformed, and were preserved beyond the Chinese mainland.

This presentation also considers the broader implications of lay authorship in Tang Buddhism. What does it mean for a scholar-official to produce such a substantial commentary on a major Mahāyāna scripture? This case invites a reconsideration of the boundaries between monastic and lay communities and highlights the dynamic interplay between textual tradition, historical context, and transregional knowledge production in East Asia.

Chen, Chia-Yu

Facilitating Colonial Governance through Shrine Visits in Early 20th Century Taiwan

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how Shinto shrine and ritual were used by the Japanese government in the first half of the twentieth century to adopt and practice modern colonial governance in its first colony, Taiwan.

Based on the argument that the meaning of civilisation gets a double face, that the shrine visit represents Japanese culture and religion as the essence under the cover of modernity, the two types of colonial shrine visit are 1) the visit of the Princess of Kitashirakawa to the Prince Kitashirakawa Memorial (Tainan Shrine) in 1901; and 2) the civilisation tour as a submission to the local people, which includes the shrine visit.

The two types of visits show different perspectives of the visitors and their status in the colonial hierarchy. The historical background of the significance of the shrine visit and colonial governance was the close relationship between Shinto and the Japanese royal family, which later formed the so-called state Shinto, and the fact that Prince Kitashirakawa was enshrined as a deity of exploitation for his death during the war that took over Taiwan. Thus, the princess's visit to the shrine for her husband and to the first public and colonial museum indicates a critical nature of colonialism in Taiwan. Although the visit was a performance based on a private relationship, it became public when her itinerary was repeated by other high officials, other members of the royal family, and applied to the Festival of the Taiwan Shrine, the highest ranking festival in Taiwan, which required the participation of the local people. The indigenous civilisation tour, on the other hand, showed the government's intention to civilise the indigenous people through the showcases of modern institutions and shrine visits. Participation in the tour is seen as a gesture of submission.

Chen, Zhenzi

The Protestant Missionary Institution “The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese (*guangxuehui* 廣學會)”, the Discourse of “Western Learning”, and the Conceptualization of Modern Periodicals in Chinese Context

“The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese (SDCK, *guangxuehui* 廣學會)” was a Protestant missionary Institution founded in late 19th-century Shanghai, with the primary mission of disseminating Christian doctrinal materials and so-called “Western Learning (*Xixue* 西學)”. This institution sought to establish an association between Christianity and modernity while reinforcing the missionaries’ (and their organizations’ monopoly over the interpretation of modernity. It also played a significant role in propelling the Reform Movement 1898.

While most existing studies on the SDCK focuses on its role in transmitting Western scientific, technological, and historico-political knowledge, its flagship periodical, *The Review of the Times / The Global Magazine* (*Wanguo Gongbao* 萬國公報), along with its predecessors—*The Church News* (*Jiaohui Xinbao* 教會新報), which edited by the SDCK’s key member Young J. Allen (1836-1907)—were in fact instrumental in shaping the Chinese conceptualization and contextualization of the modern press as both a vehicle of modernity and, to some extent, a nascent “public sphere.”

This paper examines the role of the SDCK’s official periodicals and their antecedents in facilitating the reception of modern press discourse in late Qing China. It further explores how these publications strategically positioned and contextualized themselves by aligning with Confucian intellectual traditions.

Chikhladze, Marietta

The Role of Catholic Missionaries in Transferring the Knowledge about the Indo-Persian Region to Early Modern Europe

My paper will explore how knowledge about 17th-century Georgia, as part of the Indo-Persian region, was transferred to the West through the visual and written sources (accounts, letters, drawings, engravings) of Catholic missionaries and how this knowledge subsequently circulated in Europe (17th-18th centuries).

To trace this circulation of knowledge between the Indo-Persian region and the West, I have chosen the drawings and texts of the Sicilian missionary Cristoforo Castelli (currently preserved at the *Biblioteca Comunale di Palermo*), as well as the texts of Portuguese Augustinian missionaries in Goa, Persia, and Georgia. The latter became the primary source for the Baroque azulejos panels (located in the Graça Convent in Lisbon) as a visual document of the relations between Georgia, Persia, Goa, and Catholic Europe.

Eicher, Sebastian

Literary Graduates and the Study of Western History in Treaty-Port Shanghai

My proposed paper examines the knowledge exchange that took place between the Opium Wars, focusing on the interactions between Protestant missionaries of the London Missionary Society in Shanghai and a group of Chinese literary graduates (xiucai 秀才). While the groundbreaking scientific and religious translations produced during this period are well-known, they often overshadow other forms of knowledge exchange. Among the lesser-known translation projects undertaken at the Inkstone Press were works on natural theology, literature, geography, and history.

The exchange of knowledge concerning Western history has received little attention thus far, yet it played a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding. By the mid-19th century, China had access to detailed geographical knowledge of the West through works such as the Haiguo tuzhi 海國圖志, but historical knowledge remained scarce. The efforts of Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復 (1808–1867), Joseph Edkins (1823–1905), William Muirhead (1822–1900), and their American colleague Elijah Bridgman (1801–1861) illustrate that both missionaries and their Chinese assistants recognized this gap and sought to address it.

This paper explores the Inkstone Press's historical translation efforts, the motivations of those involved, and how this newly acquired knowledge was integrated into traditional Chinese frameworks of understanding. By analyzing this exchange through the lens of intercultural translation, it sheds light on a significant yet overlooked aspect of Sino-Western intellectual interactions.

Ellguth, Richard

The ABC of Religions: Chinese Buddhism, Japanese Scholarship and the Shaping of Religious Literacy, 1920-1949

In the early twentieth century, Chinese Buddhist actors found themselves in a growingly competitive environment: On the one hand state institutions and secularist intellectuals were pushing for tough measures against Buddhist temples and clerics, while on the other hand both Christianity and new religious movements were attracting more and more followers. In the face of this pressure, Buddhists representing a young and well-educated milieu conceived strategies to reconnect Buddhism with current trends of scholarship. As a way of gaining support and esteem among urban academics, these ordained and lay-Buddhists attempted to intellectualize Chinese Buddhism and make connections to the state of the art of religious scholarship.

Since the 1920s, we can see Chinese Buddhists drawing heavily on Japanese scholars of religions such as Kato Genchi (1873-1965) or Anesaki Masaharu (1873-1949). Apart from learning new categories to describe religions (including concepts like “primitive religion”, “pantheism” and more), they collected knowledge about global religions as well. Achieving a “panoramic view” of religions, it became very much common among Chinese Buddhists to learn about the profiles of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and many other religions. Chinese Buddhist were approaching a field of knowledge that we would now call “religious literacy”. “What are the most important Muslim festivals?” “Are there holy mountains in Christianity?” “Is there a monastic tradition in Judaism?” Questions like these were answered in Buddhist articles and monographs and we can see how knowledge on non-Buddhist religions – as well as Buddhism itself – was appropriated in way that would highlight the particularity of Buddhism. This paper will outline these processes of learning and appropriating through an analysis of writings by Buddhist authors like Daxing (1899-1952), Zhang Ruzhao (1900-1969) and Fafang (1904-1951).

