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CONFIGURATIONS OF RELIGION—A DEBATE

A DORISEA NETWORK DISCUSSION

OPENED BY

BOIKE REHBEIN AND GUIDO SPRENGER

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The research network "Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia" (DORISEA) connects scholars from various academic institutions focused on Southeast Asia. It is coordinated by the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Georg-August-University of Göttingen. Its core is formed by scholars from the Universities of Göttingen, Hamburg, Münster, Heidelberg and Berlin (Humboldt University) who are involved in several projects that investigate the relationship between religion and modernity in Southeast Asia.

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in Southeast Asia

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PREFACE

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In establishing the DORISEA network, members agreed to focus on the relationship between religion and modernity as the conceptual and comparative framework for its empirical, historical and theoretical inquiries. Each network member has scholarly expertise in a region of Southeast Asia, and understands two traits as definitive in research on the region. Firstly, Southeast Asia features a specific configuration of religious and ethnic plurality which results from being an area where local cultural formations intersect with broader cultural formations from East Asia, South Asia and Euro-America. In this context, various (ethnic) local religions interact with Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. Secondly, religion in Southeast Asia is not generally understood as an antithesis to modernity. Rather, religion is better conceived of as involved in complex interactions with modernity: religion shapes modernity in an existential way, just as modernity itself shapes religion.

The individual projects of the DORISEA members can all fit into this broad understanding. The network, which ran from 2011 to 2015, was comprised of five institutions carrying out research on Southeast Asia: The Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Hamburg, the Department for Asian and African Studies at the Humboldt University Berlin, and the departments of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the universities of Münster, Heidelberg and Göttingen. The network encouraged an interdisciplinary approach, with members coming from social and cultural anthropology, sociology, history, religious studies and linguistics.

Research on Religion—An Ongoing Debate

As everybody involved in academic research on religion knows, the category of religion posits a particular challenge. The history of concepts in Western religious history and Western religious studies affected and continues to affect the scholarly analysis of religion as a category. In recent decades, the concept of religion has been thoroughly analysed, discussed and deconstructed in the social sciences and humanities. Most recently, debate has revolved around the place of religion in modern Western societies. Which is the exception: the lively religious landscape of the United States, or the secularity of Europe? Scholars such as José Casanova, Talal Asad, Grace Davie and Charles Taylor have addressed these arguments in books like *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Casanova 1994) and *Formations of the Secular* (Asad 2003).

On the one hand, this debate supports our research and findings in Southeast Asia. Importantly, these scholars undermine any notion that the West and its recent religious history is the only, the monolithic, model of development. Furthermore, they refute the established, simple dichotomies of enchantment/disenchantment and pre-modern religiosity/modern secularity, seeing them as inappropriate and misleading. Moreover, they understand the relationship between religion and modernity in the West as both diverse and complex.

Yet these arguments are also misleading, as they fail to acknowledge that the category of modernity is not neutral in itself, but rather a politically charged term dating back to Émile Durkheim and Max Weber's time. Indeed, in the social sciences the historical development of categories like religion and modernity, and their effect on social realities, is increasingly being investigated.

"Configurations of Religion—A Debate"

Throughout its existence, members of DORISEA constantly debated configurations of religion and modernity in Southeast Asia. In these debates, it quickly became clear that any attempt to form a new 'master narrative' or 'key' that collectively and comprehensively 'explained' the dynamics of religion in Southeast Asia would be a pointless, doomed endeavour. From the different theoretical models and analytical accents (e.g. state, city, village, upland-lowland, world religion-local religion, nature-culture, text, ritual, mass-media, gender, economy, politics, multiple modernities, multiple secularities) the researchers employ, different images of and perspectives on the relationship between religion and modernity emerges. While we initially found the multiplicity of viewpoints and models challenging, we came to increasingly understand these various perspectives as a profound strength of the network's research. In light of these developments, multi-perspectivism or the 'kaleidoscopic perspective' became an increasingly useful and appropriate analytical tool. In carefully and systematically adopting the 'kaleidoscopic perspective', we thereby avoided the dangers—and potential allegations—of simply using it as an arbitrary tool when nothing more suitable could be found. The "Configurations of Religion" project is thus an attempt to use such a multi-perspectivism to inspire fruitful debate.

As such, "Configurations of Religion", a debate opened by Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger is not to be understood as the 'end product' or as a final or complete summary of the DORISEA's research findings, but rather as a perspective on—or an excerpt from—debates within the network. In making this 'work in process' available, we invite other members of the academic community to take part. "Configurations of Religion" is therefore intended to make this on-going process transparent, and to stimulate ideas and discussion.

The sheer volume of research carried out by DORISEA researchers on the dynamics of the religious and modernity in Laos made the logical basis for comparative discussion. In this paper then, Laos serves as a kind of laboratory for new theory on these interactions.

Through the dialogical format employed in this volume, we aim to document and make visible the different disciplinary, theoretical and empirical perspectives, as well as the methodical approaches of the researchers involved. The diversity of perspectives is not only evident in the comments or Rehbein and Sprenger's answers to these commentaries, but also in the different positions the co-authors layout in the working paper itself. As I stated above, the paper, and the responses to it, do not and are not intended to create a coherent and complete whole, rather these differences in perspective and opinion are here to invite and stimulate further discussion.

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RELIGION AND DIFFERENTIATION: THREE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONFIGURATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with three configurations of the religious in order to explore the concept of religion. The configurations are animism, Buddhism and contemporary forms of the religious in mainland Southeast Asia. What is called religious in these configurations only remotely resembles one another. It is therefore problematic to subsume the configurations under one general concept. We argue that the concept of religion in the sense in which it is mostly used only applies to a particular European configuration and not to the ones studied in this paper.

This does not lead to the conclusion that the study of religion is either arbitrary or limited to the example of Europeanized countries. We would rather suggest that all the configurations bear family resemblances in Wittgenstein's (1973) sense: The members of any family have similarities, but no two have exactly the same traits in common. Different similarities, which exist between the members of a family, overlap and intermingle. Any two have some aspects in common with each other and different aspects with others. For this reason, we can study different configurations in one research project but we cannot subsume them under one logic or one universal concept. That is why we speak of configurations and use a kaleidoscopic approach (Rehbein 2015). Each configuration is limited to a specific field of research but bears family resemblances and links with other configurations so that scientific statements about it are neither singular nor universal but can become more general on the basis of comparison, connection and critique. What we attempt to portray then is the way seemingly similar and historically connected phenomena usually subsumed under the term 'religious' attain different meanings in different contexts. Each of the configurations assigns the religious with different relationships with other fields of the social.

Even though the three configurations studied in this paper have appeared in a historical sequence, they do not correspond to an evolutionary model of history such as Auguste Comte's three stages of humanity. Firstly, all three configurations coexist in a manner that is more 'functional' than historical. Secondly, many other possible and actual configurations can be distinguished from the three that we focus on here. Thirdly, we do not make any value judgments about 'higher' and 'lower', more or less complex forms.

The paper proposes an approach to the religious which combines the agents' perspective with an analytical one. If the religious is present in all kinds of societies and independent of its labeling, what is it different from? This paper begins by re-framing the question in terms which originate from the early days of the study of 'religion': Is animism a religion? We argue that this question points to a particular aspect that joins some of the configurations of what we will, in this paper, call 'the religious'. This question implies a view in which human communities are collectives which link human and non-human beings. This applies to Southeast Asia in particular, where the presence of spirits is not so much framed in terms of transcendence, but in those of social distance and communicative difficulties. Phenomena, which we today call 'religious', have to be understood against this background. Religion in these configurations is thus not necessarily linked to a realm of immaterial transcendence, as in modern European concepts.

Therefore, the first part of this paper, divided into two sections, experimentally adopts the perspective of a virtual animist village in Southeast Asia. Animism here appears as a practical means to integrate humans and non-humans, in particular the dead and the spirits of the land and the territory, into local communities. If there is transcendence in this view, it is articulated as social distance from the boundaries of the village and from communication among living human beings. The second section then addresses the question: what purpose could the adoption of a so-called world religion serve for the village as a specific social formation? This section proposes that adopting a foreign symbolic system of order facilitates the creation of translocal communities by turning the external into the internal while at the same time maintaining that very difference. By organizing itself around a world

religion, a village can conceive of itself as being part of larger entities that are outside and non-social in an animist framework.

The second part of the paper deals with the modern concept of religion in three steps. The first step approaches the difference between Buddhism and animism in Southeast Asia from an angle different from the first part, that of the state and social organization. We try to show that Buddhism was established as an all-encompassing symbolic system, so that if one designates pre-colonial Buddhism as religion, one would refer to the symbolic universe of mainland Southeast Asia and therefore not to any differentiated field of the social like politics, economy etc.. The second step deals with the emergence of the concept of religion. What we have come to call 'religion' is constituted by demarcating a realm of particular powerful, non-human beings. 'Religion' is thus only conceivable by differentiating it from metaphysics and physics, which first took place in the European history of thought. The final step studies the relation between capitalism, science and religion. Even though capitalist society is supposed to be rational and founded on science, science itself remains either without foundation or anchored in forms of the religious. Religion thus produces and answers important questions which capitalism and science cannot address. For these reasons, forms of the religious will persist.

THE ANIMIST VILLAGE AS VIEWPOINT

Animism belongs to the earliest theoretical terms peculiar to social anthropology and is specifically associated with the evolutionist approach of Edward Burnett Tylor (1958; first published in 1871). In its original formulation, it denoted the "belief in spiritual beings" (Tylor 1958, 8), be they parts of persons (souls) or independent immaterial beings (spirits). As such, animism did not only represent a primordial form of religion for Tylor, but the foundation of all religion (1958, 86). Later, however, the term came to be used not as a particular quality of, but a certain kind of religion, characteristic for 'primitive', non-scriptural or non-state cultures. As such, it lost its theoretical appeal within anthropology, as the category was too broad, encompassing everything that did not look like doctrinal, scripturalized 'world religion'.

However, in Southeast Asian studies, 'animism' as a residual category survived the decline of evolutionist theories. Here, it denoted the pertinent Other of world religions in Southeast Asia, including any beliefs in spirits or life-forces that coexist with the doctrinal, scriptural traditions (e.g. Condominas 1975, 257; Geertz 1964; Ong 1988, 30; Spiro 1967, 241-242). Thus, it was not so much animism by itself that was subject to theorizing but the relationship between it and the respective world religion. The relationship has been variously described as between localization and globalization, philosophy and practice, as two systems or one system with different fields, as tense or harmonious, or as transformative dialectic (e.g. Holt 2009, 233; Kirsch 1977; Leach 1968; Spiro 1967; Tambiah 1970; Zago 1972, 383).

The recent revival of animism as a theoretical concept in its own right (Descola 2013; Harvey 2013; Ingold 2006; Århem and Sprenger 2016) makes it possible to once again use it in a more analytic framework. For the present context, we choose it to describe the type of religious configuration that pertains to the very local level—relationships with dead ancestors, spirits of the landscape, life-forces which are tapped for fertility, and so on. Animism is thus about the de-centering of living humans as the sole kind of persons and the expansion of life beyond its biological definition.

This amounts to a reversal of the image of animism in earlier studies of Southeast Asia. What appeared as a residual category from a point of view that prioritizes world religions now becomes a perspective in its own right. A theoretical move which Viveiros de Castro has called "experiencing a form of imagination" (Viveiros des Castro 2013, 484) allows looking at religion from the vantage point of a localized context, a virtual animist village. This virtual village is not situated in the past but is rather an ideal model whose aspects can be found in a multitude of varieties in both historical and current social formations in Southeast Asia. These aspects emerge when world religion, state impact or globalized markets meet resilience on the local level. The virtual village is a model for describing the features of this construction of locality within a field of translocal cultural differences. However, many real villages share several structural features with the virtual village, which necessitates references to the ethnographic literature.

Using the animist village in a multicultural environment as an axiom, one can ask: What would religion be from this point of view? The argument thus proceeds from the animist village to historical states and world religions. This might look at times like conjectural history, but it is supposed to be read as a model that takes account of expanding scales of social distance and emerging differentiation step-by-step. Moving from village to state to the world is, in the following argument, not simply a historical development, but an elongation of the gaze. It is not supposed to be an evolutionary step, but rather a way to conceptualize the ongoing relationship between the religious aspects of the local and the translocal.

The animist perspective could therefore be found even in villages which identify as Buddhist, Muslim or Christian. As mentioned above, Southeast Asian religions often appear as systems which combine

world religions and local relations with life-forces and spirits, both in scholarly accounts and in the self-descriptions of Southeast Asians. What is world religion and what is local 'animism' varies greatly in different places in Southeast Asia. Thus, it does not make sense to treat the two (or sometimes more) terms as categories, as labeled boxes, which contain certain things and not others. There is an ongoing tension between local tradition and world religion, as the classification of many rituals and ideas is contested and shifting. Therefore, the distinction between them is a constitutive relationship which varies in two respects: first, in the content that is related by it—i.e. when certain ideas or practices are variously classified as animism or world religion, also by locals themselves—and secondly, by its form—antagonistic, complementary, hierarchical, etc. Therefore, we propose that the world religion-animism distinction is a useful approach to describe the dynamics of Southeast Asian religious production. Indeed, such dualisms are organized in a way that makes them productive of further differences and variations.

The background for the animist village perspective is that human communities are collectives which link human and non-human beings together. A village of the non-Buddhist Rmeet people in upland Laos, as studied by Sprenger, does not just consist of humans, but also contains spirits, animals and plants. It is a human community insofar as it is its human members who join the collective together. They are providing animals for sacrifices to the spirits, who, in their turn, assert the health and fertility of humans and plants. Animals and plants feed the humans, although the humans feed both of them as well, including their spiritual aspects, like the spirit of rice.

Spirits, then, are beings with whom humans have relationships of communication and exchange. Spirits do not inhabit a different world, although they might perceive certain beings differently than living humans do, in a manner comparable to Amerindian perspectivism, where spirits see living humans as game animals (Viveiros de Castro 1998). But relationships with spirits are different from those with living human villagers, as spirits are often difficult to understand and hard to perceive. Southeast Asia abounds with tales about the initial conviviality of humans and spirits: They lived in the same village and in the same house. However, they quarreled for one reason or another and decided to go separate ways (Schefold 1990, 291; Tooker 2012, 100).

Thus, relations with the spirits are at least as much a matter of social distance as one of ontological difference, the former conditioning the latter. Spirits might reveal themselves selectively to humans in the shape of animals, during dreams or trances, even in fully sensually accessible forms. Sensual access regulates social relationships (e.g. Platenkamp 2006). Thus, the 'transcendence' of the spirits does not so much lie in their otherworldliness. Rather, it primarily relates to the sociality of living human beings. Spirits are those beings which are far away socially and hard to communicate with. This they share with other outsiders, and often both relations with spirits and relations with (ethnic) others belong to the same type (Jonsson 2014, 144; McKinley 1976; Sillander 2016).

These restrictions to communication apply to both spirits of the external world as well as ancestral spirits and house spirits that are part of the village community, dwelling in houses or protecting their descendants. While the latter regularly receive gifts of food or libations, mutual communication with them only occurs during particularly marked events, like rituals. What is more, some human beings are closer to spirits than others, like the forest-dwelling Mlabri, the famous "spirits of the yellow leaves", of Thailand and Laos, which were once just as difficult to see as the spirits (Bernatzik 1941). Thus, when some uplanders in Laos first met Westerners and thought they were spirits, they were actually not as far off the mark as it seems from a Western point of view.

The questions then are the following: If animism is 'religious' in a broad sense, what are the differences it produces? And how do these differences link to other differences of importance for the religious in Southeast Asia, in particular states and world religions? This brings in the central semantic, which distinguishes the village from its environment and the specific others within it, the shifting definition of inside and outside. Village identities are often clearly marked in Southeast Asia, by village gates, village spirits, community houses, ritual organization, ritual experts, taboos on trespassing during certain rituals, etc.. Inside and outside is a focal distinction in constructing Southeast Asian socialities, including relationships with non-humans. Both households and villages are often defined in these terms. The inside-outside relationship also structures the non-human community. There are spirits inside the house and outside of it, inside the village and outside of it (e.g. Tooker 2012). Relationships with these beings are among the major means to define what inside and outside are in the first place (Platenkamp 2007). The spirits and the flow of life forces thus define the social entities they animate. The bounding and dissolution of the social follows the trajectories of spirit existence. Ritual and social practice constantly produce social entities like houses, kin groups and villages as 'containers' (Jonsson 2014, 144), both on the level of living humans and on those of life forces and spirits. The containment of life force or the exclusion of dangerous spirits is the central concern of animist sociality in Southeast Asia.

If there is anything like transcendence and immanence from the animist point of view, it refers to such inside-outside relations. On the one hand,

the immanent realm is the one defined by the sociality of living human beings within the village. This also implies specific forms of communicating, in regard to shared language, everyday behavior and ritual. On the other hand, transcendence is a specific form of difficulty in communicating. This is of course a far cry from the type of transcendence posited in the doctrines of most world religions, which turn the differences of social distance in animism into a fairly strict ontological dualism of immanence and transcendence. But the term, as will become clear below, is useful here for stressing the connection between the types of transcendence. The transcendence of world religions is different, but not so much as to upset the entire classificatory system. This is not to deny that the dualisms mentioned before are misleading when applied in Southeast Asia. Religion in this region is indeed organized along categories that can roughly be captured by terms like world religion and localization, localization spanning a range from animism to adapted forms of world religions. Further oppositions, like doctrinal versus practical or orthodoxy versus orthopraxis, resonate with these distinctions in one or the other way.