Fukami, Keiryu

Critical Studies of Scriptures by 13th-Century Japanese Monks

The system of thought concerning the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha, established in India around 100 AD, quickly spread throughout East Asia, where it developed uniquely as Pure Land Buddhism in regions where Buddhism was transliterated into Chinese. The three fundamental sutras—the Amitayus Sutra, the Amitayus Contemplation Sutra, and the Amitabha Sutra—have been called the “Three Pure Land Sutras” in Japan since ancient times. These sutras were widely copied and published from the late Heian to Kamakura periods, when Pure Land Buddhism was popular in Japan, although many textual differences exist among various versions. The texts can be broadly divided into two groups: those of the Tripitaka system published in China and Korea and those of other systems. The latter includes ancient Japanese manuscripts and printed versions, which also exhibit both similarities and differences. Given the coexistence of multiple versions of these sutras, how did Japanese Buddhist priests of the time treat the texts of the Three Pure Land Sutras? To address this question, this study focuses on Shinran (1173–1262), a prominent 13th-century Japanese scholar-monk.

A wealth of material exists on Shinran’s engagement with the Three Pure Land Sutras. Regarding the Amitayus Contemplation Sutra and the Amitabha Sutra, he wrote commentaries on both (the book is now designated a National Treasure), and his handwritten copies of these sutras survive. In this work, he inserted detailed notes between the lines, in the margins of the upper and lower columns, and throughout the pages, referencing multiple versions—demonstrating his diligent approach to studying these sutras. While a comprehensive copy of the Amitayus Sutra by Shinran does not exist, unlike the commentaries on the other two, he frequently cited it in his writings, including *Kyōgyōshinshō*, offering clues to the texts he relied on.

This presentation will collect and compare as many versions of the Three Pure Land Sutras from Shinran’s time as possible, classifying them into different textual systems and analyzing the versions he quoted in his writings. Through these comparisons, the study will demonstrate that Shinran was aware of numerous errors and misprints in the various editions and sought to establish a definitive version by collecting and collating manuscripts and publications from Japan and abroad, including the then-most recent Chinese Shikei edition of the Tripitaka and Japanese Jōdo-kyō (Pure Land Buddhism) editions.

Han, Caiqiong

Cross-cultural Interpretation of Chinese and Western Classical Scriptures by the German Missionary Ernst Faber in the Late Qing Dynasty

This paper investigates cross-cultural interpretive strategies between Confucianism and Biblical exegesis in the context of late Qing intellectual exchange, focusing on the writings of German missionary Ernst Faber (花之安, 1839–1899). Drawing on textual and comparative hermeneutic analysis, it examines how Faber, in *Xinghai Yuanyuan* (性海淵源, *The Origin of Human Nature*), introduces the views of 31 Chinese philosophers on human nature, framing Mencius' theory of innate goodness as a conceptual bridge between Christianity and Chinese thought. In *Jingxue Buyan Jing* (经学不厌精, *Classical Studies: Never Too Precise*), he offers a Christian reading of Confucian ethics, centered on the concept of the "soul," which contrasts with foundational Confucian concepts. Faber's interpretations juxtapose Biblical doctrines—such as creation—with Confucian cosmological ideas, such as *benyuan* (本原, origin), seeking alignment through the triad of "heaven, earth, and humanity." This study asks how theological categories were employed to reinterpret Chinese classics and explores the dynamics of religious translation in cross-cultural engagement. It sheds light on how religious discourse facilitated Sino-Western intellectual dialogue during a formative period of modern cultural encounter.

Han, Qijin

“Acknowledge God and Understand Heaven”: How Qi-Oriented Cosmology Encountered Jesuit Meteorology in Ming-Qing China

Shortly after Matteo Ricci (known in Chinese as Li Madou 利瑪竇; 1552-1610) arrived in China in 1583, he and his Jesuit successors adopted a top-down approach to evangelisation and leveraged scientific and technological knowledge and instruments as strategic tools. While their primary focus was on astronomy and mathematics, they also introduced meteorological knowledge through treatises written in Chinese and apparatuses imported from Europe or crafted in China. These efforts, however, encountered an established Chinese cosmology, where the concept of qi 氣, an all-encompassing energy, was deemed responsible for weather changes and was intertwined with yin-yang dynamics and moral values. This cultural and philosophical backdrop posed significant challenges to Jesuit meteorology which was grounded in their Renaissance interpretations of Aristotelian natural philosophy. To trace how the translation of meteorological knowledge was facilitated by the Jesuit missionary agenda, and to assess which aspects of that knowledge were more readily accepted or rejected, this paper first surveys the transmission and reception of such knowledge from the Ming to the early Qing period. It examines key Jesuit scientific treatises alongside later works by Chinese literati, in which this knowledge appears indigenized, rejected, or just cited. The second part shifts focus to doctrinal literature, particularly *Shenxin si yao* 身心四要 (Four Essentials of Body and Mind; after 1649) authored by a Chinese convert. Through analysis of its structure and content, the paper investigates how meteorological knowledge was reproduced and recontextualised by local Christian followers and incorporated into catechetical texts – materials likely to have reached a broader audience than the missionaries’ specialised scientific works, thereby contributing to a bottom-up diffusion of knowledge.

Hintersteiner, Norbert

**Resisting Translation: The Āyina-yi ḥaqq-namā in the Mirror of
Interreligious Controversy**

The notion and strategy of "cross-cultural translation" has enjoyed a certain pride of place in Jesuit missions. Less attention has been given to processes of resistance occurring in relation to such missionary pursuits. To make the case for this point, this paper studies Jerome Xavier's Indo-Persian opus magnum *Āyina-yi ḥaqq-namā* (Truth-Revealing Mirror, 1609) and the distinct resistance it sparked in the Muslim world, especially in Safavid Persia, among those who opposed the Catholic mission's efforts. Taking note of the interreligious polemical repercussions of this text between Shia scholars of Safavid Persia and Catholic scholars in Europe over the 17th century, this paper critically revisits the paradigm of cross-cultural translation in Mission Studies and argues that acts of "resisting translation" by the religious other is equally important for understanding the missional process of adapting Christian faith across cultures and religions.

Hu, Zhongyuan

Savouring Knowledge: Jesuit Missionaries' Intercultural Translation and Transmission of Chinese Edible Plants in Early Modern Europe

This paper examines Jesuit missionaries' inquiries into Chinese edible plants and botanical knowledge from the 16th to 18th centuries through three dimensions—the actual, textual, and spiritual gardens. The actual garden includes Jesuits' firsthand experiences as well as their engagement with multilingual learnings. The textual garden consists of writings and illustrations that shaped Europe's perception of China. The spiritual garden explores how food was interpreted within Christian and Chinese contexts to gain patronage for missionary work.

Missionaries recorded China's edible plants through monographs, treatises, and reports. Michal Boym's *Flora Sinensis* and Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* shaped European views. Letters and reports by Jesuits, such as Pierre Jartoux, Dominique Parrenin, François d'Entrecolles, and Pierre d'Incarville, enriched European knowledge. Louis Le Comte's *Nouveau mémoire* offered broader insights. Non-Jesuit travelers like Johan Nieuhof also documented Chinese plants, reflecting widespread European interest.

Jesuits engaged with Chinese *bencao* system but interpreted it through European botanical frameworks. In an intercultural context, how was knowledge transferred? Where did it begin and end? This paper first summarizes the sources of Jesuit missionaries' works in an intercultural context, mapping the flow of knowledge alongside missionaries' movements. It then investigates the formation of knowledge, though which what missionaries learned in China became authorized knowledge accepted by European readers. It finally explores the motivations behind missionaries' botanical studies by tracing the routes of knowledge circulation.

Jesuit writings on Chinese plants have been studied from botanical and medical perspectives, but this paper situates them within a broader historical, cultural, intellectual, political, and religious framework, emphasizing the complex and dynamic knowledge circulation, especially its preceding motives and subsequent results. It examines how knowledge was acquired, formed, and disseminated, extending beyond China and Europe to include America, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. These exchanges ultimately served Europe's intellectual, economic, political, and religious expansion.

Johannemann, Hendrik

Dynamic and Continuous Alike: The Transnational Connections and Framing Strategies of the South Korean Anti-LGBT Movement

Significant parts of South Korean conservative Protestant and Evangelical denominations have been actively fighting against LGBT rights for the past 20 years. Transnational connections on the interpersonal, interorganizational, and ideological levels figured prominently in this anti-emancipatory activism. Using data from a protest event analysis (PEA) for the years 2000–2020, this paper demonstrates how the framing strategies of anti-LGBT activists heavily relied on foreign elements and connections. The study comes up with a typology to grasp what I term ‘dynamic continuity’: the creative (re)combination of action forms and framings from the past and present, and from ideologically congruent and incongruent actors abroad and domestically, in order to appeal to as many people as possible by creating both a semblance of continuity and a sense of orientation towards the future. There are three types of dynamic continuity, which each feature different social mechanisms at work: (1) the relational-congruent type, i.e., adopting and adapting action repertoires, strategies, and frames from ideologically congruent actors, e.g., the internalization of alleged foreign LGBT ‘threats’ or of right-wing conspiracy theories such as ‘cultural Marxism’ from abroad; (2) the temporal-congruent type, combining ideologically compatible ‘old’ and ‘new’ elements, e.g., by accusing pro-LGBT activist of being communists – a potentially effective line of argument given the enduring conflict on the Korean Peninsula; (3) the relational-incongruent type, taking up elements from oppositional forces, e.g., when South Korean ‘ex-gay’ groups engage in counterframing and externalization, i.e., denying queer people human rights, but at the same time claiming them for themselves and putting forth these demands with international organizations. Using such strategies, the Protestant Right has been able to make its mark in Korean politics and society. At the same time, contradictions and internal conflicts come to the fore, complicating transnational connections and knowledge flows.

Kinadeter, Michael

Succession Documents in Japanese Zen-Buddhism

In Zen (Chinese: Chan) Buddhism, the unbroken transmission from the 'historical Buddha' through all generations up to the contemporary master(s) plays a pivotal role. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the Zen tradition employs different kinds of documents to codify and legitimize the 'correct transmission of the Buddhas and Patriarchs' (仏祖正傳). The renowned Sōtō master Dōgen describes various kinds of transmission documents (血脈, 嗣書) of the Caodong and Linji traditions from China. Ever since the knowledge of such documents was transmitted from China during the 13th century, a variety of succession documents emerged in Japan. While the form of some certificates was described in great detail early on, others were kept secret. The Sōtō school, for example, faithfully kept a particular form of succession documents (嗣書図), while other forms were newly created or underwent significant changes (血脈 / 大事). The most significant change originated from Manzan Dōhaku's campaign in the 17/18th century to reform transmission practices, determining their shape until today. Some of the documents played a significant role for monastic succession, whereas the purpose of others was restricted to personal, soteriological means, thus transcending the borders of the monastic realm to include male and female laity. The most prominent format for succession documents was a folded piece of paper, but there are also documents made of silk, documents in scroll format, and further means beyond the written form to legitimize succession (through inheriting objects such as a bowl or a robe). There is also an oral tradition of reciting the names of one's predecessors, incorporating the knowledge of one's lineage into the everyday monastic life, rather than limiting it exclusively to the issue of succession.

Kerl, Lisa

„A Lighthouse in the Dark: German Colonial Interests in the Publications of the SVD“

In 1914, in the Jiaozhou Bay leased territory under German sovereignty, a curious periodical was first published: The *Leuchtturm* (“Lighthouse”) was edited and published by the Catholic missionary order *Societas Verbi Divinii*, better known as *Steyl Mission* and was originally conceived as a tool for language learning. First issued in 1914 for only a couple of editions and then again briefly introduced in 1925-1926, the educational periodical was intended to improve the German skills of Chinese (and Japanese) readers, while at the same time promoting German culture and values. Despite its missionary origins, the publication was strikingly secular and overtly nationalistic, offering political commentary next to language exercises rather than Christian instruction. By tracing the periodical’s conception and its ultimate discontinuation, I would like to illuminate not only the complex utilitarian alliance between the German Reich and the Steyl Mission, but also the contradictions of the missionary press between its religious and educational ideals, nationalistic views and pragmatic considerations. I would like to point out how this conception of the *Lighthouse* and especially its repeated discontinuation underscore the limits of knowledge-transfer and the inability of nationalist evangelization to resonate with its intended audience in China.

Kwon, Youngpa

Between Resistance and Reception: Catholicism and Donghak (Eastern Learning) Responses to Social Darwinism in Early 20th-Century Korea

In early 20th-century Korea, social Darwinism entered through Chinese, Japanese, and Western intellectual channels, bringing with it not only evolutionary theory but also new ideological claims about civilization, competition, and national survival. This paper examines how two religious traditions—Catholicism and Donghak (Eastern Learning)—responded to this body of thought, not by simply absorbing or rejecting it, but by navigating between resistance and reception in ways that reflected their distinct worldviews and social positions.

The Korean Catholic Church, while distancing itself from Darwinism's materialist and secular foundations, appropriated certain aspects of its discourse within the framework of Catholic social teaching. Church publications and missionary education drew on evolutionary language to promote moral development, human dignity, and social reform, articulating a vision of progress that remained theologically grounded.

Donghak, by contrast, positioned itself in explicit opposition to Seohak (Western Learning), constructing a vision of "Eastern Learning" that resisted colonial domination while actively reinterpreting external ideas. Although critical of Christianity's role in imperial expansion, Donghak integrated elements of Christian anthropology and eschatology into its doctrine. Its core teaching, in-nae-chon ("humans are Heaven"), paralleled the Christian imago Dei, while its call for national renewal recast evolutionary struggle in ethical and spiritual terms.