However, inside and outside, differentiated access to the senses, the living and the dead are just some of the differences that are addressed by animism. Animism in the Southeast Asian sense appears as a way to manage such differences by means of communicating. Communication does not resolve differences, but rather cultivates them (Luhmann 1984). It frames differences in terms of a virtual but necessary relationship of complementarity between sender and receiver. The spirits are different from humans in ways which are quite social. They speak different languages, just as neighbouring groups do. In regard to spirit founder's cults, Richard O'Connor (2003) speaks of a "lingua franca of localization" that enables matching differences of locality with differences of culture. This means that spirits of localities are recognized everywhere, but anywhere these entities need to be addressed somewhat differently, as the spirits of different places, origins and relationships demand different ritual address. This amounts to a local explanation for differences in rituals and taboos between different places and people. Contrary to the unifying tendencies of world religions, this type of animism does not provide a set of standardized ritual rules but a set of concepts which allows to legitimate different ritual rules. Local and cultural differences thus do not call into question the basic tenets of this type of animism. The same goes for ancestral spirits whose social structure corresponds to the structure of village society. Different kin groups are defined by their relationship to their respective ancestors (e.g. Barraud 1990). Therefore, differences of taboo, ritual etc. between groups which are defined by their relationships with specific (ancestral) spirits can be explained in these terms. Put overtly simple, animism serves to accommodate differences while world religion strives for unification.

Animism thus produces and manages differences in society, place and cosmos. All these differences are framed by a shared idiom of life and personhood, which enables communication, (ritual) address, exchange, and hierarchy. In that sense, animism is neither a specific religion nor is it specifically religious in the Western sense of a world view. However, like the Western concept of religion, it is a symbolically mediated practice that integrates humans and non-humans.

RELIGION FROM AN ANIMIST PERSPECTIVE

But if animism manages differences so comprehensively, how does it reach its limits in Southeast Asia? Why do the people practicing it often seem to feel it is insufficient and in need of augmentation by world religions which stress unity and identity over the multitude of differences and alterities? Now there is a rather obvious relationship between world religions and the larger communities beyond the village. World religions appear as means to create states and other supralocal communities. We suggest that, seen from the Southeast Asian village, world religion is management of difference as well, but on a different scale, in a different quality—a scale and quality that are nevertheless plausible and connective to animism and the lingua franca of localization.

This is because the semantics of inside and outside coexist with idioms of centralization and hierarchy. Inside and outside frame the potential to centralize, and indeed, villages or houses are often conceived as the source and center of an orderly, fertile sociality. Centrality and boundedness are conditions for the reproduction of human and non-human life. But this model does not only refer to the local level of households and villages. It also shapes (pre-modern) kingdoms and larger alliances of villages, like 'galactic polities' (Tambiah 1985). As of today, it is impossible to say if the models of the centre-periphery dichotomy that permeate Southeast Asian socialities emerged from the village level or from pre-modern kingdoms. But we can say that the models are pervasive (Heine-Geldern 1942; Sprenger 2008). In the trade of models between upland and lowland, villages and kingdoms, those structured by centre and periphery are among the most vivid (Sprenger 2015). The question is then, how does the inside-outside distinction accommodate the centre-periphery distinction, when the centre is beyond the boundaries of the inside?

There are important differences between centrality on the level of kingdoms and states and that of villages and houses. At the very least, the

immediacy of day-to-day interaction is replaced by the 'imagined communities' of settlements interspersed with stretches of forest and wilderness (Anderson 1991). Social distance on the kingdom/state level does not indicate strangeness or spirit status, as in village animism. Moreover, the coexistence of larger and smaller, more local and more encompassing centres requires the encompassed ones to perceive themselves as peripheries, at least in certain contexts. This directly contradicts the principle of inside-outside distinctions as productive of human sociality. How do villages account for their own sociality when they need to see themselves as the periphery of remote kingdoms and states? A different system of identification and containment is thus needed in order to create notions of inside and outside on the level of larger groups. This system needs to address the paradox that something clearly external has to be internal at the same time—a social entity outside the village being the source of its belonging and identity.

One plausible and historically available way to solve this paradox is to adopt a foreign system of order. This system would be marked as external and non-local, while at the same time ordering and managing local differences. For a supralocal entity like a kingdom or state, a foreign religion is more than just a signal of cultural splendor and luxury, as James Scott (2009) surmised. It creates a level of socio-cosmic integration on which an external entity like a different village or town falls within the range of one's own internality. The foreignness of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity enables communities and households which adopt the respective religion to define other, remote communities as 'inside' in specific contexts.

For this reason, adopting foreign religions has always been a profoundly political act in Southeast Asia, or, equally, state building has been a religious act. Numerous early states were able to stabilize themselves only by becoming institutions of such imported systems of order. Of course, the ways by which foreign religions were adopted depended on very diverse processes. But again, the question of this section is, why would animists take up world religions in the first place? This implies the question, what is the difference between a village and a state from the point of view of the animist village. Aside from historical contingencies, we suggest, the problems which the adoption of foreign systems addressed were similar.

We exemplify this ongoing relationship between village and state by the pre-modern kingdoms of the mainland. These polities employed different ways of reproducing inside and outside, center and periphery that related differently to the village level. As Lehman (2003) suggests, two different models were used, one pluralist and Brahman, and one monist and Buddhist. The pluralist model integrated local spirits into the idiom of the Hindu pantheon with its potentially endless differentiation of gods in local guise. This retained the dynamics of an oscillation of centre and periphery, the coagulation and dissolution of allied villages and centres. Villages or smaller centres could easily stress their autonomy from a superior centre and their cosmological containment on the basis of their identification with one of the Brahman gods. Brahmanism was thus a version of the animist differentiation of territories and villages, and a transitory model in the adoption of world religions.

The other possibility, offered by Buddhism, was a monism in which the king was not linked with one among many gods but appeared as the single protector of an institution that represented the world order. Until the twentieth century, the Buddhist monkhood provided the only comprehensive institution that linked the state to the villages (Matthews 1999, 30; Swearer 1999, 201). The price for this was an increased distance of religion from daily life. While Brahmanism was translatable into the idiom of animist differentiation, Buddhism appears as a means to transcend it, as it, at least doctrinally, transcends every worldly difference.

This distance is then a transformation of the kind of transcendence found in animism. If animism conceives of transcendent levels of sociality in relation to the localized communities of living humans, the adopted religions transcend the level of animist integration. Adopted foreign religions, in turn, allow for an internal distinction between themselves and local animism on the one hand and an external distinction between the autochthonous and the foreign on the other. However, while animism allows shifting the boundary between inside and outside according to context—e.g. from house to village—foreign world religions enable the conception of the external as internal within the same context. Foreign systems operate within the village context and centralize it, the Buddhist temple being the centre of the village in terms of value and order. At the same time, they maintain their foreignness with the teachings and the monks' lineages going back to India, a faraway, almost imaginary realm for most Southeast Asians who refer to it. Within this framework, kingdoms, states and other supralocal entities can be established as forms by which inside and outside, as well as centre and periphery can be articulated. By combining centre/periphery and inside/outside—those differences which are constitutive of many Southeast Asian communities—with foreign religions, larger social entities can be legitimized. The most prominent mythical figure embodying this principle is the stranger king, who brings (world) religion and marries a local woman or spirit in order to create the kingdom (Sahlins 2008).

This provides the framework for the constant production of the dualisms of local and global, orthodoxy and orthopraxis, doctrine and practice,

which spawned both Southeast Asian self-perceptions as well as scholarly discourse. By organizing and centralizing the inside by means of the outside, the content and applicability of the inside-outside relation becomes subject to endless variation. For this reason, globalized and doctrinal versions of world religion time and again attempt to exert pressure on both animism and their own localized versions in Southeast Asia. Localized versions of world religions serve to manage differences on a regional scale, where upland and lowland, town and country, state and village provide the major social differences—aside from the differences between gods, spirits and life-forces. Globalized versions that often appear as reformist movements in contrast stress higher degrees of transcendence and a greater distance from concerns that would otherwise be considered the responsibilities of the spirits. This call for greater transcendence makes world religion more applicable and more binding for believers anywhere, regardless of their local affiliations. Here, different scales of a transcendence/immanence distinction are in conflict.

In spite of this, local traditions and animism demonstrate considerable resilience (Endres and Lauser 2011). The relation between local differences, as managed by animism, and the transcendence of world religions remains a matter of playing with concepts. Concepts from local animisms jump scales in ways that were perfected by world religions. Animisms can rise to manage differences on the state level that can be supralocal, defining the kingdom, but are not universal, as the royally sanctioned Burmese nat pantheon (Spiro 1967). On the other hand, world religions are forced into the service of animist goals like the protection of single villagers which are not religious experts at all, and may even be criminals (Crosby 2014, 46; Tannenbaum 1987).

The nexus of inside and outside, transcendence and immanence articulated in terms of human/non human sociality is thus the family resemblance which draws local animism and the adoption of foreign religions into the category of 'religion'. However, in regard to world religion and the state and the diversity of current religious practice, other means of connecting the categories need to be employed.

BUDDHISM IN PRE-COLONIAL SOUTHEAST ASIA

Following Eisenstadt's (1996) ideas about the axial age, all organized states seem to have developed or adopted an organized religion. This was not a predetermined evolution but the particular shape that the religious took was likely to emerge once organized states had come into being. On the intellectual level, we have argued with regard to mainland Southeast Asia that the animist world-view can hardly unite different collectives into a single entity, something which an organized religion is capable of doing. On the social level, it is difficult for an animist society to centralize power over these collectives in such a way that the centre mediates between the human and the non-human world. Finally, in political terms, animism would have problems legitimizing a centralized power such as a prince or a king.

In the axial age, representatives of local elites in many states, such as India and China, developed ideas to mediate between the non-human and the human world in a consistent manner which included human collectives different from one's own and possibly extended to all humans or even beings. The world was increasingly unified in these interpretations. The interpretations attempted to find a logic underneath or behind the entire world. This logic was supposed to determine the workings of the human and the non-human world. It was also supposed to be the foundation of the social order and placed certain moral demands on the members of society and by implication on all human beings.

These interpretations generated by members of local elites made it possible to construct large organizations, especially monastic orders. Many of them were initially at odds with the local rulers, but some of them were integrated into the state apparatus.

Gautama or the Buddha was concerned with individual salvation (Bechert 2000, 414). He developed an intellectual universe that answers a lot of philosophical and soteriological questions but does not aim at the organization of society. However, his ideas did not remain an affair of ideas. His teachings had an impact on society when his disciples gathered and organized as a monastic order. When this order was recognized by political authorities—especially the Maurya emperor Ashoka—organized hierarchically, and used to integrate, control and discipline the population, Buddhism emerged as a so-called 'world religion' spreading beyond the Mauryan empire (Smith 1965). The order was neither part of the ruling court nor a people's movement but an educated group, which Bechert (2000, 423) even called a 'social stratum'. It became an integral component of the political architecture dominated by a religiously legitimized ruler (Zago 1972, 40; Grabowsky 2004).

In Southeast Asia, rulers adopted interpretations developed in India and formed organizations to manage the interpretations (Jacques 1979). These interpretations were first spread in connection with trade. There was constant communication across Asia that comprised elements of Hindu 'religions', Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism as well as other ideas. Ashoka's missions spread Theravada to Southeast Asia (Smith 1965, 11). It was firmly anchored in mainland Southeast Asia in the Mon empire, which helped spread it further across

the region (Bechert 2000, 3). The Tai groups who adopted Theravada Buddhism seem to have been those which were able to subdue or integrate local populations and found their own states (Turton 2000; Wyatt 1982, 37). Those groups who continued to adhere to animism were ultimately dominated by other groups.

Buddhist cosmology was capable of centralizing the human world and integrating the entire universe. The ruler was elevated to the status of a centre of the world, possibly subordinated to a more powerful ruler in a superior centre, with the supreme ruler in the ultimate centre (Tambiah 1978, 113). The supreme ruler was a mediator between the superior powers beyond the world and the human realm. Mount Meru was supposed to be the symbolic centre of the world, and for this reason the king had to reside on Mount Meru. Rulers in Southeast Asia actually resided either on a mountain, in a compound at the highest temple or in a central palace (Heine-Geldern 1942). As mentioned before, the polity was sustained as one component of a cosmological system. The king ensured this integration, which was managed by the religious specialists (Tambiah 1978, 114).

The system interpreting the relations between the human and the non-human, at this point, moved beyond the world of animism.

> *"My central thesis is that the strain to identify the Buddhist religion with the polity, and the Buddhist polity in turn with the society were deep structure tendencies in the Buddhist kingdoms of Southeast Asia."*
>
> *Tambiah 1978, 112*

A transcendent realm of being emerged, not only beyond humans but also beyond non-humans: the realm of the ultimate God, of higher powers, of the laws of the universe, of the unintelligible. This is the barely accessible hardly accessible sphere of the sacred, which could only be interpreted and attained by a special group of people: by initiating them, by removing them from everyday life and by imbuing them with special powers. In Southeast Asia, many kings made themselves the ultimate mediators between the transcendent and the immanent (Swearer 1995, 73).

The Buddhist universe did not entirely obliterate animist systems, however. There were different blends and oppositions of Buddhism and animism in varying configurations. In case of conflict, Buddhism usually prevailed because of its association with an all-encompassing cosmology and its propagation by a powerful ruler, both of which animism lacked (Terwiel 1975). Besides this hierarchy, however, the religious was a hybrid of various forms of animism and Indian 'religions'. The Theravada Buddhism constructed in sacred texts, and especially by Europeans interpreting these texts, did not exist in real life (Pattana 2005, 462).

The creation of a distinction between the unified immanent world and the transcendent realm did not constitute what we would call 'religion' today because this system comprised everything. The same system of thought and action pertained to all types of being. There was no difference in logic between the immanent and the transcendent. The same specialists were in charge of the interpretation of both, since the principles of the transcendent world influenced or even determined the immanent world. Knowledge was anchored in religious texts and the ultimate goal of any practice was religiously motivated (Zago 1972, 52). Only their mediation by trained specialists ensured the proper functioning of society and legitimized the ultimate power of the centre. It does not make sense to call phenomena like Buddhism in Southeast Asia 'religions' in the Western sense because they had no other, no form of non-religion. Even the relation with animist practices and ideas is not mutually exclusive, but part of the same social world. That means that either everything or nothing was religion. The symbolic systems did draw a line between the inner and the otherworldly, but they did not distinguish between their respective interpretations. One system of thought was in charge of managing both.

RELIGION AS A DIFFERENTIATED SYSTEM

Greek culture began to develop a distinction between systems that interpreted the immanent and those that referred to the transcendent. Disciplines of scientific thought were delimited from religion. Sciences like metaphysics and physics were to investigate the non-human world, while politics and ethics referred to the human world. They could be carried out independently of the transcendent realm. However, the main distinction was still between human and non-human collectives. A common logic and a supreme power regulating both were not part of the Greek world-view (Eisenstadt 1996).

The common logic was the core of what we call world religions today. Christianity postulated a common logic and a supreme power. At the same time, Christianity did not distinguish between metaphysics and the transcendent realm to the same degree as the Greeks. The principles of Christian science were determined by religious factors, not the other way around. Equally, the principles of human society were based on the transcendent realm, not the other way around. Only European science, which emerged on the basis of and in opposition to Christianity, really drew a line between the immanent and the transcendent by limiting itself entirely to the immanent, delegating religion to the

transcendent and refusing to see a logical connection between the two. This is when it makes sense to speak of religion in our present sense of the word.

Religion in this more narrowly defined sense deals with the transcendent (or the otherworldly), while science deals with the immanent. This particular epistemological distinction only emerged in modern Europe, while the kinds of transcendence and immanence elaborated above are separated in shared terms of social relations. To claim that other cultures and other times had similar distinctions—because this dividing line exists in reality or because their own distinctions can be reinterpreted in the European framework—is an anachronistic distortion. However, this particular distortion was actually exported to the rest of the world by colonialism. Not only the self-description in terms of religion but also Western science prevails basically everywhere in the world. Today, every culture, every state and every group does have a religion—from its own as well as from an outside perspective. Buddhism and even animism are now called religions in Southeast Asia, and Tylor's invention of 'animism' as a term for those who do not seem to have a religion importantly contributed to the extension of 'religion'. These, however, have to be interpreted not in the framework of the pre-colonial world but in that of a globalized capitalism.

Capitalism is supposed to be able to do without religion. In the case of European capitalism, Christianity gave way to science, which historically and systematically became the foundation of the capitalist economic system and democracy. The natural science created by Galileo, Burton and Descartes, the political science created by Hobbes and Rousseau as well as the first capitalist democracies were explicitly founded on the notion of God. They used Christian theology to link God with the most fundamental principles of their explanation of the world. It was not possible to cast doubt on these principles or to argue beyond them from within the system.