Rather than offering a linear narrative of rejection or acceptance, this study traces how both traditions engaged with social Darwinism through reinterpretation, selective integration, and cultural translation. Their contrasting responses reveal how religion in Korea shaped alternative paths to modernity—not by standing apart from new knowledge, but by confronting it, questioning it, and ultimately weaving it into new visions of justice and human flourishing.

Lan, Yangyang

An attempt to combine Western and Eastern Morality: Yang Zhongyu 楊鐘鈺's Editing of Moral Books in Early 20th Century China

During the 1920s and 1930s, Yang Zhongyu, a scholar from Wuxi 無錫, edited a series of moral books, including classical religious texts such as the treatise on response and retribution (Taishangganyingpian 太上感應篇) and scripture to awaken the world (Jueshijing 覺世經), along with non-religious moral education books that featured successful moral stories of notable figures. These works aim to be used for both family and civil education. In the religious books, Yang commented on the text, giving many stories and points of view from different sources as support. Notably, Yang did not limit his references to Chinese works; he also drew upon a wealth of Western stories and moral education resources. Such as duty, character, and self-help by Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), the true citizen: how to become one by W.F. Markwick and W.A. Smith and biographies of George Washington (1732-1799) and Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). His aims were clear: to re-examine the value of traditional Chinese morality and demonstrate the interconnectedness of Western and Chinese morality. Furthermore, to incorporate Western moral education within the context of Chinese traditional morality.

Interestingly, most of the Western works were not directly translated from English into Chinese but were instead translated from Japanese.

In my analysis, I will first delve into Yang's ideas and practices on civil education, deeply rooted in religious thought under the special background of late 19th and early 20th centuries China. Subsequently, I will compare the original texts with their translations to identify any omissions or misinterpretations that may have occurred during the indirect translation process. I'll also explore the role of Japanese translations as a conduit for Western culture into China. Lastly, I will discuss how Yang integrated Western moral and civil education into the framework of Chinese morality.

Lau, Siu Hang Kenneth

Non-sectarian but Christian: Lingnan University and the Ecumenical Transfer of Religious Educational Ideals in Late Qing and Republican Canton of China (1888–1927)

The paper explores the intercultural transfer and transformation of religious knowledge through the establishment and early development of Lingnan University from an ecumenical perspective, examining its intricate relationship with Christianity between 1888 and 1927, the period before the transfer of school administration from the Western missionaries to the Chinese. Founded initially under the American Presbyterian Church's auspices, Lingnan University soon embraced an explicitly non-sectarian ethos, influenced by American missionary colleges such as Robert College and Syrian Protestant College, fostering significant cooperation among various denominations active in Canton, both Chinese locals and Western missionaries.

Through an in-depth analysis of original archival materials, this study reveals the complexities and internal tensions within the Presbyterian mission which paradoxically facilitated Lingnan's transition towards a more inclusive, interdenominational Christian identity. Key actors, including Rev. Andrew Happer and various missionary societies, are identified as central figures negotiating these shifts.

Moreover, the research highlights Lingnan's practical embodiment of ecumenism through formal and informal collaborations with organizations such as the Canton Union Theological College, the London Missionary Society, and the Chinese YMCA, further demonstrating how religious frameworks influenced intercultural knowledge transfer. This historical examination not only addresses significant gaps within existing scholarship but also provides nuanced insights into how Lingnan University's Christian identity evolved within broader socio-cultural transformations, thus enriching our understanding of transregional religious interactions in early modern Asia between the West and the East.

Lee, Judy

Refugee, Religion, and Knowledge Creation: Ingen Ryūki's Transformation and Influence in Japan

This paper explores the role of Ingen Ryūki (隱元隆琦, 1592-1673), a Ming Chinese monk, whose refugee experience catalysed the creation of a new religious tradition in Japan. Fleeing the collapse of Ming China, Ingen's migration illustrates how refugees can foster knowledge production and religious innovation, transcending mere political displacement. Arriving in Nagasaki in 1654 amidst political upheaval, Ingen quickly became a prominent figure in Japan's religious and political landscape, despite initial surveillance by the Edo Bakufu. His success was supported by maritime networks of Hokkien and Cantonese communities across East and Southeast Asia, especially through the influence of Zheng Chenggong's (Koxinga) military power in Taiwan. Ingen's teachings gained patronage from the Japanese imperial court and Tokugawa shogunate, leading to the establishment of the Ōbaku-shū (黄檗宗), a distinct Zen sect blending late Ming practices with Japan's socio-political realities.

Through the foundation of the Manpuku-ji (萬福寺) in Kyoto, Ingen's community became a site of both spiritual growth and subtle political engagement. This paper argues that Ingen's life underscores the potential for refugees to act as conduits for cultural exchange and institutional transformation, demonstrating their role as active agents in transnational history. By examining Ingen's rise from a Ming refugee to the founder of a powerful religious sect, this study reveals how displacement can spark intercultural dialogue, reshape religious paradigms, and bridge cultures.

Löffler, Beate

Implicit Christianity, Explicit Japan-ness. Knowledge Transfers in Modernizing Japan

In the second half of the 19th century, the Japanese government initiated a rapid modernisation aimed at creating a competitive Japanese nation state. In addition to such changes as new family law, compulsory education, redistribution of property, etc., the government contracted Euro-American experts with the goal of importing western knowledge and allowed limited settlement of foreigners. Although the ban on Christianity in Japan remained in place, this enabled both missionaries and Christian faithful to meet the Japanese population. The ensuing information transfers went in both directions, encompassing many facets of cultural knowledge, albeit with different foci depending the background of the actors and their specific role relative to Japanese society.

The paper looks at the Catholic missionaries of the Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris and their work to promote pastoral care and economic development in the poor rural areas of today's Nagasaki Prefecture, on the one hand, and at North American protestant teachers in higher education institutions inspiring Christian grassroots congregations, on the other hand. This allows providing an overview of different patterns of information brokerage and knowledge transfer into, within and from Japan in religious contexts. Beyond that, the paper points to the role of missionaries and committed laypersons as learned men (and occasionally learned women) within the overall Euro-American knowledge production about Japan.

Ma, Tianhui

"Why Do I Forget My Teacher?": Learning and Forgetting Tibetan Lamas' Incantations among Nuosu Bimo Priests in Southwest China

This paper examines the dynamics of religious interaction between Tibetan Buddhism and the indigenous Nuosu (Yi) religious tradition in Liangshan, on the eastern edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Since at least the mid-Ming dynasty, Nuosu *bimo* priests have engaged in a covert practice of learning Tibetan Buddhist and Bon mantras from Tibetan lamas. This influence is evident in contemporary *bimo* ritual texts, which incorporate Tibetan syllables such as *aoh* (༎), *o'o ma nyi skad ma gtong* (ཨ་མ་ཌི་སྐད་མ་གཏོང་), and *hū swāh hā* (ཱུ་སྐ་ཧྲཱི). Today, many *bimo* continue to travel to regions such as Kham and Tibet to deepen their knowledge of these esoteric practices.

However, the *bimo*'s narrative framework surrounding this cross-cultural learning reveals a consistent structure. Whether referring to ancestral oral accounts or their own experiences, *bimo* often claim to have forgotten the names, locations, or detailed teachings of their Tibetan mantra masters. Instead, they emphasize stories of conflict, struggle, and evasion—especially recurring motifs in which Tibetan lamas demand marriage alliances (e.g., offering a daughter or niece), prompting the *bimo* to flee. These narratives serve to reassert the *bimo*'s ritual autonomy and their identity based on patrilineal transmission.

This study argues that such strategic "forgetting" and selective remembering function not only as mechanisms of boundary maintenance but also as a form of resistance to Tibetan Buddhist cosmological influence. Rather than framing this interaction as a case of religious assimilation or replacement, the paper proposes a model of mutual cultural appropriation that gives rise to a unique "symbiotic tradition". This religious coexistence offers a compelling example of pluralistic negotiation and identity preservation within a frontier religious landscape.

Ma, Tianji

Epistemological Transformation and Cultural Negotiation: The Revolutionary Impact of the London Missionary Society Press (墨海书馆) in Late Qing China

The London Missionary Society Press (*Mohai Shuguan* 墨海書館), established in Shanghai in 1843 by Protestant missionaries, particularly Walter Medhurst, became a pivotal locus for Sino-Western cultural exchange during the late Qing dynasty. Initially aimed at disseminating Christian texts, it soon evolved into a broader intellectual enterprise, producing a wide array of publications spanning geography, history, astronomy, mathematics, physics, botany, and medicine. Notable works include *The Universal Geography* (1853) and *The History of Great Britain* (1856), which introduced Chinese audiences to unprecedented knowledge of world geography and historical methodology.

Mohai Shuguan's contributions were revolutionary in several fundamental aspects: (1) Technological innovation—by introducing Western typography to China, it heralded a new era of modern publishing and accelerated the dissemination of scientific and cultural knowledge. (2) Intercultural engagement—its collaboration with Chinese intellectuals like Wang Tao, Li Shanlan, and Jiang Dunfu, who collaboratively translated and contextualized Western works, fostered an intercultural dialogue that transcended religious proselytism. Building upon these foundational dynamics, the *Mohai Shuguan* became intricately involved in a continuous process of (3) epistemological and hermeneutical expansion, characterized by an ongoing dialectical negotiation of identity between the *self* (China and Chinese intellectuals) and the *other* (the West and its knowledge systems). While the groundwork laid by Jesuit missionaries during the late Ming dynasty was instrumental in introducing Western astronomy and cartographical knowledge to China, it was the *Mohai Shuguan* that initiated a far more profound and unprecedented transformation. By confronting and gradually dismantling entrenched cosmological frameworks like *Tianxia* (天下), *Mohai Shuguan* instigated a conceptual shift from perceiving China as the world's central axis to recognizing it as part of a broader, interconnected global landscape.

This paper will examine *Mohai Shuguan's* activities as a critical node of intercultural knowledge transfer, assessing its broader implications for the transformation of Chinese epistemological frameworks in the nineteenth century.

Manteghi, Haila

Knowledge Transfer in Early Modern Mughal India: the case of *Ādāb al-salṭanat* (dated 1609) by Jerome Xavier SJ

This paper examines Jerome Xavier S.J.'s *Ādāb al-salṭanat* (*Directorio dos Reis*) of 1609 as a significant case study of intercultural knowledge transfer within a transregional Asian religious context, specifically the Mughal Empire. Produced by a Jesuit missionary for the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, this political philosophical treatise exemplifies the mechanisms, actors, content, and processes involved in the transmission and potential transformation of knowledge between European Christian and Indo-Persian Islamic spheres.

The *Ādāb al-salṭanat*, a "Mirror for Princes," aimed to impart "European political wisdom" to an Eastern potentate. This involved the transfer of Western concepts of governance, ethics, and the role of a monarch, filtered through a Christian moral and religious lens and adapted for a Muslim ruler. Key actors in this process were Jerome Xavier, the head of the Jesuit mission and author, and 'Abd al-Sattār ibn Qāsim Lāhōrī, the Mughal courtier who assisted in the translation and cultural adaptation of Xavier's works into Persian. The Mughal court served as the central space for this intercultural exchange, where religious actors, institutions, and ideas interacted amidst profound political and cultural changes.

The content of the *Ādāb al-salṭanat* itself, dealing with the manners and duties of kingship from a moral and religious perspective, highlights the prioritization of specific forms of knowledge deemed relevant for governance. The use of Persian as the target language for this transfer underscores the crucial role of linguistic mediation in disseminating knowledge across cultures. Furthermore, the process of its creation, involving collaboration between a European missionary and a Mughal scholar, reveals the complex dynamics of knowledge acquisition, adaptation, and potential syncretism. By analyzing the *Ādāb al-salṭanat*, this paper seeks to deepen our understanding of how religious contexts facilitated the transfer and transformation of knowledge in, about, and across Asia during the early modern period, shedding light on the interplay between religious frameworks and the circulation of political thought.

Maske, Mae

Glocalizing Humanistic Buddhism

The Fo Guang Shan temple in the metropolis of Frankfurt represents a cultural convergence of traditional Buddhist values within a contemporary global context. This temple, like others worldwide, serves as a home and light for lay practitioners, fostering a sense of community and spiritual engagement that transcends geographical boundaries. Based on Humanistic Buddhism, a modern interpretation of Buddhist teachings that focuses on applying Buddhist principles to everyday life and contemporary issues. Fo Guang Shan managed to established a network of global temple communities, that can also be seen as franchisees, and strategically positioning itself within the competitive landscape of world religions. This paper examines how Fo Guang Shan employs various adaptation strategies to align with the cultural norms and practices of people in different countries. Based on the case study of my Bachelor Thesis, which explores how the temple, part of the international Fo Guang Shan Buddhist organization, embodies the principles of Humanistic Buddhism in a Western context. By examining the temple's activities, community outreach, and adaptation to local cultural landscapes through interviews with temple representatives, this research highlights the temple's role in fostering intercultural dialogue and spiritual practice. The findings concentrate on the dynamic processes through which Humanistic Buddhism transcends geographic and cultural boundaries, offering insights into the global dissemination of religious practices and the transformative potential of cultural integration. A Comparative analysis with other Fo Guang Shan temples will further contextualize the approach within the broader landscape of contemporary Buddhism. I argue that through globalization, the modern organizational methods, and the adaptation strategies in different cultural backgrounds contribute to humanistic Buddhism being seen as a successful modern develop way of Buddhism. This study reflects how Fo Guang Shan adapts its teachings every localisation, revealing insights into managing cultural diversity within a modernizing religious movement.