The development from Augustine to Thomas to Descartes and Weber was completed in the concept of 'religion' as the belief in transcendence as opposed to science, which deals with immanence, the world as we see it. In the European capitalisms, the Protestant concept of religion was generalized: religion is unmediated individual belief, all individuals are equal, and everyday practice is guided by a religiously inspired ethic. Religion is no longer a social practice that unifies and defines a larger community and tradition. Following Weber (1978), one might call Protestantism the capitalist religion. It certainly represents the bourgeois revolution. Any religion in a capitalist democracy might therefore be referred to as Protestant in type, as even Catholicism was subjected to a bourgeois revolution in the wake of the Thirty Years War.

Gombrich and Obeyesekere have coined the term 'Protestant Buddhism' against this background.

> *"Traditional Buddhism rests on recognizing that there are two sets of values, those of life in the world and those higher ones of leaving it. Protestantism is characterized by rejecting any such hierarchy: the same values are considered applicable to all people in all circumstances."*
>
> Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988, 273

Protestant Buddhism, according to these authors, developed in Sri Lanka during British occupation in the 19th century in reaction to British Protestantism and became prevalent in the 20th century (1988, 9). Tambiah (1978, 120) makes a similar point by observing a bureaucratization of the Thai Buddhist order in the 20th century.

All authors, as mentioned above, observe a persistence of animism, either in hybrid forms or contrasting popular animism with upper class Buddhism. Even though the nationalist project in all Buddhist countries attempts to construct a pure form of authentic, national religion, social life does not conform to this project (Zago 1972, 387). Protestant Buddhism is reckoned to be a project of the past. It seems to be crushed between 'impure' forms of the religious and capitalist secularization.

From the perspective of Western science and capitalism, anything that cannot be integrated into their logic has to be denied or delegated to the realm of 'religion' (or superstition). This reminds one of the interpretation of capitalism advanced by Horkheimer and Adorno (1981). According to them, the historical tendency of rationalization discovered by Weber aims at integrating everything into a rational system and leaving nothing outside. As it cannot rationally explain itself and keeps on creating new outsides, the irrationality of religion remains part of the ever more rational system (Horkheimer and Adorno 1981, 16). However, this teleology seems to lack any necessity. The 'irrational' is systematically and historically presupposed by Western science and capitalism. Even though science and capitalism aim at the same all-encompassing symbolic universe that characterized early Buddhism, they remain logically incomplete. This can either be overcome, or be neglected or form an openly recognized foundation of both science and capitalism. Critical science, as suggested by Horkheimer and Adorno themselves, would exemplify the first option, most European democracies would embody the second option and the US would be an illustration of the third option.

Another option is the interpretation of capitalism as a functional equivalent of religion. In an unpublished but posthumously very influential fragment, Walter Benjamin suggests interpreting capitalism as a new form of religion:

> *"Capitalism has to be regarded as a religion, i.e. capitalism serves to satisfy the same worries, pains and uneasiness to which in former times the so-called religions used to give answers."*
>
> *Benjamin 1991, 100; our translation*

It is not, as Weber claimed, founded on a religious ethos but it is a religious entity in itself. Protestantism was not the condition for the development of capitalism but it was transformed into capitalism itself (2011). More specifically, Benjamin regards capitalism as a religion of permanent cult and distinguishes it from earlier forms of religion by its creation of guilt (which in German is the same word as 'debt') instead of salvation. Capitalism's goal and endpoint is not the transcendence toward God but the complete humanization of God, not the improvement of being but its utter destruction.

If we think of critical theory since Marx or of capitalism's contemporary institutions, several parallels between Christianity and capitalism are obvious. In principle, one could try to interpret money as the equivalent of God, financial capitalists as its priests, consumption as its body of rituals, economics as its theology and getting rich as the meaning of life. However, if one recalls Marx's and Weber's arguments a bit more precisely, the parallel becomes less convincing. Both argued that capitalism will do away with religion, it will demystify the world, replace belief with rationality and render religious institutions superfluous. Capitalism's main characteristic, viewed from this perspective, is precisely that it is not religion. We would agree with Marx and Weber that capitalism and science are neither religions nor functional equivalents of religion. However, they presuppose Christianity historically and systematically. This is not a logical necessity but it historically happened to be this way due to the specific form science took with Descartes and the way it became a foundation of capitalism.

RELIGION AND CAPITALISM TODAY

For the classics of the social sciences, it was evident and confirmed by everyday observation that capitalism diminishes the role and status of religion in society. Prominent examples of 'modernization' in the past decades have, however, cast doubt on the claim that religion and modernization are opposed to one another. Neither in the US nor in Southeast Asia can we observe the all-encompassing process of 'rationalization' or devaluation of 'religion'. We are witnessing a 'return of religions' (Riesebrodt 2000) that contradicts any interpretation based on Marx and Weber. Many of the returning 'religions' are neither very rational nor constricted to a social sub-system nor very private nor a component of capitalism. This observation has led Talal Asad (2003, 1) to claim that there is only one certainty concerning the relation between modernization and religion: The relevance of religion does not decrease. If this is true, we have to revisit the relation between rationalization, capitalism and religion.

Max Weber's position on rationalization was ambivalent. The strong interpretation of Weber's thesis actually claims that 'religion' as an instrument of rationalization has to give way to more efficient instruments in modern societies, especially science. A weaker interpretation suggests that 'religion' cedes to permeate all aspects of society and becomes one realm or system next to a host of others (Hefner 1998). According to the weakest interpretation, 'religion' becomes a matter of private faith in a highly differentiated society, which does not have a common stock of meaning any more (Berger 1980). All three interpretations can be supported by empirical material.

They are rooted in different components of social structure (Rehbein 2011). The strong interpretation is true for social groups employed in the capitalist division of labour. These groups seem to give up religion in favour of science. The weak interpretation could refer to the workings of the state. And elites seem to be proof of the weakest interpretation. However, the three cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, all three interpretations are true and false at the same time. They are certainly false with regard to the disappearance of religion. Animism and Buddhism persist in those social groups that are not integrated into the capitalist division of labour but they also reappear in firmly 'modernized' groups, especially among Southeast Asian capitalists (Rehbein 2011). And they persist, as we have just argued, as objects of nationalism, as objects of science and as complements of science. It is likely that they continue to persist but the distinction between human and non-human, between immanent and transcendent and between science and religion will certainly be re-interpreted and superseded by new distinctions.

Contemporary capitalism cannot legitimize itself, in spite of all attempts to install the market as the ultimate foundation of society. It has to be based on a cosmology that integrates humans and non-humans or on an external justification. In the first case, Benjamin would be right with his interpretation of capitalism as 'religion'. There would be no real difference between capitalism and religion. Even the specific definition used by Riesebrodt (2000, 40) to differentiate religion from other phenomena pointing to the role of superhuman powers could be extended to the superhuman powers of the markets. In the second case, Weber's genealogy of capitalism out of Protestantism would still be valid today. We would still need the belief in the divine value of making money to justify our capitalist actions. Both interpretations are partially

correct but too imprecise. It has been remarked by both Benjamin and Weber that Western capitalism as a symbolic system is founded on science and not on 'religion'. Even if contemporary capitalism has structural and functional similarities with 'religion' and even if a religious ethic was necessary for society to adopt capitalism, the relevance of science cannot be neglected.

Beyond the important role of Western science and the religious in contemporary capitalist practice, the patterns of action incorporated by each of us have a religious foundation, as Weber has shown. Even the utterly non-religious values of contemporary capitalism like success, wealth and consumption have a religious foundation. They developed out of a Christian culture. But the point here is not that they have their Weberian origin in Protestantism, the point rather is that they cannot be entirely justified within the symbolic universe of contemporary capitalism. The liberal tradition in economics from Smith to Friedman has tried to attribute them to a universal, timeless human nature but even if we believe in the notorious selfish beast, we would still lack a reason to unleash its nature. We need a hierarchy of values (Rehbein and Souza 2014).

This moral hierarchy has its origins in the protestant and the scientific transformations of the Christian tradition. There is no rational justification for this hierarchy, just as there is no acknowledgement of an inherent inequality in capitalist societies. It remains invisible and irrational. Any personal 'failure', such as poverty or a humiliating profession, and any 'success' in contemporary capitalism is justified on the basis of the meritocratic myth, which in turn cannot explain itself. There is no rational argument for competition and success, for the unmediated link between success and social position, for the symbolic domination of the markets and for an individualist ethic. Milton Friedman (1962, 33) tries to legitimize neoliberalism by declaring that 'individual freedom' is the highest possible value—but the justification for this value is his personal 'belief' and a definition of freedom is lacking in his work. The fantastic constructions of a selfish beast, an egotistic Robinson Crusoe and a homo oeconomicus cannot be a convincing logical and ethical foundation of capitalism.

But religion has also served as the logical foundation for science. Modern European science was founded on the notion of God. Science's claim to truth made it necessary to find a solid foundation for human knowledge. For Descartes (1986), this was the Christian notion of God: God was supposed to have created the world in such a way that human beings could know it—otherwise, all constructs of the mind, i.e. science, would be an illusion. God as the ultimate being in turn required no further foundation.

Even Max Weber (1965) has acknowledged that science is somewhat arbitrary if it does not have a solid foundation. However, he could not find the foundation of science in Christianity any more. Weber was ready to draw the consequence and to accept that science has no further foundation. To him, there was no ultimate foundation of science but to opt for science is nothing more than a personal 'decision'. This argument illustrates the systematically incomplete character of science. Of course, it is only evident to a few scientists and philosophers. It does not prove that all of us need religion in order to believe in science, even though the practice of science has penetrated all aspects of contemporary life. Just like capitalism, science could remain without foundation and be simply a matter of individual decision.

This would be acceptable if science and capitalism were able to answer the most important human questions. Against the background of European science and religion, Kant (1956, A 805) defined the most pressing human issues as rules for action, boundaries of knowledge and hope. At this point, the establishment of a difference between science and religion brought such spiritual needs as the subject of religion into the foreground. Religion became a specific field of thought and action that would cease to define social or cosmological structures, but rather focus on existential questions of the individual, like the meaning of life or individual death. When science cut the link between the transcendent and the immanent, the moral foundation of the social order was lost as well. It is not clear what to turn to in order to guide our actions. We could turn to biology to know what to eat or to psychology to know how to avoid depression. But we have no science to answer Kant's questions, which arise from the distinction between science and religion: to tell us how to live, to give us a foundation of truth and to inform us what to expect in life and death. It is therefore likely that contemporary capitalist society will maintain a religion in this narrow European sense.

Two social tendencies support the persistence of the religious in Mainland Southeast Asia (Rehbein 2011). Both are related to the important role that Buddhism has played in the organization of the state. The first tendency is religious practice. Southeast Asian nation states draw on their Buddhist heritage for the purposes of nationalism and the construction of a national culture. Groups, which are firmly anchored in the capitalist division of labour, are part of these endeavours. Business-people seem to increase their participation in religious rituals rather than to decrease it. Just as science does not cater to all spiritual needs and necessities, it contributes little to the moral aspects and communal traditions of everyday life. From private magic rituals to community meetings in the monastery, many parts of a Southeast Asian life are linked to the religious.

The second tendency of the religious, which opposes disenchantment, is the intellectual

preoccupation with religion. Religious studies as well as political agendas deal with the Buddhist heritage in mainland Southeast Asia. Knowledge is accumulated and a Buddhist religion constructed to a degree that would have been impossible before colonial times. This also applies only to certain historical groups but it is a powerful current in all societies. Therefore, rationalization also ensures the survival of religion.

CONCLUSION

Three configurations feature in our analysis of the religious in Southeast Asia. Animism manages differences of locality, kinship, and the non-human environment on the local (village) level. In order to integrate centrality beyond the village level, world religions like Buddhism are integrated into the village, constituting a relationship between inside and outside, foreign and local, at its core. This integration of the local and the foreign constitutes the second configuration. In both these configurations, religion as a bounded, functional entity hardly exists, in the sense European discourse defines the term. The third configuration appears when the scale expands once again and globalized markets, concepts of community and state come into play.

In contemporary society, religion is less and less a book religion constructed and supervised by the state or priesthood but increasingly a transnational community. There are Brazilians living in England who have converted to Islam, while some British have moved to the American Southwest in order to be initiated into native American magic. What is tradition, what is modernity, what is book religion, what is folk belief and whose religion is it in these cases? These examples allow us to see that the classic sociological concept of religion refers only to a very brief historical period in the restricted social setting of modern Europe (Knoblauch 2009). Beyond that, the idea of a clearly defined religion is just as misleading as the concept of the nation state. Phenomena like religion do not have geographical borders and binding scriptural definitions. Any religion, just like any culture, is a hybrid (Nederveen Pieterse 2004). There is constant interaction, intermingling, exchange and transformation instead of timeless unities. Still today, from the point of view of the three configurations, Western concepts of religion coexist with others.

Against the background of the link between capitalism and the use of the term religion, Max Weber's idea of rationalization makes sense—not in a descriptive sense but as ideological manoeuvre. It rather points to the attempt to delegate the irrational to religion and religion to the realm of transcendence. This is the process of rationalization analyzed by Horkheimer and Adorno. Rationalization in this sense remains both incomplete and without foundation. It will always be coupled with the religious or the 'irrational'. Science and capitalism could do without the religious today, as they could transform into structures that are not systematically dependent on a religious foundation or they could simply ignore any transcendence. Either of these possibilities may become reality, but it is more likely that society and individuals continue to need the religious for systematic, symbolic and psychosocial reasons.

Furthermore, the religious contributes to any existing regime of domination because it is its symbolic mediation. The religious is not primarily "opium for the masses" (Marx 1953 MEW 1, 378) nor merely a reflection of social structure (Bourdieu 1987). Above all, it is a symbolically mediated practice—not merely a symbolic system and not merely a mirror of practice. It is neither independent of social structures nor can it be reduced to them. It is hard to pin down because it includes both aspects. The religious is part of the symbolic universe, which mediates and sustains the existing social order. It expresses unequal social structures, covers them up by referring to transcendence and legitimizes them by giving reasons for the existing structures. This happens both through incorporation into an ethos of action and through institutionalization.

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COMMENTS ON THE PAPER BY MEMBERS OF THE DORISEA NETWORK

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Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger present three "configurations of the religious" in detail, and note that "many other possible and actual configurations can be distinguished from the three we focus on here" (p. 7). This statement can be read as a sort of arbitrary proposition that there are many other possible configurations yet to be discovered. It can also be read as an invitation to rearrange the proposed elements. In this case, the authors offer a box of bricks, and encourage their colleagues to play with and create their own configurations.

I opt for the latter and will apply some of their construction devices on my field of research, namely the communication with the dead in Western spiritualism and Southeast Asian ghost movies.

Obvious and applicable connections with Rehbein and Sprenger's configurations show the concept of animism as communication of humans with non-human beings, and "as a practical means to integrate humans and non-humans ... into local communities" (p. 7), the question of 'is animism religion?', and the modern concept of religion, especially the relation of capitalism, science and religion. I will use two examples to draw such connections, Western spiritualism in the 19th and early 20th century, and contemporary Southeast Asian ghost movies.

My first example, spiritualism, refers to Western modernity between 1850 and 1920. Although spiritualism emerged from Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture and kept some liturgical features such as Sunday services and hymn singing, it soon detached itself from Christian religion. The ritualized contact with the spirits of the deceased took place on a theatre stage or in private rooms. The audience was predominantly but not exclusively part of the urban bourgeoisie. The popularity of spiritualism in the United States and all over Europe (and even Japan) also contributed to the creation of a translocal and transnational community. The trance medium on stage contacted ancestor spirits of some of the attendees, historical entities such as Napoleon, Beethoven, Shakespeare, or mythic figures such as Egyptian kings, (North American) Indians, sages from Roman and Greek antiquity and the mystic East. This kind of communication with the spirits of the dead functioned as a practical means to integrate the dead into the community of a new emerging class, the bourgeoisie. This new class whose members attended spiritualist sessions needed the contact with highly esteemed ancestors as a source of moral protection and collective identity building. Thus, the spirits of the dead moulded the bourgeois spirit. Looked at that way, Western spiritualism resembles the configuration of Southeast Asian animism as outlined in the text by Sprenger and Rehbein, and since spiritualism deals with the dead and afterworld, managing transcendence and immanence as well as human/non-human sociality, one would not hesitate to place this sort of Western animism in the realm of 'the religious'.

On closer inspection, however, we detect discrepancies. Prominent spiritualists and the majority of the adherents articulated staunch church criticism and distanced themselves from Christian religion and 'the religious' in general. They considered spiritualism as a practical means to gain knowledge of the afterworld. Spiritualism was understood as the science of communication with the dead (Auerbach 2004, 282). Learned societies (of psychic research, for example) were founded and natural-scientific methods applied to achieve insights into the 'realm beyond' and prove the immortality of the human soul (Conrad 1999; Sawicki 2002). Spiritualism was for many a rational endeavor, and leading spiritualists (in Germany) wholeheartedly embraced Late Enlightenment philosophy (Cyranka 2008). The scientific search for superior knowledge corresponded with an obsession with new media (e.g. telegraph, telephone, photography) to facilitate communication with the dead and to document this communication (Sconce 2000). The actual communication with ghosts took place on stage and was inseparably linked to the modern spheres of entertainment, spectacle, and show business (Natale 2013). Spiritualist sessions provided not only superior knowledge of the otherworld but also fun and thrill. The mechanisms of celebrity culture and consumerism sometimes encouraged mediums to deploy trickery, and professional stage magicians exposed trance mediums as impostors.

Spiritualism challenges historians of religion as well as historians of science. Historians of science usually declare spiritualism as pseudo-science (Bohley 2008; Zander 2008), whereas historians of religion try to 'purify' spiritualism. As a result, 'authentic' spiritualism is based on belief in 'real' ghosts and belongs therefore to the realm of the religious (and, of course, not to the scientific). 'Inauthentic' spiritualism is based on fake (or at

least artificial) ghosts and belongs to popular culture and the entertainment industry. The scholarly observation strictly separates science (rationality, knowledge), the 'religious' (irrationality, belief), and popular culture (the sensational, consumerism).

My second example, Southeast Asian ghost movies and their audiences, illustrates further difficulties with such demarcations. Ghost movies, extremely popular all over Southeast Asia, are, of course, products of the capitalist entertainment industry, and cinematic ghosts are not 'real', as every movie-goer knows. Most ghost-movie fans would flatly deny that, for example, the Japanese genre classic Ringu is a movie about religion or a religious movie. Therefore, is seems logical to put ghost movies in the popular culture box and label them as non-religious. The movies narratives, however, comment on the destructive side of capitalist modernity, because "modernity intensifies violation, violence, and the haunting of the dead," as Pattana Kitiarsa put it. Ghost movies "reveal the dark side of urban modernization" (Kitiarsa 2011, 216). Ghost movies convey moral tales. They show that communal solidarity and tradition are threatened and the protagonists always struggle with the task to integrate the demands of the dead into their lives.

Furthermore, ghost movies deal with the human quest for existential meaning: death and what comes after death. What state of afterlife existence can be expected? This question belongs to the spectrum of existential questions for which religions traditionally provide ultimate answers. Ghost movies test such ultimate answers, with the cinema functioning as a laboratory for such plausibility tests. The moviegoers experience the reality of ghosts through their senses. Ghost movies operate most effectively by arousing "somatic modes of attention" (Csordas 1993, 138). Thus, through creeping horror, attacks of sweating, goose bumps, elevated blood pressure and so on, ghost movies provide a sort of bodily knowledge of ghostly presence (e.g. Grodal 2009).

Contemporary Southeast Asian Ghost movies and the Western spiritualism of the 19th and early 20th centuries have substantial similarities. The spiritualist's stage performances and the cinematic performances in ghost movies offer a space for imagination, in which 'as ifs', sceptical popular subjunctivity, can be tested: "What if you were already dead?" The main hypothesis being tested is the question of whether ghosts exist or not, whether there is 'existence' after life or not.

Viewed in this light, spiritualism as well as Southeast Asian ghost movies can be linked to configurations of the religious as elaborated in Sprenger & Rehbein's text. Both forms of communication with the dead are related to the animism configuration but also to important aspects of the modern concept of religion, outlined in the second part of their paper. The examples, however, also show the insufficiency of underlying 'either-or' attributions. The segregation of something 'religious' from science, knowledge, or entertainment is obviously unsustainable. We have to be constantly aware that Christian theology, especially its Protestant version, had tremendous influence on the common and scholarly concept of religion and 'the religious', as Talal Asad (1993) demonstrated. Referring to "the Christianity of Anthropology", Fenella Cannell (2005) rightly argued that anthropologists have reiterated clear-cut Christian divisions between heaven and earth, the human and the divine, immanence and transcendence. Against the background of this somehow 'taken for granted' Christian cosmology, immanent contact with the dead is not intended to be part of authentic religion. Seen from that perspective, spiritualist séances in public theatres and encounters with ghosts in cinemas are abstruse, and such common notions also affect scholarly assessments.

This sheds light on the efforts to conceptualize the category of 'religion' in the information age and under the conditions of 'post-theism', as philosopher Hent de Vries put it:

> *"If religion is, in a sense, everywhere, if 'religion' comes to stand for any relation to others or otherness that does not close itself off in some sameness (or totality, as Levinas would say), then it is also nowhere: no longer directly available as an empirically or conceptually determinable object of study. Paradoxically, then, in the interdisciplinary and analytically ambitious project of contemporary religious studies, 'religion'—formally defined—suffers a fate similar to 'theism' in the classical and modern forms of theology and Religionswissenschaft. Perhaps it should do so more consciously, even deliberately, having nothing to lose but everything to gain."*
>
> *de Vries 2001, 30*

Taking these critiques into consideration, proper configurations which portray spiritualism and ghost movies as forms of the religious have to include technical media, the human body, religious aesthetics, popular culture, the entertainment industry, science, and knowledge concepts. In the end, we have configurations of the religious which are permeated by and dependent on capitalism and science, but equally conditioned by sensational manifestations and very concrete, material dimensions (Meyer and Houtman 2012). This might contradict the statement on page 8: "religion thus produces and answers important questions which capitalism and science cannot address". Can we assign 'the religious' exclusively to the realm of ideas and ultimate questions, excluding media, mediatisation, matter and materiality? Are our questions such as "is animism/spiritualism/a ghost film religion?" fruitless exercises of boundary drawing? Are we not trapped in subtle Protestant notions of what

'religion' really is? Or does the proposed concept of configuration provide additional epistemological values and insights by transgressing boundary drawing? Are configurations snapshot-like models or Weberian ideal types? How, then, can the important aspect of the 'dynamics' of religion in Southeast Asia be addressed?

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The article by Rehbein & Sprenger opens an intriguing and inspiring perspective for our thinking on the religious and on religion. From their perspective, the religious is constituted by relating spiritual transcendence with the immanence of living human beings and the ways this transcendence and immanence are mediated practically by human actors. Depending on specific ontologies and epistemologies, these forms of transcendence and immanence can be related, mediated and therefore mutually constituted differently resulting in historical contingent configurations. Against this background, the authors explicate three specific configurations of the religious: (1.) animism, characterized by an all-encompassing socially defined immanent spiritual transcendence, (2.) pre-colonial Buddhism, characterized by an all-encompassing ontologically defined immanent spiritual transcendence, and (3.) contemporary religious configurations, characterized by a dualistically radicalized transcendence constituted by an ontological and epistemological differentiation of a non-spiritual immanence and an absolute spiritual transcendence. It is only the latter configuration Rehbein & Sprenger consider to be 'religion' in the strict sense of the term. Rehbein & Sprenger relate these configurations to the practical functions of these configurations in constituting sociality and hierarchy and in endowing socio-political and socio-economic orders with meaning and legitimation. They demonstrate this in their discussions of religious dynamics such as the adoption of Buddhism by animist actors and the persistence of religion in modern capitalism. Following the various dimensions of the argument, the reader is rewarded with insight into the specific features of the religious as a configuration of transcendence and immanence; into the specific features of the modern Western concept of religion and its possibilities and confinements both as a practical and normative and as an analytical concept; and into the practical functions of the religious. Thereby, Rehbein & Sprenger convincingly demonstrate that the specific features and functions of the religious are not confined to the dimensions of doctrine, organization and social form or access to material, nor to social and symbolic resources and power. These features and functions also have to be searched for in the dimensions of ontology and epistemology as the historically contingent conditions of religious persistence, resilience and change.

This argumentation shows how important it is to reflect on the conditions of the dynamics of the religious on the levels of conceptual logics, ontology and epistemology. At the same time, it raises several questions. One of these questions refers to the possibilities to capture and embrace comprehensively the concrete historical dynamics of the religious and the subjective meaning ascribed to these dynamics by the actors. The argument is to quite an extent formulated in the language of intrumentalization and objectivation of the religious. But how is the 'purpose' of religion (p. 7), its 'being object' (p. 15) or the situation that groups 'have' religion (p. 14) articulated on the level of concrete praxis and subjective meanings of actors? Rehbein & Sprenger develop, for example, a sound argument with regard to the concept of religion as a specifically Western concept. As such, it is characterized not only by a dualistically radicalized configuration of transcendence and immanence, but also by being conceptualized as individual belief. Colonialism and capitalism have globalized this religious configuration with the result that now "every culture, every state and every group does have a religion" (p. 14). But what does 'have' mean exactly here? It is certainly true that the concept of religion in Rehbein's and Sprenger's sense has an enormous impact all over the globe on the politically motivated classifications of religious configurations as well as on the self-understanding of religious configurations becoming 'religionized', so to speak. However, the complex historical processes of 'religionization' cannot be reduced to the ontological and epistemological dimension alone. The concept of religion as a practical normative concept in many contemporary Southeast and East Asian societies is not only informed by a specific configuration of transcendence and immanence and by the specific role of individual belief. Rather, a certain form of authoritative doctrine as well as certain kinds of institutional organization and social form are part of the idea of a religion. It is against this background that many 'religious' people reject a self-designation as having 'a religion'. But if they do not 'have' 'a religion', do they have 'religion' (instead of 'a religion') in the sense that they are (implicitly?) accepting the Western configuration of transcendence and immanence and considering themselves as religious because of 'belief'? If yes, how can we observe how the Western concept of religion is present in every culture, state and group, and how can we find out how this concept and the ontological and epistemological implications it carries are articulated in the individual ways of being religious?

Another intriguing question is the one of why modern societies dominated by capitalism remain religious. It is certainly plausible that Western capitalism can on the one hand function as a symbolic form without religion and that on the other hand this very same capitalism is logically incomplete and in need of an ethical legitimation of some of its core values which can be provided by religion in the narrow, Western sense as conceptualized by Rehbein & Sprenger. However, I am not sure whether this argument works for all Asian societies and for all parts of those societies in the same

convincing manner. Modern, 'secularized' capitalism emerged in a historical situation in the West where the religious was de-secularized and other dimensions of the societal such as the political, the economical and the social were de-sacralized—a process which was propelled not only by secularist forces, but also by religious ones. If we look back to the history of secular modernity in the West, it is interesting to see that the religious was shaping modernity not only as an ideological counterpart. That is, the specific structure of religious configurations and the institutions related to them such as the churches—characterized by specific forms of power relations, dualistic ontologies and control of worship—were also crucial for the trajectories de-sacralization and de-secularization have taken. The possibility of a secular realm of the political, for example, did not only originate in a move to liberate political actors from the authority of the churches, but was also a result of a move taken by the medieval Catholic church to deny the worldly kings sacred kingship in the power struggle known today as the Investiture Controversy (cf. Weinfurter 2006). Further, the control of worship by the Churches can be interpreted as one of the conditions of possibility to de-sacralize history as well as kinship, as political and ancestral figures could not be sacralized outside the official rituals controlled by the churches. In contrast, the cosmological and societal context of capitalism in Asia today is a very different one. Social, political, historical and cosmological dimensions have never been de-sacralized in the same way they have been in Europe or northern America. Political power is related to the spiritual dimension, historical heroes are object of ritual veneration, kinship has a strong sacred dimension mediated by the ancestor worship, materiality is not independent of spiritual causalities. The articulation of capitalism with the everyday practices of the actors has to be understood within this context. Is it possible that the religious does much more for capitalism than an ethical legitimation? Is it possible that capitalism is here more than a quasi-religion or a logically and ethically incomplete phenomenon, but a part of an encompassing cosmology and causality by religious worldviews not willing to de-sacralize both, physical nature and society and looking for causalities beyond the logic of the market?

Another aspect which remains unclear is the meaning of the concept of a 'virtual animist village' (p. 7 and p. 8). Certainly, it is prudent to be cautious in reconstructing animism in its original form as this form of animism seems not to be existent anymore. However, it remains unclear in which sense the 'virtual animist village' is to be understood. Is it a set of essential features of animism shared by all concrete animist villages, a kind of prototype some villages are more similar to than others, an ideal type which is never to be found in its pure form in empirical reality, or a set of characteristics constituting a range of features defining family resemblances?

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The paper is a laudable approach to explain a wide span of more or less interrelated religious phenomena of the Southeast Asian region: animism, Buddhism and contemporary forms of religion, stretching effectively over a time frame of almost 2,000 years. This fact alone makes it seems to be a quite heroic enterprise. Effectively, it was only made thinkable and feasible through the use of an extended range of literature which has seen the light in European-Western countries during the last decades. However, the bibliography seems to reveal that the authors have certain favourites. Anderson, for example, was included with his all-to-known concept on nation and nationalism, while Emerson (1967) and Anthony Smith (2000; 2001), who present other perhaps more elaborate and thought-through answers to the tricky question of what a nation and nationalism are, are missing. Questions of nations and nationalism have been quite controversial for more than 100 years, a period in which the same kind of arguments have been exchanged again and again. Taken this background into consideration, the sweeping and generalizing, though very fashionable statement about the "misleading [...] concept of the nation state" (p. 17) could perhaps have been avoided. Lieberman's (2003) work on the longer historical development of mainland Southeast Asia and its comparison with similar developmental processes in Europe are also conspicuously absent. An explanation could be that the authors have, as each and everyone in the world, cited those authors who support their ideas and omitted others which present alternative ways of thinking.

The authors of the paper are first of all one eminent, well-known German specialist on animism. The second author is a respected specialist on the society and sociology of Laos. The question is: Can we take Laos as an exemplary model which stands for the whole region? The answer could be yes, as far as general terms and underlying processes are to be ascertained. And no, as this tiny country is an exceptional historical case, for instance with its own political history and ethnic make-up.

As one of the two authors has worked extensively on animism, the stress on the reappraisal of animism which, in his opinion, has suffered from a negative image in recent decades, seems very understandable. The authors have convincingly demonstrated the wide role of animism and its role in Southeast Asian society. They have correctly stressed that the role of ancestor and spirit worship in general is not only to explain and rationalize natural phenomena (like birth and death, illness, weather or bad harvest), but also to create and foster social harmony of the village based society. This statement is valid for both so-called tribal or high civilizations alike, and perhaps for the whole of Asia, including India and China. It might have been valid for other cultures as well, such as among the Germanian languages speaking tribes of the early middle ages, to whom a lot of research has been devoted since the 19th century.

If we compare the three above mentioned and treated aspects of animism, (Theravada) Buddhism and capitalism, specialists on the Philippines or on Vietnam, to give only two examples, would perhaps have stressed different aspects as peculiarities of their cultures and religions in comparison to other cultures and societies such as those in Europe, Latin America or China. Focusing on the question of religion in Vietnam, for example, I would like to stress the following factors, which are of course already well known in the literature, but seem to be nevertheless far from wrong or out-dated, especially if regarded in a longer historical period (*longue durée*). These terms are relative tolerance, openness, adaptation, even curiosity. Other important factors include temporary conflicts against the background of state-sanctioned ways and forms of worship, as well as cohabitation, even mingling of different influences of various cultures and religions, and the acquisition of so-called foreign influences to make it a part of the perceived own. That seems to be very Vietnamese and at the same time Southeast Asian as well.

What is typically Vietnamese? Is it the Spirits' cults of the Viet (so heavily penetrated by Taoist mythological motives and practises)? Is it Buddhism in some form which originally came from India, but to the country of the Viet predominantly via China and has been there for more than a millennium, and in more modern times has also come from Taiwan and Japan? How about Catholicism, the religion of almost ten percent of the total population? What are the dissimilarities or similarities between spirit cults and ancestor worship professed by the Japanese (Shinto, "the way of the spirits"), Chinese Taoist and other temples, such as those in the city and village, similar Vietnamese places of worship or highland shamans in village-centred former tribal societies, not to speak about the Nats in Myanmar? These questions alone touch on a wide range of factors which have to be taken into consideration before convincing conclusions 'on the region', or even on one country or one people in it can be drawn. On the one hand, we could admit that this multitude of influences represents an imbroglio of players and counter-veiling tendencies, a mosaic or a kaleidoscope. On the other hand, we could try in our research to dig deeper and explain each and

every phenomenon consistently and coherently on its own merits. That is, "to eat one piece in order to know the whole cart-load", as the Vietnamese proverb says. Historical studies seem to favour the second method of research.

We should also not forget the role of ethnicity in shaping religious affiliations: the Islamic and Brahman Cham versus the Confucianist Viet, the Mahayana Viet versus the Theravada Khmer, lowland Confucianists or Catholics versus highland animists or Protestants etc. Since the 19th century at the latest—age of colonialism—the question of ethnicity has been a fundamental one in shaping religious affiliations.