Merin Joy, Emy

The Jesuit Mission and Interreligious Polemics in Malabar: The Paravur Dialogues and the Transmission of Anti-Jewish Thought (16th–17th Centuries)

This paper examines Jesuit missionary strategies in early modern Malabar (Kerala) through a literary and historical analysis of the Paravur Dialogues—a multilingual interfaith text presumably authored by Francisco Ros S.J. (1559–1624), a Catalan Jesuit and the first European archbishop of Malabar’s Christians. Composed in Garshuni Malayalam—a hybrid script blending Syriac and Dravidian (Tekkan Malayānma) graphemes—the Dialogues stages a theological debate between two Jews, Hindu, Christian, and a Muslim, incorporating rabbinic citations in Garshuni Hebrew and biblical quotations in Aramaic and Syriac. Dated to the late 16th or early 17th century, the text exemplifies Jesuit efforts to adapt European anti-Jewish polemics to Kerala’s pluralistic context, particularly targeting the conversion of Cochin’s Jewish community.

I argue that the Paravur Dialogues served as a vehicle for intellectual transfer, refracting European theological antagonisms through local linguistic and cultural frameworks. By analyzing its polemical rhetoric, multilingual composition, and engagement with Kerala’s Jewish, Hindu, and Muslim communities, this study reveals how Jesuit missionaries repurposed European anti-Judaic discourse for a Malabar audience. The text’s hybrid script and interreligious structure underscore the Jesuits’ reliance on cultural translation, even as they sought to undermine rival faiths. This paper contributes to broader discussions on early modern Catholic missions, colonial knowledge production, and the globalization of religious conflict. It highlights the Dialogues as a case study in the transnational circulation of polemical literature, while also offering new insights into Kerala’s intellectual history and the Jesuit role in shaping interreligious dynamics in South Asia.

Neitmann, Florian

Anchoring Syriac in India: The Konat Collection as a Vehicle for Knowledge Transfer

This paper explores the significance of the Konat Collection, a repository of Syriac manuscripts in Kerala, India, in facilitating the transfer of knowledge and cultural heritage. The collection, owned by the Konat family of priests from the Malankara Orthodox Church, plays a crucial role in preserving Syriac language and traditions in modern-day Kerala. Through a historical overview and analysis of the collection's networks, I demonstrate how clergy from Syrian Orthodox churches enabled this knowledge transfer.

The manuscripts reveal intriguing examples of cultural exchange, such as the combination of Syriac liturgical texts with local traditions like Ayurvedic recipes in Malayalam. A case study of a 15th-century lectionary from Homs, Syria, showcases the manuscript's journey across the Levant to India, highlighting the diverse actors and networks involved in its preservation and editing.

The paper also examines 19th-century manuscripts that replicate a liturgical order containing apocryphal books, demonstrating that the transfer of religious knowledge was not solely governed by canonical distinctions. Instead, the dignity ascribed to certain material objects also played a significant role. By investigating the Konat Collection, this research illustrates the pivotal role of Syriac-speaking Christianity in facilitating knowledge transfer across Asia, underscoring the importance of shared religious and cultural traditions.

Nishimura, Yoshiya

On the Controversy of the Pure Land Buddhism Thought in Eastern Japan during the Kamakura period

This presentation aims to shed new light on the process through which Pure Land Buddhism in Japan was formed during the Kamakura period. I will focus on the practices and beliefs of Pure Land Buddhism in Eastern Japan to unravel that process.

Hōnen (法然 1133-1212) founded the Jōdo sect(浄土宗) at the end of the Heian period(794-1185), and his teachings rapidly spread throughout the country. After Hōnen's death, however, his followers insisted on the orthodoxy of their thought, which gradually led to doctrinal disputes that resulted in splitting the sect into various new schools (e.g., Shin-Buddhism(浄土真宗), Chinzei School of Jōdo sect(浄土宗鎮西派), Seizan School of Jōdo sect(浄土宗西山派)). Previous studies have shown that Pure Land Buddhism schools such as Ryōchū (良忠 1199-1287) of the Chinzei School of the Jōdo sect, Shinran (親鸞 1173-1262) of the Shin-Buddhism, and Shōkū (証空 1177-1247) of the Seizan School of the Jōdo sect were spreading their line of teachings in Eastern Japan during this time. It has also been noted that these schools were often involved in disputes with each other due to differences in doctrinal interpretation. However, a paucity of extant literature prevented a full picture of these doctrinal disputes.

Consequently, the present study focuses on a large body of hitherto untranscribed Pure Land literature housed in the Kanazawa Bunko(金沢文庫) and attempts to explore the aforesaid disputes. Many of these works were written in Eastern Japan during the Kamakura period, and as they are written in question-and-answer form, they help understand the nature of the disputes concerning Pure Land Buddhism thought. In this presentation, I will introduce some of those untranslated texts, such as *Kangyō-sho Kikigaki* and *Anraku-shū rongi* by Ryōchū, and show that discussions were indeed held in Eastern Japan on themes like the descent of Amida Buddha to welcome the dying devote (*rinshu raigō*, 臨終来迎) and the nature of Amida Buddha's Pure Land, and in this process of debate these sects formed their unique thoughts.

I hope these works will help clarify the ideological deliberations that led to the formation of the broader Pure Land Buddhism in Japan as a whole.

Quan, Chenle

The Religious Stance of Ming Confucian Scholar Zhan Ruoshui

Zhan Ruoshui (湛若水), an official, thinker, and educator of the mid-to-late Ming dynasty, holds a distinguished place in the history of Chinese thought. Alongside Wang Yangming (王阳明), he is recognized as a leading figure of Neo-Confucianism during his time. However, from his self-perception as a Confucian scholar, his religious stance appears notably conservative—he was critical of both Buddhism and Daoism, leaving behind a series of writings that reflect his firm commitment to Confucian orthodoxy. At the same time, he actively participated in various folk rituals, such as worshipping mountain and river deities, and even established ceremonial practices for grassroots organizations.

This apparent contradiction in his religious outlook warrants further examination, requiring an analysis of his personal experiences, the broader religious landscape of the Ming dynasty, and comparisons with his contemporaries. A closer study reveals that he selectively engaged with the diverse religious knowledge of his time. His impoverished family background inclined him toward Confucian learning as a means to secure an official career, shaping his religious stance. Even though he systematically studied Buddhist doctrines at a certain stage in his life, he remained critical of Buddhism. When compared to his close friend Wang Yangming's more tolerant attitude toward Buddhism and Daoism, this contrast becomes even more striking.

This study illustrates how religious knowledge was selectively adopted based on practical considerations. Zhan Ruoshui's worship of mountain and river deities reflects a pragmatic approach to religion, while his steadfast belief in Confucianism can be understood within this framework of religious pragmatism. In conclusion, this study aims to understand the reception and learning of religious knowledge as an integral part of an individual's life history, focusing on personal religious stances without generalizing the characteristics of a single case.