In their first chapter, the authors reject any concept of an evolutionary historical development, referring to Comte (1968-1970) as an example, but later in the texts they frequently use contested terms like 'capitalism'. As we all know, this is an essentially contested and widely debated term or concept, defined very differently, for instance, by David Ricardo (1819), Karl Marx (2008), Werner Sombart (1955), Max Weber (1934) or Kenneth Galbraith (1952), to name only a few of the most famous authors. Furthermore, it is also a term or concept which most of the authors mentioned above have understood under evolutionary preconditions, that means human society moved consistently onwards towards a stage of their development where the accumulation of capitals became the central way of organising the economy and finally, the society. Even if different authors have named and stressed different reasons for the accumulation of capitals and the emergence of a capitalist class from the 15th to the 18th and 19th centuries (financial or other economic reasons, city versus countryside, trade, industry and technology, social, cultural or even religious factors, for instance), most of these authors have developed their capitalism models against the background of the continuous evolutionary and/or revolutionary developments of European-Western history which undoubtedly had finally reached the stage of 19th century's Western hegemony over the whole world (the Age of Colonialism). Ironically, with the acquisition and unprecedentedly speedy development of so-called Western capitalism in the nations of the former so-called Third World, this political and economic hegemony is about to wane. The outcome is yet uncertain, but certain tendencies can already be observed. A new capitalist world is about to grow, in which the former domination of the nations of Europe, North America, and Australia are going to be merged into a new order, which they can no longer control, manipulate or even structure. This inevitable development will hopefully encourage new discussions on different explanations and models of capitalism, society, and modernity and, among others, religion, not the least with new inputs and fresh ideas from these countries as well.

In this paper, the authors have stressed and largely elaborated on the essentially Weberian, sociological tradition of explanation regarding the relationship between capitalism and religion at the expense of other authors. Sombart (1955), for example, has given a more historically balanced description of the relationship between capitalist economic development and the innovative role of the Catholic Church which has been confirmed by more recent studies on Europe's early medieval period. The 'Protestant myth' can no longer be taken for more than a myth. This again allows us useful comparisons with early forms of capitalist accumulation in outer-European cultures like India, China and Japan, and, last but not least, in some parts of Southeast Asia.

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The authors of this contribution invite the reader to partake in a thought experiment, which aims to grasp "the animist village as view point" and to approach "religion from an animist perspective". Both quotations are chapter headings of their contribution, which by and large aims to answer the following question: "Why would animists take up world religions in the first place?" (p. 11).

As the very term indicates, a thought experiment permits particular liberties to be taken that are prohibited to systematic reasoning. It permits to juxtapose animism and world religion schematically, argue with these categories dualistically and postulate generalizations that are so general that they say nothing specific about Southeast Asia, nor about anywhere else in the world. As previously mentioned, all this pertains to the liberties of a thought experiment. However, it has to allow the question what these mental exercises are intended to be good for. In other words: Has this thought experiment been capable of producing any insights? Has it been successful?

As one can legitimize, or alternatively challenge, a thought experiment only from its results, I will not dwell on the details of its design, but proceed immediately to the core statement of this contribution. According to this statement, animism and world religion are two systems of order that both manage differences, yet do so on different scales. They are contrasted primarily in that "the animist worldview can hardly unite different collectives into a single entity, something which an organized religion is capable of doing" (p. 12). From the viewpoint of the animist village, it is therefore beneficial to connect with the superior system that predominates at the state level, a process that is supposed to explain the adoption of foreign systems of order into the animist world view. This adoption facilitates the creation of translocal communities while at the same time allowing other differences to be retained. The whole procedure is characterized as "centralizing the inside by means of the outside" (p. 12).

The expression just quoted has a particular appeal, but I doubt that it is the result of a thought experiment in the strict sense of the term. It is rather a conventional application of Luhmann's (1984) systems theory and his well-known 'complexity reduction' to the religious dynamics of Southeast Asia, with the result that this dynamics boils down to problems of communication and adaptation between systems of different complexity and range (village vs. state, animism vs. world religion etc.). Such an approach manages without local actors and human experiences, as it is 'this system' that needs to manage differences and address paradoxes (p. 11)—a way of looking at human relations that escapes my understanding and sympathy.

Moreover, I consider the emphasis given to the unifying potential of world religions misleading in view of the ambivalence that has always been one of their crucial features: empires have been both created and destroyed in the name of world religions and nation states, whereas the devastating consequences of civil wars, expulsions and climate change are nowadays topics for world councils, organized by indigenous ('animist') people in Manila or Mumbai. However, I am well aware that objections of this kind do not reach the level of abstraction applied in this thought experiment, which eludes any alignment with historically or ethnographically based arguments. Systems theory has no basis in the empirically observable and describable world. Based on particular premises, it is exclusively the result of the logical operations its inventor has deduced from them, and therefore not to challenge with empirically based arguments. This creates a particular predicament for an empirically acting research network like DORISEA: its expertise resides in the rich ethnographic experiences collected by members of this network in months of empirical research in a variety of areas in Southeast Asia. However, this expertise is largely insignificant when it comes to challenging systems theory, as only other theories are capable of doing this.

This contribution, which at once is the concluding publication of a research network to which I belonged for almost five years, mirrors yet another problem connected with generalizing statements on Southeast Asia. DORISEA's internal discussions had made it clear that many generalizations pertaining to *mainland* Southeast Asia are not applicable to *island* Southeast Asia. Obviously we have not grappled sufficiently with these differences, given the generalizing statements in this concluding publication on animism and world religion.

The relationship between animism and world religion, spirits and gods (to seize two of the prevailing dualisms of this concluding publication), has to be conceptualized differently, at least in those parts of island Southeast Asia where, after all, three DORISEA members had worked ethnographically. What happened on Java, Bali and Lombok since the arrival of the first Europeans in this area was not an adaptation of the animist world view to world religion, however processual and gradual this adaption is conceptualized. It was a conversion from one world religion to another world religion—if there was a conversion at all. Followers of a faith that Western experts had identified as Hindu-Buddhist either became followers of a local form of Islam or, as far as Bali is concerned, held on to their faith, which they referred to as 'Agama Bali', that is, as the religion of Bali. This is not to say that these

religions did not undergo profound transformations and change. However, crucial to the religious dynamics in this region were processes that Clifford Geertz (1973) called 'internal conversion': the stepwise and processual dispensation of these religions from their entrenchment in history, language and culture, i.e. their '*Entweltlichung*', their rationalization and codification according to standards that became globally mandatory for modern religions.

The distinction between gods and spirits (to address the second dominant dualism in this contribution) is likewise unproductive with regard to large parts of island Southeast Asia. What Western ethnographers identify as mountain spirits or water spirits are, in local designations, gods or goddesses (e.g. Batara, Ratu, Dewi). In addition there are spirits (e.g. Djin, Bhuta, Leyak), but the boundaries between them are fluid. Gods and spirits are not to be defined ontologically, but rather in respect of where, when and why they appear and how they behave. Their characteristics are, in other words, not essential but to a large extent contextual. Therefore I doubt that the dualisms under scrutiny here are suitable for theory-building regarding religious dynamics in Southeast Asia.

However, based on the dualisms mentioned above, the authors develop a line of argument that proceeds from a virtual animist village to historical states to world religions (p. 8). This "moving from village to state to the world" (p. 8) leads into the second part of their contribution and finally results in questions of global historical dimensions which resemble an extension of systems theory to world systems theory. The authors draw a line from ancient 'Greek culture' (p. 13) to "religion and capitalism today" (p. 15), referring to Galileo, Burton, Descartes, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Weber, Gombrich, Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Obeyesekere, Tambiah, Talal Asad etc. and, in the conclusion, to Marx' famous equation of religion and opium—which is unfortunately misquoted, as the authors repeat the popular misunderstanding that denies agency on the side of 'the masses' (p. 17). The attempt to study "the relation between capitalism, science and religion" (p. 8) in few pages is unavoidably sketchy but also full of apologetic statements like the following: "Modern European science was founded on the notion of God" (p. 16). Unfortunately the authors make few efforts to develop their statements systematically and to underpin their findings. Therefore the explanatory value of the second part of this contribution in particular is limited, making the decision to follow an argument rather a question of personal inclination.

It was indeed a legitimate decision to establish this contribution exclusively on historical and theoretical grounds. However, anthropology as a discipline provides the opportunity to go back and forth between empirical experiences and theoretical considerations. This is one of its major advantages. It would have been beneficial for the argument of this contribution, if the authors had made more use of it.

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This interesting paper argues for understanding religion not primarily as a book religion but as a hybrid concept with book religion, folk beliefs (such as spirit cults), and social transformations interacting with each other. The two co-authors, specialists in the cultures and societies of Mainland Southeast Asia, combine their expertise in the social anthropology of highland communities in northern Laos (Sprenger) and processes of social transformation in the Lao-Tai world in the age of globalisation (Rehbein) respectively. This explains the authors' focus on Laos and the relationship between Theravada Buddhism and animism which is constitutive in this multi-ethnic Southeast Asian country. As an historian-philologist specialising in the Tai-Lao world, I would have approached the topic from a completely different perspective using different methodological devices. The outcome would have been a very different paper. Instead of commenting on the theoretical framework used in this article, I would like to focus on a few issues which, from my point of view, deserve more attention.

1.) I very much doubt whether the concept of 'religion' is a European or Western project. The same holds true for the term 'world religion'. At least for my understanding, a 'world religion' is much more than a religion whose believers are spread all over the world but follows a universal soteriological concept aimed at a path to salvation for mankind. In contrast to such 'world religions', we have '*Stammesreligionen*' (including spirit cults) which are only or predominantly concerned with the salvation of their respective kin members. In this light, we may surmise that Judaism, unlike Christianity and Islam, might not qualify as a world religion. Buddhism definitely qualifies as a world religion as the Buddha's teaching about the noble eightfold path to enlightenment addressed all human beings the world over. The authors, however, do not explicate their own definition of 'world religion', as shown in their hypothesis that Buddhism emerged as a so-called 'world religion' after political authority in India under emperor Ashoka was organized hierarchically and the diverse population integrated, controlled and disciplined (p. 12). I fully agree that the reign of Emperor Ashoka was a turning point in the ascendancy of Theravada Buddhism (see Prapod 2010) but I would rather argue that it was with the first Buddhist missions sent by the Maurya ruler to areas outside India, including Mainland Southeast Asia (Suvaṇṇabhūmi) that Buddhism became a 'world religion'.

2.) With regard to pre-Buddhist religions in Southeast Asia, I would not go so far as to disqualify them from fitting into our (modern) understanding of religion. Such a narrow understanding of religion is, for example, reflected in the following sentence: "It does not make sense to call phenomena like Buddhism in Southeast Asia 'religions' as they had no other" (p. 13). Moreover, I recommend not using the terms 'Brahmanism' and 'Hinduism' interchangeably (p. 11). The latter term should be avoided in the Southeast Asian context as it is indeed a Western colonial construct. It is no accident that people in Southeast Asia hardly speak of 'Hinduism' but of Brahmanism (Thai: *satsana phram*) when they refer to pre-Buddhist religious beliefs and practices, such as the Royal Ploughing Ceremony marking the auspicious beginning of the rice-planting season.

3.) Though not explicitly stated, Buddhism in Laos (not the same as Lao Buddhism) is the focus of many of the authors' theoretical considerations. This is fine, and I do not have any objections with this approach. However, I recommend not relying solely on authors like Zago, whose ground-breaking work (1972) has become a classic, but also to take into consideration several more recent studies. One important study is Hayashi Yukio's *Practical Buddhism among the Thai-Lao* (2003) that is missing in the References. The strength of Hayashi's work is his intensive field work in both Lao PDR and Northeastern Thailand (Isan). Holt frequently praises Hayashi for having identified an ongoing process of 'Buddhacization' in Isan which is "unfolding especially in relations to the spirit cults" (2009, 245). I personally find his idea of a village guardian deity shrine (*hò phi ban*) as serving a unifying function at the village or community level in contrast to the village monastery (*wat*), which is in principal open to the outside world, to be productive.

4.) The last point I would like to pay attention to is how religion, in particular Theravada Buddhism, is used for building and consolidating political and other communities. Scholars like Max Weber (1993) have argued that Buddhism, as an essentially individualistic religion, is incompatible with the necessities of political authority and state power. This does not hold true as Jonathan Walters has demonstrated in a fascinating article entitled *Communal Karma and Karmic Community in Theravada Buddhist History* (2003). Walters' point of departure is the widespread belief among Buddhist monks and layperson in Sri Lanka, Thailand and other Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhist countries that family, friendship, and also village community are constituted by previous Karma and will be constituted in the future by present Karma as well. The wide-spread wish of sponsors and donors of religious manuscripts to be reborn in the age

of the future Buddha Maitreya—along with one's own relatives—is a good example of that belief. Walters quotes Buddhist scriptures such as the Buddhavaṃsa and the Apadāna to demonstrate that the idea of a 'communal Karma', though en vogue since the 19th century, has some concrete roots in 'early Buddhism'. Among the various types of Socio-Karma we also find the belief that the destiny of a modern nation, as a collective unit and not only as the sum of its individual members, is determined by the Law of Karma (Thai/Lao: *kot haeng kam*).

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Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger deal with three configurations—animism, Buddhism and contemporary forms of the religious but their analysis is confined to mainland Southeast Asia. The question is therefore to what extent their observations need to be modified when Islam in insular Southeast Asia is to be included in the analysis. I propose to think likewise in terms of similarities between the configurations of animism, Islam and contemporary forms of the religious in Malaysia, Indonesia, Southern Thailand and the Southern Philippines. The goal is to analyse to what extent insular Southeast Asia deviates from the mainland.

Like on the mainland, in insular Southeast Asia anthropologists have, since colonial times, taken an evolutionary perspective, assuming that the origins of village life lay in animism. Exemplary for this assumption is Walter Skeat's study on *Malay Magic* (1900), for Indonesia Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's *Verspreide Geschriften* (1924). Later studies (Sprenger mentions Clifford Geertz and Aihwa Ong) propose a co-existence of animism and world religions, first in the form of Hinduism-Budddhism and later Islam. Whereas for the mainland a current resurgence of animism is postulated, most of today's observers on Malaysia and Indonesia argue that a more scripturalist, orthodox and transnational form of Islam has put animist as well as mystic practices on the defensive. As such, a fundamentally different trajectory occurs—whereas cities on the mainland experience a modern resurgence of belief in spirits, in insular Southeast Asia supernatural practices are increasingly suppressed. This seems to fit in nicely with nationalist projects in Malaysia and Indonesia which attempt to construct national religion as a potent form of political capital.

Rehbein argues that 'religion' could only emerge in Europe on the basis of a modern epistemological distinction between the immanent and transcendent. This distinction was then transferred to other parts of the world. The question is whether the distinction between *agama* (religion) and *kepercayaan* (belief) in Indonesia and Malaysia pertains to a colonial transfer or that Islam, in its self-understanding as a religion, is closer to the European model than Buddhism and animism in mainland Southeast Asia. Islam, as I understand it, develops an overarching claim, which in recent times included efforts to Islamize science. It also distinguishes between an idealized original core and illegal innovations (*bid'a*), which have been pushed back by several reform cycles during its modern history. Some label current Salafiyya influence on Southeast Asian Islam therefore as protestant Islam.

Contrary to Walter Benjamin's (1991) suggestion of interpreting capitalism as a new religion, in insular Southeast Asia and elsewhere capitalism does not replace Islam but they seem to fit very well together, as can be seen most clearly from pious consumption patterns of a growing Muslim middle class. It also increasingly affects those social groups who are on the margins of the, what Rehbein calls, capitalist division of labour. We may surmise, however, that capitalism in the format of transformed Islam definitively serves elite interests most.

Although philosophically science is based in religion, in contemporary society, as Rehbein and Sprenger argue in their conclusion, religion has become a rationalizing strategy in order to deal with transcendence. In Islam it seems the other way around—transcendency is outsourced whereas science and capitalism have been incorporated into religion.

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REPLY TO THE COMMENTS

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Most of the criticism directed against our argument is very appropriate and really helps to develop the argument further. That it is mainly constructive and that even the basic theoretical disagreements do not result in unqualified rejections of our argument, seems to indicate a certain consensus or even a joint perspective, which has evolved over the years of cooperation and mutual critique. Against this background, we would claim that the bulk of the critique could be joined with our paper to amend and improve it.

However, not all differences can be bridged. We see two fundamental points of disagreement, which we cannot integrate into our paper. They would rather lead to writing a new, completely different argument. The first point insists on the general applicability of the term 'world religion' (Grabowsky). Many cultures seem to have developed world religions, not only the Europeans, especially since European religions come from outside of Europe. One of our central claims is that these are not religions but over-arching symbolic systems that comprise everyday practices, political institutions, economic relations etc., which cannot be subsumed under the Latin term 'religion'.

A point related to the application of European modes of thought to Southeast Asia is the charge of evolutionism (Engelbert). We seem to suppose a universal evolution of the world toward Western capitalism. This is ill conceived because there have been capitalisms in other societies. That is a good point, and we agree. Good point, we agree—and so does Weber, by the way (see the introduction to the Protestant Ethic). The critique also implies that there is no evolution toward the 'end of history' consisting in a global spread of Western capitalism. We do not fully agree with this implication because Western capitalism did spread across the globe, mainly by force, even if it is adapted and modified in each society and locality.

This leads to the next point of critique which concerns the global spread of the concept of religion. It seems as if we locate this spread only on the level of ideals but it is also a result of practice and power relations (Dickhardt). We agree. The question follows how this happens. This is a very good and relevant question but unfortunately not part of our study. We should have stressed this more clearly.