Rüsch, Markus

**Western Influences on Buddhist Ritual during Japan's Modernisation -
Design and Sound –**

Japan's opening in the late 19th century had far-reaching impacts on its society, extending beyond the mere transfer of abstract knowledge to encompass a new aesthetic that permeated virtually every aspect of life, including religious institutions. This talk will explore how Buddhist rituals were adapted and augmented, with particular emphasis on design and sound. Regarding design, this involves the incorporation of Western architectural styles into sacred spaces, such as temples as well as prayer halls (raihaidō 礼拝堂) within newly established Buddhist universities. In terms of sound, the analysis will focus on the evolution of Buddhist liturgy and its adoption of Western musical elements, notably the introduction of organ music during services. Nowadays, rituals featuring organs and choruses are referred to as 'music rites' (ongaku hōyō 音楽法要) and occupy a significant place in the contemporary repertoire. This talk will examine various sects of Japanese Buddhism, discussing how ritual serves as a medium for transmitting 'Western' knowledge and demonstrating how this influence gave rise to a novel aesthetic in Buddhist ritual. Furthermore, it will illustrate the extent to which 'Japanese' and 'Western' elements merged to form syncretic expressions that blend traditions of religious architecture and liturgy.

Schmücker, Marcus

Ananta Kṛṣṇa Śāstrī and the Living Vedānta: Rethinking Intellectual Traditions and Religious Knowledge Transfer in Colonial India

The 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by significant transformations in Indian intellectual traditions. While Vedānta gained prominence within colonial and academic discourse, the contributions of scholars rooted in traditional Sanskrit institutions were largely marginalized by early historiography. One such figure is Ananta Kṛṣṇa Śāstrī (1886–1964), a distinguished philologist and commentator on both Advaita and Dvaita Vedānta. His editorial and exegetical work on texts such as the Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, Advaitasiddhi, and Nyāyāmṛta exemplifies how Vedānta continued to live as a dynamic, dialogical tradition—not merely preserving doctrines, but critically reassessing and expanding them.

Śāstrī was far from a passive transmitter of inherited knowledge. Rather, he actively shaped the development of Vedāntic thought by reinterpreting classical debates in epistemology, metaphysics, and hermeneutics within a modern intellectual context. His work demonstrates that tradition and innovation need not be oppositional: rather than uncritically repeating received positions, he subjected them to rigorous scrutiny, offering new arguments that revitalized the tradition from within. Yet contributions like his have remained largely absent from dominant narratives of Indian philosophy.

It may seem exaggerated to claim that modern historiography draws a strict dichotomy between “modern” critical inquiry and “traditional” repetition. However, this opposition has indeed been strongly suggested—particularly in European portrayals of Indian intellectual history—resulting in a distorted image of Sanskrit traditions as static or unreflective.

This paper reconsiders Śāstrī’s work as a case of religious knowledge transfer within traditional frameworks. It situates him within a broader network of Sanskrit scholars who sustained Vedānta as a living and evolving tradition, thereby challenging prevailing historiographical models and calling for a more differentiated understanding of Indian philosophical modernity—grounded in ongoing, living of knowledge transmission.

Shih, Richard Yu-Cheng

“Sacred Fluidity: Knowledge-Making of Water across the French Jesuits, Local Ritualist Healers, and Their Followers in the Modern China, 1860-1930”

This article examines the ways in which the religious ideas and practices have reshaped human interactions with the riverine environment in modern China. It emphasizes the pivotal activities of French Jesuit missionaries, who arrived in China after the 1860s, in bridging the western spiritual and scientific knowledge about water with local societies across the Yangzi Delta. A primary aspect of these intellectual exchanges revolved around the utility of mineral spring water and the “holy water” for the Catholic ritual purposes. While these understandings have persisted in the Yangzi Delta even to the present, they also have been re-interpreted by local communities through a diverse array of what Geertz terms “local knowledge.” Within this framework, water is not simply regarded as a sacred element in Christian practices but is also integrated into esoteric medical treatments and exorcistic rituals associated with non-Christian popular deities. In this context, water functioned as a catalyst for conversion and re-conversion among local followers across Christianity and local popular sects. The knowledge-making of water in modern China, therefore, reiterates a novel perspective to explore the changing local perception of nature and the corporeal intimacy with water, particularly in response to the arrival of new Western authorities rooted in both science and religion.

This project adopts an interdisciplinary approach that spans environmental humanities, religious studies, and cultural anthropology. It draws upon a number of multilingual sources, including Chinese local gazetteers, newspapers, and journals, as well as British reports and French Jesuit parish records from the late nineteenth century onward. Also, it is informed by my ethnographical fieldwork in the Yangzi Delta since 2020, which includes participant-observation of local religious ceremonies and oral interviews with the ritualist healers and rural followers who prioritize the use of water in their practices. These experiences, encompassing both Catholic and non-Christian ones, provide insights into the underexplored role of water in everyday life, particularly in relation to healing, suffering, fear, and uncertainty. Yet, these bottom-up voices have largely been muted in given Chinese narratives. Water, in this sense, is not merely a material for daily needs but also a medium through which power, hierarchy, and religious belonging circulate. By foregrounding the centrality of water, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of religious crossings within local water environments, shedding new light on the intersections of faith, ritual, and ecological knowledge in modern China and beyond.

Storm, Kerstin

“Reject heresies to uphold orthodox learning” – Knowledge Transfer through the Sacred Edict in Late Imperial China

In the autumn of 1670, the Kangxi emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) issued an edict that in scholarship came to be regarded as “one of the most concise and authoritative statements of Confucian ideology” (Mair). At its core, the text of the so called Sacred Edict (*shengyu* 聖諭) consists of sixteen concise maxims instructing the inhabitants of the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual empire in proper conduct, aiming at what was termed *jiaohua* 教化 in Chinese — “transformation through moral education.” Following its promulgation, and over the two centuries until the fall of the empire in 1911, the edict achieved extraordinary circulation. It was expanded and commented upon in numerous ways, giving rise to several dozen adaptations, each designed primarily to guarantee that different social and ethnic groups throughout the empire would understand the lesson.

The seventh of the maxims seemingly addresses religion, as it calls upon the people, rather vaguely though, to “reject heresies in order to uphold orthodox learning.” This vagueness, however, has been elaborated on in the adaptations. Thus, my talk exemplarily examines how knowledge of proper and improper behavior was transmitted across the vast territorial, ethnic, and cultural boundaries of the Qing empire. To do so, it will focus on the seventh maxim in particular and on its elaboration in one of the most widely disseminated adaptations, which remained in circulation up to the early 20th century: Liang Yannian’s 梁延年 *Shengyu xiangjie* 聖諭像解 (*The Sacred Edict, Illustrated and Explicated*).

Terhechte, Anton

Networks and Newspapers: Print, Counterpublics, and Muslim Self-Representation in Post-Mao China

During China's "reform and opening-up" period, Islamic discourses and Chinese Muslim identities entered new terrains of visibility through the medium of print. Enabled by shifting political conditions, affordable printing technologies, and informal distribution networks, Muslim periodicals circulated with an openness that appears striking in retrospect. This moment generated not merely religious commentary but a Muslim counterpublic—a communicative arena in which Chinese Muslims could articulate, debate, and represent themselves in ways that both intersected with and diverged from the dominant state-sanctioned public sphere.