Another point clarifies that Western religion is not as homogeneous as it seems. Spiritualism serves as a counter-example of an organized religion (Bräunlein). This is a good point as well. We should have stressed more that there are alternative and oppositional movements in any society. And it is a very important point that the lines between science, religion and popular culture are not as clearly drawn as is generally assumed. We agree as our conclusion shows.

While the paper deals with Buddhism and animism in Laos, most comments point to differences in other religions and cultural contexts. The greatest contrast seems to be Islam, which incorporates capitalism and science (Houben). This is a very important comment and could be the core of further research. We would argue that the spread of Western capitalism precludes the incorporation into Islam—but its expansion may come to a halt and may be completely reconfigured with an advance of Islam (or with the integration into the one-party state, for that matter).

An extension of this point claims that the case of Laos is special and cannot be used as a basis for generalization (Engelbert, Gottowik). At the same time, the paper is criticized as being too abstract. We agree with the demand for contextualization, as we argue on the very first page of the paper. However, we would suggest that our core argument about the relation of animism, religion and capitalism is valid for other contexts as well. This is precisely what the process of science should look like: study exactly limited empirical cases and link them to theory by trying to create concepts and generalizations in such a way that they can be extended and applied to other cases. If this extension does not work, the generalizations and concepts have to be modified accordingly. By this, we refer to the theory of science that is linked to the concept of configuration (cf. the comment by Bräunlein).

The final major point of critique casts doubt on our interpretation of the relation between religion and capitalism (Bräunlein, Dickhardt). We claim that religion produces questions and answers that capitalism cannot address and that religion serves as a legitimation for capitalism. The comments cast doubt on these claims—and justly so. Our claims, in this regard, are too much bound to the European context, not sufficiently complex and probably not entirely applicable to other contexts. Most of the other points of critique hint into the same direction and thereby prove the necessity of cooperative research and joint discussions as well as exchange because only on this basis can the respective bias of the researcher and the blind spots be overcome.

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I am very grateful for the excellent comments which substantially supplement our modest elaborations based on a fairly limited range of detailed knowledge. In particular, the comments by Vincent Houben, Thomas Engelbert and Volker Gottowik point at significant variations in the configurations we proposed, especially in regard to insular, Muslim Southeast Asia and Vietnam. However, as I will elaborate below, I consider these cases as variations around a central theme in Southeast Asian religion, not as separated by a deep trench of difference. That theme is, in many ways, typical for world religions in general. World religions are not so much marked by the universal validity of their ideas or the mere political power of their institutions. Rather, they operate as world religions due to their constant oscillation between localization and globalization, between the adoption of local differences—of place, kinship, ontology—into their fold and the claim for translocal validity, coming in the form of reformist movements. I have used the term animism for a form of cosmology that is geared to address local differences in an idiom which allows for great variation. In this sense, animism is different from world religion, as world religion has difficulties elaborating upon local differences. World religion, while also necessarily localized, tends towards standardization, while animism tends towards differentiation. However, the localizing tendencies of world religion are functionally comparable to animism, and it is unsurprising that the relationship between animism and world religion outlined in this paper compares to the relationship between localized and globalized versions of world religion. This latter relationship would account for many of the religious processes in insular Southeast Asia.

Several comments, e.g. by Volker Grabowsky and Peter Bräunlein, have also pointed out that religion is neither an invention of the West nor can be properly differentiated from other fields of social practice. I fully agree with this statement, if 'religion' is taken in a rather wide and somewhat vague definition. However, I maintain that religion is not just anything. It is a principle to produce certain differences, and this principle differs in the three configurations. It is primarily in the sense current in Western modernity (and, as Houben points out, shared with Islam), that religion denotes a field to be differentiated from, say, politics, economics or kinship. Current attempts, for example, in modern Islam to design a specific 'Muslim economics' only make sense if that differentiation is accepted in the first place. If there was no difference, any attempt to sacralize politics or the economy would be meaningless, as these fields of action would already be religion. The conscious sacralization of non-religious fields only changes the hierarchical relationships between the fields, with religion being put in the guiding position.

However, this differentiation of fields is, in many cases, already part of the third, modern configuration. We were not out to prove that there are clear boundaries between such fields or that the question if animism is a religion is an essential one. Rather, we were concerned with the emergence of discursive fields in modernity which claim such differences—even though such claims might be unrealistic upon closer inspection. When we write that "religion thus produces and answers important questions which capitalism and science cannot address", we are speaking of a specific construction of religion that occurred in Europe in the course of modernity. Therefore, it should be expected that the differentiation of religion cannot be found in other regions of the world, Southeast Asia being a prime example. The other forms of differentiation—between local communities in animism, and between translocal and local community in the relation between animism and world religion—still coexist with the modern configuration. Thus, considerable mixing of contexts and fields can be expected.

Peter Bräunlein provides excellent examples for the way the boundaries between religion, science and media become blurred. This rather corroborates our argument about differentiation. 19th and early 20th century spiritualism demonstrates this point very well. As Bräunlein remarks, spiritualists were keen to stress that what they were doing was science, not religion. Thus, they were operating with exactly those differences whose emergence we tried to trace in the second section of the paper. It is well known that Tylor hesitated to use the term 'spiritism' for his animism concept, for the reason that he wanted to avoid confusion with the spiritualist practices of his day. For him, however, spiritualism curiously was indeed religious, in the same sense that animism was, as a survival of earlier stages of human intellectual development. He did not recognize spiritualism, as Bräunlein correctly does, as a result of modern engagement with media and science. Still, the historical debates about spiritualism do not call into question the differentiation of science and religion in modernity, but rather enact it. They feed the discourse which produces the difference. A discourse that would operate with undebated, clear-cut categories would not be able to sustain these categories, as there would be no debate. The debate on spiritualism would have been different if it had been concerned with the question if it was, for example, art or politics.

However, the question Bräunlein raises is of crucial importance. If the differentiation of religion did not occur in the same way in Southeast Asia as it did in Europe, what about the status of ghost movies there? While European viewers might experience similar scares and goosebumps, wouldn't there be a difference between a community of Southeast Asians and of Europeans watching the same movie? And wouldn't this difference be more than that between 'rational' Europeans and 'superstitious' Asians? Rather, if religion is not—or differently—differentiated in Southeast Asia, how does that affect the relationship between ghostly images on TV and cinema screens and relations between living humans and spirits? According to all we know, the relations are different.

Thus, the curious constellation marked by the overlap of spirit medium and mass medium found in modern spiritualism will have a different shape in Southeast Asia. This relates to the final argument in my section of local and translocal 'religion' in Southeast Asia. I argued that local communities in Southeast Asia are based on a constitutive relationship between local and translocal relationships. This allows the community to be local and have relationships beyond locality that still are potentially relations of identity. This necessarily allows for a play of local and translocal that cuts the other way, too: Types of relationships which were decidedly local, i.e. relations with the dead, become issues of translocal communities—a point which also pertains to Gottowik's argument about animist communities on the world stage (see below). Bräunlein argues that, even though ghosts on screens are recognized as fictions, they are nevertheless a mediatized reality. In this sense, they are transformations of local relationships into a global/translocal idiom. From this observation, we could ask the question of the reality of movie ghosts anew, beyond a Western, rational differentiation of fiction and reality.

Vincent Houben, as mentioned above, rightly points out the mainland bias in our argument. Still, Buddhism, just as Islam, has a history and established vocabulary of reform and purification which is not simply instigated by modernization. However, Houben is right that the suppression of heterodox and ‚animist' practices seems stronger in most Muslim societies of Southeast Asia than in Buddhist ones, where such attempts at exclusive purification are conspicuously unsuccessful. This might relate to the fact that Buddhism was initially not conceived as a mass religion but as a practice for a small religious elite of monks, to whom access was democratized. Therefore, conversion to Buddhism can be a gradual process while conversion to Christianity and Islam is ritually clearly marked and supposed to usher in a new life for the convert. All these differences move Islam and Christianity closer together, which makes plausible Houben's argument that the dynamics between Islam and local animism have been akin to the ones between modernity and animism even before modernity came to Southeast Asia. This particular aspect of modernity found fertile ground in Muslim societies of Southeast Asia. However, pushes towards modernization created an image of animism and local cosmological relations being on the wane on the mainland as well. This has turned out to be wrong, at least in mainland Southeast Asia, for the time being.

Houben's observation that Islam and capitalism go well together equally makes a lot of sense, as Islam spread to Southeast Asia by trade. This indeed suggests that the configuration between an established world religion, local animisms and capitalism will take a different form then on the mainland.

Volker Grabowsky, besides very helpful suggestions for the improvement of the article which have been included in the revision, raises the important question how religion could be identified, in particular world religion. He rightly points out that world religions claim to work for any human being (and some non-humans, like the djinn that have converted to Islam), while local religions do not have such aspirations. The so-called world religions provide a framework that is independent of concrete localities or kinship relations, even though these may play an important role for pilgrimages or successions. I therefore prefer the term transcultural religions, as they are designed to travel across perceived cultural boundaries. This makes them attractive for managing alterities which confront local communities in Southeast Asia.

As mentioned above, a closer look reveals that the distinctions between world religions and animism are less pronounced than they first seem. Local animist systems also provide an idiom, a set of concepts which might be able to explain matters even in remote and unknown places. If people legitimize local practices with the characteristics of local spirits, the difference with other practices might easily be explained by the idea that spirits in other places need to be addressed by different rituals. The animist conceptual apparatus thus does not demand similarity of ritual, but enables difference. World religions, however, strive for similarity of ritual and thought, quite independently of locality and relationships.

The theme of socio-karma which Grabowsky raises is also an intriguing one. While the idea that karma is shared by a community points at the potentials to localize Buddhism, it does not entail the kind of difference in ritual and socio-cosmic rules which characterizes animism. However, this is certainly worth of further research, as it counters many doctrinal positions of world religions like Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, which individualize relationships between human beings and the cosmos, circumventing the community.

Thomas Engelbert's comments resonate well with the tone of our paper. He argues that a detailed

analysis of historical cases might be more illuminating than the kind of grand narrative we attempted. Of course, grand narratives today, in a rather sceptical intellectual environment, do not fulfill the same role as they used to do. They much less aspire to point out the essential truth beyond the surface contingencies, but rather try to be sources of inspiration for further studies and comparisons. What such models might provide are suggestions about how a variety of phenomena are related. These relationships must be conceived as transformative and variable, otherwise the model will be unable to account for any empirical case.

A number of the relations Engelbert suggests are highly feasible. This in particular holds for the terms he uses to describe Vietnam—as open and relatively tolerant, as able to adopt numerous external influences. This indeed seems to be one of the features of Southeast Asian religion in general. My proposal is that the very structure of 'animism' as a localized cosmology enables the adoption of the foreign and the production of variation.

This is also important for the argument Engelbert makes about ethnicity. Ethnicity is highly relational in Southeast Asia. It is less an unshakable essence which holds societies together, but rather a polymorphic sense of boundaries which might bundle numerous differences together—linguistic, cultural, political, economic, etc., religion being a major factor among these. Many ethnic identities are highly contextual, and religious differences have contributed to the emergence of such multifaceted ethnicities. I am thinking of studies on upland Myanmar that show how ethnic identities are stabilized through the conversion to Christianity and how Christianity, at least in some contexts, turns into an ethnic marker of unprecedented integrative power (e.g. Sakhong 2007). Thus, it seems that the differences which together make up ethnicity and religious affiliations reinforce each other, instead of ethnicity being the base for religious affiliation.

Engelbert's remarks on capitalism are also highly welcome. In this context, Engelbert calls our approach evolutionary. However, this is not evolution in the sense of the unfolding of a necessary development or teleology. What we hope to demonstrate is that the emergence of capitalism is a highly contingent cultural process. The most important points are how capitalism relates to and changes religion. It is evolutionary only in the sense that certain social forms are superseded by others, but it is not evolutionary in the sense that the new necessarily replaces the old without a trace. In fact, the coexistence of the configurations of religions is a central concern of our paper.

Michael Dickhardt raises the intriguing question what the spread of the European notion of religion would actually mean for people in Southeast Asia and how the alternatives would look like. This resonates with Grabowsky's critique of our statement that religion, in the strict sense of the term, is a product of modernity. What, then, would be an appropriate concept for the differences that Southeast Asians made—between Islam and Brahmanism, between Buddhism and spirit worship—before this concept had arrived? What would it mean to 'have' a religion? What fields of thought and action would that affect?

We have made an attempt at this, unfortunately quite implicitly, by distinguishing between religion and the religious. In her famous article, *Writing against culture*, Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) identified the concept of culture as a Western-modern construct that is unable to describe the complexity and specificity of local life. Thus, she suggested to abandon 'culture' but to retain 'cultural', as a term to denote a multitude of differences in thought and action. A similar strategy could be feasible here. This means that people can be 'religious' without having 'a religion'. They would address powerful cosmological and non-human forces in their everyday lives and rituals, but not necessarily adhere to a fixed canon of doctrines and practices. This would remove the exclusivist concepts and the focus on attitudes and creeds that come with the Western-modern concept, a concept that, as several commenters point out, explains only part of what is going on in Southeast Asia.

This also relates to the question of the relation between capitalism and religion in Southeast Asia. Dickhardt is correct in pointing out that the de-sacralization that characterizes European intellectual history did not occur in Southeast Asia. Therefore, we speak of different configurations in which the religious has different places and produces other kinds of differences. This should include capitalism. Although a number of authors (e.g. Sahlins 2000) have pointed out how capitalism is cosmological in Western modernity, the capitalist cosmology of Southeast Asia would probably be different. As Houben has also pointed out, Islam and capitalism relate well to each other. Similar things can be said about Buddhism on the mainland. In Buddhism, it is not so much production or trade which create a link with capitalism, but consumption. Religious spending is a major feature of modern Buddhism, and thus consumption is a religious act (e.g. Jackson 1999). This should be subject of future research.

Volker Gottowik suggests to read our piece from a Luhmannian perspective. This is interesting but, however, difficult to argue. When speaking about animisms and world religion as systems, I identify them as 'symbolic systems' in the classical anthropological sense, not as systems of communication, as Luhmann's systems theory would have them. Therefore, I do not assume that state societies and their religions are by necessity more complex than animist villages (which they would be for Luhmann) and that a reduction of complexity occurs between them. This is a possible point of view, but it is not the present argument.

Instead of a general theory of the Luhmannian kind—which indeed cannot be proven wrong on an empirical base—we attempt to generalize about Southeast Asia on the base of what we have learned from DORISEA. As any generalization, this one works better for some cases than for others. However, it might serve as an inspiration for comparison which elucidates patterns in variation that are specific to Southeast Asia.

The examples of the role world religions and animism play in the current world which Gottowik provides are indeed the kind of phenomena that are addressed by our theoretical model. World religions are means not to create harmony, but to create a shared understanding of belonging—which is necessarily exclusive. This is the reason why wars, expulsion and conflict can be legitimized in terms of world religions. Local religions (animisms) are not able to make such claims. I am not aware of any animist group fighting another animist group because they do their ritual differently. The unifying capacity of world religion is thus a potential that is variously realized.

However, if local animisms are being categorized by a dominant discourse as a specific kind of religion—as the anthropological tradition has been doing after Tylor—this allows for adherents of non-world religions all over the world to start identifying as a kind of alternative world religion. As we wrote, when the mechanisms that created world religion are in place, animism can 'jump scale' and adopt similar strategies. While we only mentioned the state level (e.g. the Burmese *nat* pantheon), Gottowik's examples of indigenous people assembling in world councils on environmentalism, indigenous rights etc. and taking up animism as an argument are excellent instances of a further jump of scales.

In the following comments, Gottowik rightly points out the differences between mainland and island Southeast Asia—at least, the western and central Sumba islands. His argument that island Southeast Asians converted from one world religion to another after the arrival of Europeans would not pertain to most of eastern Indonesia. I fully agree with Gottowik that it does not make sense to differentiate between gods and spirits, as I have pointed out in regard to the role of Brahmanism in mainland Southeast Asia. The difference which is important is the one between a multitude of localized beings and a unified transcendent sphere, sometimes denoted as God with a capital G, which subordinates all other relationships. This potential to centralize the cosmos may be unique to world religions, although the empirical question is how much this potential is realized. Animisms in Southeast Asia sometimes do have high gods, but rarely their central position is so pronounced that they are addressed in each and every ritual context. In other cases, gods and spirits are much less strictly hierarchized and therefore hard to distinguish. In this respect, the various ways the religious is localized in Southeast Asia are not as incomparably different than it may appear.

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'EXTERNAL' COMMENTS ON THE PAPER

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Southeast Asia is no doubt an excellent field to try to understand what religion is—provided an attentive criticism of categories inspired by monotheistic experience and widely reported by the science of religions is conducted. The area enables us, first to approach the complexity and diversity of religious expressions; secondly, to take into account and to draw some important conclusions from the ubiquitous reality of syncretism.

Reading Rehbein and Sprenger's paper reminds me of a number of critical points, some of which I raise here—partial and probably somewhat abruptly—as a counterpoint and complementary approach to their dense analysis.