Publications such as *Gaoyuan* and *Kaituo*, and most notably *Musilin Tongxun*, a self-run Muslim newspaper, exemplified this dynamic. The latter in particular did not simply report news but performed journalism from a distinctly Muslim perspective, thereby enacting forms of cultural and religious agency largely independent of the state, though tacitly tolerated for a time. Through postal distribution and self-organised networks, Chinese Muslims extended their own communicative infrastructure, carving out a temporary yet vibrant space of self-representation within a Han-centric political order.

These experiments must be situated within the broader "print revolution" of the 1980s and 1990s in China, when low-cost media technologies expanded access to publishing beyond elite institutions. For Chinese Muslims, print thus enabled both renewed engagements with local Muslim identity and connections to transnational Muslim networks. While this Muslim counterpublic was short-lived—gradually constrained by censorship and rendered obsolete by digital media transformations—the ephemeral publications of this era remain crucial historical sources. They reveal how Chinese Muslims briefly inhabited and reshaped the public sphere in post-Mao China, producing novel forms of knowledge and self-representation that have received scant scholarly attention.

Weng, Haifeng

Radical Left and Confucian Conservatism: Two Interpretations of Bergson's Philosophy in 1920s China

This paper examines how two ideologically opposed Chinese thinkers—Li Dazhao and Liang Shuming—appropriated the philosophy of Henri Bergson in 1920s China. While Li, a pioneering Marxist, mobilized Bergson's notion of *élan vital* (vital force) to articulate a theory of revolutionary life energy aligned with historical materialism, Liang, a Confucian philosopher, reinterpreted Bergson's theory of intuition as a spiritual foundation for Confucian cosmology and ethical self-cultivation. At first glance, their uses of Bergson appear contradictory. However, this study argues that both figures consciously translated Bergson's ideas into their respective religious and philosophical vocabularies, revealing the flexibility of Bergson's conceptual framework and the dynamic conditions of knowledge transfer in modern China.

Rather than treating Bergson's influence as a case of Western philosophical diffusion, this paper highlights the ways in which his thought was re-coded through competing epistemological traditions. For Li, Bergson helped bridge the metaphysical gap between dialectical materialism and a spiritualized vision of revolutionary will. For Liang, Bergson validated a critique of mechanistic rationality and provided intellectual support for a Confucian revival in a secularizing age. These divergent interpretations were not incidental but symptomatic of broader transformations in how Chinese intellectuals engaged with religion, science, and moral philosophy in the post-May Fourth era.

By analyzing how a single Western philosophical system was appropriated by both radical leftists and Confucian conservatives, this paper offers a new perspective on the epistemic hybridity and conceptual negotiations that shaped early twentieth-century Chinese thought. It contributes to ongoing debates on the localization of foreign knowledge and the religious dimensions of intellectual modernity in transregional Asia.

Wong, Tsz

“Noodles and Knowledge”: Embodied Relief and Intercultural Knowledge Transfer in Postwar Hong Kong

This paper revisits the postwar humanitarian efforts of Monsignor John Romaniello (1900– 1985), an American Maryknoll missionary whose creative response to the limits of conventional food relief led to a transregional practice of intercultural knowledge transfer. Upon encountering vast stores of U.S.-donated wheat flour, cornmeal, and powdered milk in 1950s Hong Kong — ingredients unfamiliar or impractical for the diets of Chinese refugees — Romaniello turned to the idea of transforming them into a culturally resonant, nourishing staple: handmade noodles.

Collaborating with local cooks, refugees, and church volunteers, Romaniello experimented with ratios of grain and milk powder to produce a new kind of noodle, distinct from traditional East Asian types made with egg and wheat alone. His formula — wheat flour, cornmeal, powdered milk, salt, and water — maximized the utility of American surplus while adapting to local culinary norms. This practical knowledge was soon shared widely. Factories based on Romaniello’s model were established in Korea, Macao, Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, such as the Seoul plant operated by the Holy Martyr Sisters, which produced up to 16 tons of noodles monthly to feed over 7,000 people.

Romaniello’s initiative offers more than a relief anecdote — it is a case of Catholic-initiated knowledge transfer through material culture and community practice. Like the Jesuits before him, Romaniello embodied an accommodationist strategy: co-creating new practices that honored local contexts while transmitting technical, theological, and ethical frameworks. His work was rooted not only in doctrinal mission but in dynamic, networked action involving food, women’s labor, refugee participation, and transnational logistics.

With the recent approval and support from the Maryknoll Mission Archives in New York, this study draws on unpublished manuscripts and correspondence to explore Romaniello’s role as a cultural mediator in a vivid, adaptive system of postwar Catholic aid. His “noodle story” underscores how religious actors can become catalysts of embodied, practical knowledge across boundaries of nation, language, and taste.

Zheng, Qijun

When a Towel Factory Meets the New Gospel of Health: Intercultural Acquisition of Fasting Knowledge and Practices in Modern China

This paper explores the transregional transfer of fasting knowledge in early twentieth-century China by examining the remarkable role of Three Friends Industrial Company (三友實業社, SYS)—a Shanghai-based towel manufacturer—in publishing a 1934 Chinese translation of Charles Courtney Haskell's *Perfect Health: How To Get It and How To Keep It* (1901). Haskell's text, hailed as "The New Gospel of Health" and influenced by the New Thought movement, offered modern medical justifications for fasting. SYS's edition appended "divine prescriptions,"¹ effectively reframing fasting from religious frameworks into scientific ones during early 20th century China.

Adopting recent global-history approaches, this study highlights how a secular industrial enterprise facilitated intercultural knowledge transfer by merging Western health principles with longstanding Chinese religious fasting traditions. SYS founder Chen Wanyun (陳萬運, 1885–1950) mobilized philanthropic and commercial networks to disseminate the translation across urban centers, exemplifying the broader phenomenon of religiously inflected publishing outside missionary or temple-based institutions. By probing the evolving interactions of merchant ethics, personal piety, and mass print media, this paper reveals how knowledge circulated fluidly across cultural and doctrinal boundaries.

Through a close philological analysis and comparison of Haskell's original treatise in English and SYS's translation in Chinese, together with internal archives, advertisements, and correspondence, this research demonstrates that early Republican-era China witnessed more than a simple East–West exchange of ideas. Rather, fasting for health and moral self-cultivation became intertwined, giving rise to new forms of religious expression and popular wellness practices. Ultimately, this case study argues that secular industrialists played a pivotal role in shaping both religious discourse and cross-cultural understandings of the body in modern China.

¹ Qijun Zheng, "Divine Medicine: Healing and Charity Through Spirit-Writing in China," *Religions* 15, no. 11 (2024): 1303, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111303>.