I) In the first part of the paper, Rehbein and Sprenger rehabilitate the concept of animism in spite of its ambiguity and its history, and probably under the influence of an ahistorical culturalism. Using such a concept could overshadow a series of phenomena—the cult of the dead, ancestral worship, worship of spirits—which may seem simple scale changes insofar as they melt in a relatively harmonious synthesis, but might be necessary to distinguish (according to the method recommended by the authors) as I believe that each of them expresses deep historical changes in the socio-political and economic order.

In any case, I'm not convinced that "Is animism a religion?" is a pertinent question. At the same time, if the aim is to identify what is the 'religious' by the study of several religious configurations, one finds oneself called to order: we must have an idea of what religion is, if only to determine what falls within the 'religious'! Knowledge of religious phenomena always obeys a subtle dialectic, full of pitfalls and dead ends, between observation, assumptions and categories.

Rehbein and Sprenger open more channels in this direction. The distinction 'inside'/'outside' is a good starting point if considered as a distinction between 'human world'/'non-human world'. I suggest that religion is relative to the human world (inside) and that the outside is essentially considered as a source of danger, barbarism, a place of confusion which does not deserve to be named, when it is not best not to name it at all. The main feature of the human world is that it is focused and organized in every detail and every corner, according to a magical rationality—as was amply illustrated by Marcel Mauss (1983) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962)—and does not tolerate any improvisation nor flaw which may induce confusion and the risk of dissolution of society. Such a 'social space'—a concept explored by Georges Condominas (1980) and unjustly ignored—is strictly controlled, forming a 'network of networks' of relationships with nature, with other people, but also with other beings present in the densely populated human space—I would say nearly 'saturated' by invisible beings with whom it will be necessary to communicate and that should be domesticated in order to maintain viable and even successful relationships with them.

Human/non-human is in no way a distinction between a visible with which communication would be immediately possible and an invisible with which communication would be difficult ... In my view, the distinction is between the world (human) managed by men and where a communication, difficult as it may be, has become possible between men and different beings (even invisible) that inhabit it; and the world with which man will not or cannot maintain any successful relationship and which is relegated to the outside.

Considering the network of relationships that composes the social space and forms a society (a 'human space'), we can note that:

1) there is always one relationship that imposes itself above the others, giving the entire network meaning and cohesion;

2) this relationship is always with 'beings' (to speak in Buddhist terms) very present but at the same time over which man has no immediate control, necessary but difficult to grasp. These beings include the dead, the ancestors, the spirits, the gods of extended social spaces—the latter often composed of various inner social spaces that gods may help to control—and finally (but after a radical change) the masters of salvation.

This is what I call 'religion'.

The problem of communicability identified by Rehbein and Sprenger suggests that the relationship to such beings is endowed with a totalizing power. In fact, it is not only to communicate for the sake of communication, but to get something vital: respite from and protection from the dead; the conditions of life in society and prosperity guaranteed by the commemoration of the ancestors; peace, health and prosperity of the soil through the worship of the spirits; the same aims and the conservation of power in the worship of the gods; and last, by respecting the message of the masters, individual salvation outside this painful, earthly existence. The challenges to establishing such relations are therefore 'dramatic' and the dramatic tension is

multiplied by the fact that humans have no direct influence on the 'beings' in question (which I will refer to as 'powers' from now on) and that, moreover, humans have no absolute guarantee for successful communication—despite the introduction of rituals designed to minimize failure.

The link between the configuration of social space and entities should be noted here: kinship/the deceased, clan/the ancestors, members of the same soil/territorial spirits, principality/gods power. As indicated by Rehbein and Sprenger, the shift from one configuration to the other is done by successive enlargements and without opposition, by integration and harmonious synthesis of religious expressions. In this sense, one can speak of development. Such a synthesis preserves the aspirations of each circle of the society (family, extended family, local communities) and even combines them to increase the chances of good protection and happy survival. Failing to perform family rites (to the dead, ancestors and family spirits) is thus perceived as undermining the entire territorial community. It is probably this close melting, seeming to justify the overall term 'animism', which conceals the original difference between these 'cults' and induces to underestimate the process that led to this close complementarity.

It can be assumed here that the 'transcendence' would be what would fall under the particular and always dramatic modes of communication between human beings and 'powers-beings' on which humans have no firm hold and whose protection is, however, essential. The 'immanence' would be, inversely, what falls under usual human relationships. I can't see any other possible definition of transcendence and immanence considering societies which were not concerned by Greek metaphysics, by monotheism nor even by India's mystical elaborations. One could question the relevance of such a duality for the societies in question.

II) In the second part of the paper, we are again confronted to a series of dualities—animism/worldwide religions, center/periphery—which appear as evidences but are extremely problematic.

What does the expression 'worldwide religion' mean? I presume it refers to a religion which, because of its project and its dynamism, arises as universal. If this is the case for the Buddhist message, it is irrelevant as regards to the cults of deities ... Brahmanism included, before the affirmation of bhakti movements that flourished in India's 12th to 13th centuries at the same time as the messages of salvation spread in the Southeast Asian societies.

In the case of the 'Hinduization' of Southeast Asian societies, adoption of Brahmanism is, as indicated by Rehbein and Sprenger, a matter of princes and powers: legitimization of power inside, with the appropriation of the "king of the gods who is the god of the king" (*devaraja*) by Angkorean kings, and assertion of power against the outside that is to say against other princes. The structure inside/outside remains relevant here: the different princes appropriated gods of Indian origin, whose names, features and potentialities are similar, but these gods are, however, totally different from each other in that they exercise their powers exclusively for 'their' prince (and when a prince takes an enemy capital, he moves the most prestigious statues and texts to his own capital to strengthen the magic power of the latter and further weaken the vanquished prince). Brahmanism in Southeast Asia is not the result of a would be inherent particular dynamic expansion and universalization. Rather, it is essentially an expression of strategies for power by which the gods are somehow 'nationalized'.

These power games, in which the relationship to the deities are involved, explain what the duality center/periphery may be—that Rehbein and Sprenger consider as another structuring principle of relations between societies and thus between their religious expressions. Indeed, the opposition center/periphery applies mainly to relations between centers of power and is essentially expressed by the duality of "Central Universal King vs subaltern kings" (see Tambiah 1976 and Wolters 1999 amongst numerous others for work on developments in the galactic society, on mandalas (a word almost absent from ancient Angkorean vocabulary!), or what Lieberman (2003, 33) calls the 'solar society', which is the term I prefer). In view of the societies, however, it is always the inside/outside opposition that continues to prevail. And the inside does not include 'periphery', it is the 'entire center', the 'universe' where capital (as axis of the world) and rural country are to form a whole. Note here that the Khmer *srok* and the Thai *muong* are always "a city *and* its countryside" together. Sukhotai, as described by its king Ram Kamhaeng, is an inner city *and* its countryside (see the translation of RamKamhaeng's inscription in Prasert Na Nagara and Griswold 1992, 265). Literature, for its part, permanently offers the image of a close and constant exchange between city and rurality.

III) Starting from the concept of 'axial age' (striking but blurred) to define the relationship between Theravada Buddhism and society in Southeast Asia (from the 12th to 14th centuries) seems perilous. Rehbein and Sprenger's use of the concept of 'organized' religions which, like that of 'worldwide religion', may add to the confusion. If there ever was an 'axial age', it appears and is characterized in Southeast Asia—like elsewhere—by the affirmation of individual salvation messages, applying to 'all'.

Those messages therefore offer the promise of salvation from this world where people lead a life of suffering, incompleteness, or illusion. This promise is for all people (all 'beings' in Buddhism, including spirits and gods) and thus has a universal scope.

As 'messages', they are propelled by and raise particular dynamics (here, to paraphrase McLuhan

(1968): "the medium is the message"). Indeed, originally stated by a person, a 'master', they are fragile: the words and example of the master, showing the Way, may be lost or corrupt—which would jeopardize the salvation of all. Furthermore, the messages can only be maintained if they persist through texts and an institution (*sangha*, monks community, one of the Three Jewels alongside with Budhha and *dhamma* (Buddhist Law)) destined to retain 'exactly' the Master's word and example.

A condition, usually hidden, for the perpetuation of a message and its expansion outside its original environment (generally urban, non-peasant) was its capacity (the capacity of the institution of salvation) to operate a satisfactory permanent updating and synthesis. This 'conciliation' enabled predominantly rural populations to both provide the means to ensure their salvation (or advance on the path of issue) and preserve conditions for their daily survival. Theravada Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam all succeeded in this need of conciliation with what Rehbein and Sprenger called 'animism'.

Three phenomena must be noted here:

1) there is a real 'conversion' of the people and societies who become—as much as powers—stakeholders actually committed to the perpetuation of religion (this aspect fails to appear in the presentation of Rehbein and Sprenger's paper). Now, it is the societies as a whole which are concerned and not only upper casts and classes as in Brahmanism. And there is no schizophrenia between what would be a superficial adherence to Buddhism and a deep and permanent attachment to animism (in opposition to visions perpetrated by Protestant and Catholic reforms as expressed for instance by Spiro 1970);

2) thus, in the Southeast Asian conciliation process with 'animism' and "various forms of Indian religion", the message is not passive but 'active'. A real 'buddhicization' of traditional religious expressions even exists (worship of the dead, spirits, divinities) (see Forest 2012);

3) finally, a fundamental feature of the conciliation is the alliance that manages to be established between institutions of salvation and political powers (royal or more precisely 'imperial'—Asoka, Parakkamahabu Constantine, Charlemagne...). On this matter I agree with Rehbein and Sprenger, though I consider that, if the representations and rites of power from Indian influence (and essentially Civaism) remain in Buddhist kingdoms of Southeast Asia (city center the of world, cosmic or solar model, ritual of king's *abhisheka* ...), the Buddhist conciliation encloses political power in a number of ethic obligations, new and relatively restrictive social policies, and above all absolute obligation to protect and maintain the Buddhist Triple Jewel.

I also suggest that the purpose of *sangha* is not some form of 'sacred' attainment or to bear witness to the 'sacred'. Rather, the *sangha* aims purely and simply—without theory but in practice—at perpetuating intact the message and the example of master Gautama in society. Therefore, the following question becomes essential: What are the nature, dynamism and main features of the relationship between power, the institution of salvation (*sangha*) and Buddhist society?

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Responses from other DORISEA colleagues show how Southeast Asia's religious history is crowded with competing theories and just how difficult it is for any generalisations. Further remarks are superfluous given the points brought home so eloquently by other colleagues. So, I will instead raise some questions on methodology and purpose with regard to the pursuit of radical difference in Rehbein's and Sprenger's paper with the hope that it will invite the authors to develop their arguments further.

Before I begin, let me say that I have much sympathy for their quest to render autonomous conceptions of religious formations in the region as it is a project close to my interests. I find novelty in their kaleidoscopic approach—drawn from Rehbein's inspiring book on *Critical Theory After the Rise of the Global South: Kaleidoscopic Dialectic* (2015). This approach treats all religious knowledge as coeval and particularistic in nature. Particularism hence becomes a common feature of all religious phenomena regardless of spatial-cultural origins. By the same token, empiricism becomes core to knowledge-making and a basis of foundational criticism. A kaleidoscopic approach also overthrows the rule of omniscience in Eurocentric theory, taking knowledge as always particular and disputing the universalism/relativism divide. All these make a kaleidoscopic approach promising at the ideational front; as a radical framework that recognizes an objective category of 'religion' out there with multiple formulations which are inter-related, or which bear 'family resemblances', but which are not the same as each other. The aim then is for social scientists to bring diverging religious configurations within an empirical universe into comparison and critique. It is by comparing and evaluating divergences within an empirical universe that scientific statements on religious distinctions, which are neither singular nor universal but general, can be established.

Notwithstanding its radical promise, Rehbein's and Sprenger's endeavour to build a convincing account of religious difference is somewhat trapped by the orthodoxy of academic practices, particularly the assumption that we can only know through definitive concepts/categories and abstractions. Let me elaborate by referring to two problems. The first has got to do with the way their analysis leaves the Western category of religion present in its absence. Despite shrinking the Western concept of religion into a mere contrastable category, implied Western delineations are left intact in their interpretations of spiritual transcendence in animism and pre-colonial Buddhism in Southeast Asia; that is, as a form of social distance instead of spiritual transcendence, in the former, and as an all-encompassing symbolic universe that defies differentiations between sacred and secular spheres, in the latter. Such a discernment of difference seems to be directed by a lookout for deviations from the binary system of classification that structures universal definitions of religion. A second problem has got to do with their unconscious assumption of a vantage point to analyse and name religious difference. The anthropologist David Scott (2003, 104) has called such a position an 'omniscient epistemological vantage' as it assumes a detached non-relativized perspective whereby all simultaneous differences are available to its gaze. Therefore, while relativism and omniscience are precisely criticized by Rehbein and Sprenger, unfortunately, the ways through which religious alterities are captured via gaps in symbolic systems and functions, and rendered with definitive qualities, may have unwittingly reinstated relativist comparisons, undermining their radical intentions.

The above-mentioned problems are related to the difficulty of pinning down and portraying difference. The fact is that real difference is unknowable as it exists outside the worlds we know. But we social scientists have a tendency to believe that our arsenal of concepts and discourses are sufficient for us to grasp difference that lies outside the worlds we know. Hence we resort to construct that unknown world by contrasting it with the one we know. But this only results in the effect that the alterities 'found' merely become alternatives to our existing world, concepts and meanings. Yet, a project that takes difference seriously must consider that existing analytical categories and discourses may be inadequate for representing difference. In capturing absolute difference, we should be ready not only to change the content but also the terms/logics and the very categories of our social conceptions.

Here, a work by Helen Verran (2001) on capturing alternative mathematical logic among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria provides useful leads. Studying mathematical practices at a local school, Verran began her study with the quest to present a Yoruba scientific logic that is distinct but equivalent to that of Western mathematical tradition. She had begun her study with the assumption that Yoruba people share the same cognitive framework in counting with that of the West whereby objects are seen as something out there waiting to be conferred the right qualities by way of thought by a knowing subject. Resting on these assumptions, she has initially explained away all differing logics that she had observed, and in the process produced a robust but static account of a distinctive Yoruba numbering system. Yet, she noticed that in real life, her Yoruba students have a more versatile way of managing across different generalizing logics when speaking in English and Yoruba, making contingent

connections and separations, as and when needed. In trying to overcome the disjuncture between 'reality' and her representations, she began to treat the Yoruba world of counting as an unknown/emergent, discarding all her taken for granted assumptions about the workings of time, space and matter in the act of counting. It is by doing so that a social life of numbers among the Yoruba people became evident to her. This is a world whereby counting is enacted via dynamic interactions (rather than separation) between subjects and objects using both verbal and bodily actions. It was through such interactions that a distinctive African logic of counting was revealed. This alternative logic shows how qualities and certainties of numbers are neither out there in the world nor in culture, as assumed by universal and/or cultural assumptions, but are enacted in the process of doing science in "ordered/ordering micro-worlds" (Verran 2001, 238). Speaking Yoruba has the effect of propelling speakers into an alternative ontological universe of science in which performance, action and manifestations are privileged in the act of counting. What is useful in Verran's study is that she shows us how reality/alterity is always multiple, always in the making, and always involving dynamic relations between human actors, objects, utterances and bodily acts. While processes of enactment may not add up to a clear category, ways of doing and imagining are conduits through which we can trace the twists and turns of how realities (alterities) come into being. Rather than looking for difference via analytical concepts, processes of enactments at particular places and times can provide us with potent glimpses into how particular worlds, at once with all their complexities, multiplicities and reciprocities, emerge in collective acting. After all radical difference is never about the normative and it is only by opening ourselves to the unfamiliar that we can better delineate separations as well as inter-connections or 'family resemblances' across differences.

This brings me to my second point on purpose. I believe that a project to render autonomous understandings about religious practices ought to address intellectual and political issues at stake. Such questions are however amiss in Rehbein and Sprenger's paper. As we know, alongside the loss of certainties promised by science and progress, religion has become a major vehicle for counter-cultural modernization in the world today. Southeast Asian countries have joined this bandwagon as states and ordinary people increasingly take their destinies into their own hands. Against this background, what are the ethical-political and epistemic questions at stake in the interpretation of religious difference? As Rehbein and Sprenger would agree, while encounters with European conceptions have shaped the past and continue to shape the present, there are other religious narratives that may not be easily brought into the fold of modern categories. What issues, beyond political-economic interests, are then at stake in the various claims of religious difference? How can knowledge about religious pluralities discontinue canonical assumptions about religion? How can we build epistemic and hermeneutic foundations that are based on cross-religious dialogue and plural religious philosophies? As things stand, it seems that if we want to know how religious practices were like in the past and are like now in Southeast Asia, we will need to listen carefully to people, to observe carefully how they think, act and feel, and their interactions with the material world around them without rushing into quick conclusions based on existent social scientific categories and discourses. Religious configurations that do not sit comfortably within the modern ambit, may require us to be also open to different ways or 'epistemologies' of knowing.

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This is an ambitious effort to draw together many different strands of research about religion and state formation in Southeast Asia, and while I admire the sweep and aspirations of this effort, in many ways it does not correspond to the specific social processes I have seen in field research in Eastern Indonesia (with an 'animist' society on Sumba) and in Vietnam (with the 'new religion' of Caodaism). The three configurations of animism, Buddhism and 'contemporary forms' seem to be ideal types, and so they do not necessarily correspond to what is found on the ground in the great diversity of Southeast Asian societies.

A) The 'animist village'

If this is constructed as an ideal type, then it is problematic to also identify it as 'local religion', since its local variants will necessarily vary from this ideal. Spirits are often the intimate partners of humans, so I find it difficult to accept the idea that animist spirits are necessarily "those beings which are far away socially and hard to communicate with" (p. 9). Some spirits—the ancestors who impose rules and police correct ritual procedures—may be best kept a distance. Others live so close to their human partners that they are seen as spirit wives or spirit husbands, inseparable companions.

I have some problems with the 'virtual village' as the model for 'animistic societies'. A great many remote Southeast Asian peoples (like the Kodi people of Sumba that I studied) do not live in 'villages', but instead in scattered garden hamlets, so that while they are linked to 'ancestral villages' where some important rituals are held, they spend most of their time gardening in shifting swidden fields and herding horses and buffalo. The 'virtual village' seems to essentialize a single type of society and assume that it applies to all those who live in more remote areas.

One reason that Geertz (1973) developed a definition of religion as a shared system of symbols was that he wanted to be able to study 'religions' which did not have written scripture, formalized clergy or an organized and hierarchical structure. I think this was admirable, and would argue that the more encompassing anthropological definition of religion is a key contribution of the field.

B) Animism and the state

I think it is dangerous to assume that world religions appear as a means to create states (p. 11). World religions are sometimes allied to specific states, but more often they are part of a much larger community that is not contained by, and certainly not coterminous with, any specific state. Nor is it true that all peoples ruled by states practice world religions (many of the strongest states are associated with secular and even atheistic regimes), or that adhering to a world religion is a condition for achieving statehood. Often, conversion to a world religion is specifically part of a strategy to resist the state—as seen in the conversion of many highland Southeast Asian groups to Christianity, specifically to resist atheistic, Buddhist or Islamic states in Vietnam, Laos, and Indonesia.

While I would agree that "adopting foreign religions has always been a profoundly political act", I think it makes no sense to say that "state building has been a religious act" (p. 11). States are built to create monopolies of power, to gain control over territory, to mobilize labor, to coordinate forms of production, but none of these goals is necessarily 'religious'. The many myths of stranger kings analyzed by Sahlins (1981) and others (e.g., Liang 2011) are stories of the political incorporation of outsiders but NOT the bringing of world religions.

Both Hinduism and Buddhism have proved fairly nimble at incorporating animist spirits in an 'implicit syncretism' based on resemblances and an instrumental logic of "praying to the most efficacious spirit". But Islam and Christianity have stricter borders and these 'world religions' have been more exclusionary and required a more explicit syncretism if they are to become localized and blended with animistic beliefs or practices.

I do not necessarily follow Eisenstadt's (1996) idea that all organized states adopted what could be called an 'organized' or 'world' religion. Notably, Mongolian leaders like Genghis Khan conquered huge empires while adhering to a shamanic tradition (see Thomas and Humphrey 1996), and the Roman Empire had a flexible pantheon of deities which was in no way organized along the same lines as what we call today the 'world religions'. The Japanese state emerged as powerful with the largely 'animistic' cult of the divine ruler now called Shintoism (even if today Shintoism has been neutralized into a less threatening form of nature worship).

As a former student of Stanley Tambiah, I admire his theories about how Buddhism came to be identified with the polity in Southeast Asia. But he (in contrast to his rival Spiro) emphasized how animism, 'supernaturalism', amulets and magic were integrated into Buddhist polities, not displaced or defeated by them. So any sort of evolutionary progression from 'animism' to the state is disproved here.

C) Religious change and Modernity

Many theorists have argued that the modern notion of 'religion' developed at the same time as 'secularism', since it was necessary to demarcate a form of 'non-religion' in order to demarcate the domain of religion. I think both authors need to pay much more analytic attention to secularism, which has of course been very important to the Marxist governments of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and in fact these governments have developed a form of state atheism (incorporating its own hero cults, such as the cult of Ho Chi Minh) which had kept capitalism at bay until recent decades.

Capitalism is not in any way opposed to religion, and the two are often allied, as we have known since Weber's work on the Protestant Ethic. The idea that 'critical science' overcomes capitalism, European democracies neglect capitalism (how is that possible?) and the US combines science and capitalism makes no sense to me. The US is and has always been a more religiously committed and thus less 'secular' society than much of Western Europe, but that does not seem to have led to the union of science and capitalism in any realistic way. (Unfortunately, creationism and the denial of global warming are all ways in which American Christian religious leaders are very 'anti-science'). Benjamin's (1991) idea that capitalism can be the functional equivalent of religion has not been shown to be particularly prescient, but certainly the atheistic regimes of the former USSR, China and Vietnam have tried (largely unsuccessfully) to make communism the functional equivalent of religion.

Neither science nor capitalism addresses ethical issues, and while it is not necessary to be 'religious' to address these issues, the need for a social consensus about ethics and morality may be a reason for religion to persist in 'modern' industrialized countries.

In speaking of Southeast Asia as a whole, however, it is not possible to argue that 'Buddhist heritage' is a reason for the survival of religion. First, of course, Islam is numerically the largest religion in Southeast Asia, and Christianity is also very important (in the Philippines, Vietnam and among ethnic minorities in the highlands). Even in a supposedly 'Buddhist' country like Vietnam, Confucian morality has been much more influential than Buddhist teachings in regulating daily life and behavioral norms, while Buddhism is seen as a path of self-cultivation.

The scriptural traditions (what is meant, I assume, by the rather unfortunate phrase 'book religion') have never been as influential as various forms of practice, and it was a scholarly folly to have once believed that they were.

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Multiplicity and Contextuality in Southeast Asian Religiosity

Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger's study of three configurations of religion in Southeast Asia points to the need for non-Western and, in particular, Southeast Asian cultures and histories to assume the epistemological status of sources of general concepts and theories in the international academy. This paper brings the anthropology of religion, originally a discipline that studied the cultures of Europe's so-called 'premodern others', into conversation with the sociology of religion, a discipline whose founders imagined as being the reflective study of Europe's own ostensibly 'modern' self. Anthropology has historically emphasised and successfully argued for multiplicity and difference, while European sociology has aimed, largely unsuccessfully, to decipher universal principles of 'modern' social organisation.

In the now-receding era of Western global hegemony, sociology held an epistemologically superior position to anthropology in the Western, and indeed in global, academy. The theories emerging from sociology's reflective studies of Western social formations were assumed, in fact, presumed, to be of general relevance and universal applicability. In contrast, theories emerging from anthropology were typically assumed to be 'local' and relevant only to specific non-Western, 'premodern' settings. As Volker Gottowik observes in his response, the expertise of the DORISEA network has been based upon,

> *"the rich ethnographic experiences collected by members of this network in months of empirical research in a variety of areas in Southeast Asia. However, this expertise is largely insignificant when it comes to challenging systems theory, as only other theories are capable of doing this."* (p. 27)

This epistemological hierarchy, of sociology above anthropology, is now being challenged, and with it the presumptions of 20th century sociological theory. Rehbein and Sprenger's paper is an attempt to anthropologise sociology, and contributes to the decentring of European-based and European-derived sociology of religion. Their opening suggestion that the diverse configurations of religion found in Southeast Asia, "bear family resemblances in Wittgenstein's … sense" and cannot be "subsume[d] … under one logic or universal concept" (p. 7) presents a fundamental challenge to European sociology and social theory more broadly. Rehbein and Sprenger argue that social theory needs to abandon its essentialist obsession with ostensible general principles derived from the historically and culturally limited experience of post-Enlightenment Europe. As the many studies of religion—however we understand this term—in Southeast Asia have repeatedly demonstrated, attempts to employ European sociology of religion and theories of modernity in this part of the world have consistently pointed to the limits and inadequacies of European sociology.

However, it is still the case that many scholars of religion in Southeast Asia limit the theoretical aspect of their work to critiquing European sociology of religion, rather than developing alternative positive models that represent the diversity of religious expression and the changes in ritual and practice now underway in the region. Rehbein and Sprenger's paper is an attempt to conceptualise Southeast Asian religiosity in its own terms, a project with which I am in full sympathy.

There is a need for theoretical models that take multiplicity, and potential incommensurability amongst diverse co-existing religious expressions, as the starting point. As Rehbein and Sprenger note, Southeast Asian animisms are based on an awareness and acceptance of irreducible difference, complexity, and multiplicity. Animism negotiates the incommensurability of different spirits and their specific rituals of propitiation and communication through strategic means of ritual action, not by any attempt to establish or impose transcendent conceptual or doctrinal unity.

Wittgenstein's argument that language-based concepts lack unifying essences or general, universal bases is a productive point of departure for rethinking religion at the global level. I suggest that another idea that may be drawn upon in further developing this model is the repeated reference to the 'contextuality' of social and cultural life, including religion, in studies of Southeast Asia. As Rehbein and Sprenger note,

> *"Contrary to the unifying tendencies of world religions, … animism [in Southeast Asia] does not provide a set of standardized ritual rules but a set of concepts which allow to legitimate different ritual rules …. Animism thus produces and manages differences in society, place and cosmos."* (p. 10)

They further observe, "Animism allows shifting the boundary between inside and outside according to context" (p. 11). The repeatedly observed, but still poorly theorised, contextuality of Southeast Asian cultures needs to be given more prominence in theories of religion in the region. Indeed, there is the potential for the study of the contextuality of Southeast Asian religiosity to contribute to studies

of other dimensions of culture in the region, such as Penny Van Esterik's (2000) argument that Thai gender is multiple and contextual.

As Thomas Engelbert notes in his response, Rehbein and Sprenger in fact point to factors that are not only relevant to Southeast Asia but which are valid "perhaps for the whole of Asia, including India and China" (p. 25). Indeed, Rehbein and Sprenger describe Southeast Asian religiosity in ways that closely parallel Michael Carrithers (2000) account of what he calls the 'polytropy' of Indian religiosity. Carrithers seeks to understand the forms of

> *"social intercourse within a great and variegated civilisation, where one is brought daily into necessary and necessarily peaceable contact with persons of many practices and beliefs."*
>
> *Carrithers 2000, 835*

While writing only of India, Carrithers' words closely echo studies of culture and religion in Southeast Asia.

Carrithers observes that studies of Indian religiosity need to come to terms with,

> *"a degree of slipperiness, an ability to be enthused by now one religious figure and now another, and perhaps throughout to maintain worship of a third … that is profoundly South Asian and yet difficult to bring decisively within the grasp of scholarship."*
>
> *Carrithers 2000, 832*

In further reflecting on the anthropology of religion in India, he notes,

> *"[S]cholars writing on areas of South Asia from the Himalayas to Sri Lanka have attested again and again to the pervasiveness of this religious pluralism."*
>
> *Carrithers 2000, 832*

Scholars of South Asia have drawn on expressions such as, 'Indic eclecticism', the "fluidity of attitude towards religious identity", and the "complex and often shifting nature of religious identity" in describing the region (Carrithers 2000, 833). However, Carrithers finds all these attempts to grasp Indian religiosity inadequate, and instead proposes a new model that he terms 'polytropy'. For Carrithers, polytropy refers to the,

> *"eclecticism and fluidity of South Asian religious life. I coin the word from the Greek poly, 'many', and tropos, 'turning', to capture the sense in which people turn toward many sources for their spiritual sustenance, hope, relief, or defence…. This points to a cosmopolitanism in social and spiritual relations which I take to be the norm, rather than the exception, in South Asia."*
>
> *Carrithers 2000, 834*

Of particular relevance to studies of religiosity in Southeast Asia is Carrithers' argument that the forms of ritual expression and social relationship more broadly that emerge from South Asian cosmopolitanism, "are hierarchical and manifested through deeply ingrained and highly stylized corporeal and sensual acts of worship, puja" (Carrithers 2000, 835). Carrithers argues that the key religious attitude in Indian religious systems is 'respect', which is expressed through embodied ritual practice not through statements of belief or doctrinal faith. Carrithers sees this as demonstrating "a particularly Indic quality" (Carrithers 2000, 835). However, scholars researching Southeast Asia will also see this as an apt account of much religious expression in the region. In Buddhist and animist Southeast Asia the fundamental religious attitude is not based on any statement of belief or profession of faith, but rather is an embodied demonstration of respect manifested through the prostration of the body and, most importantly, the bringing together of the hands at the level of the chest or the head. As Carrithers observes of South Asia,

> *"Puja expresses a relationship, not a concept, just as a handshake may express a relationship. This social character is demonstrated by the absolutely minimal act necessary to puja, the anjali, the obeisance with joined prayerful hands and the inclination or prostration of the body toward the divine person."*
>
> *Carrithers 2000, 835*

This same embodiment of religious respect is the foundation of ritual practice from India, through mainland Southeast Asia and across China and East Asia. In Thailand, "stylized corporeal and sensual acts of worship" are also called *puja*, pronounced locally as *bucha*, with the *anjali* described by the Thai term *wai*, which is a verb, not a noun. Indeed, the borrowed Sanskrit/Pali term *puja/bucha* is also a verb in Thai, 'to worship', indicating the fundamental cultural emphasis on religiosity as embodied action rather than belief or faith. Indeed, in Thailand inquiries about one's religious affiliation are not expressed in terms of "What religion do you believe in?" but rather "What religion do you *respect*?" (*nap-theu sāsānā arai?*). Adam Chau (2011) has productively drawn on Carrithers' account of polytropy in studying religiosity in China. Given that Southeast Asia has always been a site of intersections between India and China, bringing contemporary studies of religion in this region into direct dialogue with accounts of religion in China and India will be productive, especially given that scholars researching these two regions are struggling with precisely the same issues of theorisation and categorisation.

On a critical note, I agree with Michael Dickhardt's observation that the meaning of the authors' notion of a 'virtual animistic village' is unclear (p. 24). I am not sure what the term 'virtual'

means here. Does it refer to the impact of the Internet in rural Southeast Asia, with everyday life being increasingly lived online in virtual spaces? Is Rehbein and Sprenger's use of this term intended to imply that animist villagers in Southeast Asia now have access to the Internet, perhaps via smart phones or even home computers, and live their animist lives 'virtually'? The authors do not appear to suggest this, but rather use the term 'virtual' in a somewhat dated pre-Internet era sense of 'model' or 'idealised'. If this is the case, then another term needs to be found to avoid confusion, as in recent years 'virtual' has primarily come to denote social life as lived online in cyberspace.

I am also not sure that the notion of a 'virtual animist village' is particularly productive in developing theoretical models for the contemporary situation. An idealised notion of rural religiosity may perhaps have been useful historically, but urbanisation is the key transformative phenomenon of recent decades and with it the emergence of new forms of religious expression out of the conditions of marketised and mediatised life in the industrial Southeast Asian city.

The notion of an animist Southeast Asian metropolis may perhaps be more productive for theoretical development, as the metropolis is now the most influential form of social organisation in the region and it is within urban spaces that many new forms of animist ritual practice are emerging. The 21st century Southeast Asian city is inhabited by a plethora of spirits and supernatural powers, and understanding the (re)enchantment of urban spaces can perhaps contribute more directly to decentring the Eurocentrism of social theory, given that 20th century sociology imagined the modern industrial city as necessarily being a site of rationalisation, disenchantment, and growing secularism.

Rehbein and Sprenger pose the historical question of "[W]hy would [Southeast Asian] animists take up world religions in the first place?" (p. 11). The answer they give is in terms of scale and state formation,

> *"Now there is a rather obvious relationship between world religions and the larger communities beyond the village. World religions appear as means to create states and other supralocal communities. We suggest that, seen from the Southeast Asian village, world religion is management of difference as well, but on a different scale, in a different quality—a scale and quality that are nevertheless plausible and connective to animism and the lingua franca of localisation."* (p. 10)

However, in the context of 21st urban animism, I would reverse this question and ask, "Why are followers of world religions in mainland Southeast Asia now increasingly taking up animism?"

In terms Rehbein and Sprenger's theorisation of expanding scales of religious expression, 21st century urban animisms are fundamentally different from the animisms that they present as characterising the 'virtual village'. Many 21st century urban animisms have transcended the placed-boundedness of village animisms to now become translocal, and hence capable of fulfilling sociological functions previously limited to world religions. Rehbein and Sprenger do note that Lehman (2003) proposed a 'pluralist model' of the adoption of world religions, which "integrated local spirits into the idiom of the Hindu pantheon with its potentially endless differentiation of gods in local guise" (p. 11). In this setting, "Brahmanism was translatable into the idiom of animist differentiation" (p. 11), and the authors note that,

> *"Concepts from local animisms jump scales [from village to state] in ways that were perfected by world religions. Animisms can rise to manage differences on the state level that can be supralocal, defining the kingdom, but are not universal, as the royally sanctioned Burmese nat pantheon … On the other hand, world religions are forced into the service of animist goals …"* (p. 12)

However, Rehbein and Sprenger overlook the transformative role of new media in enabling urban animisms to jump scales. It is by inhabiting the 'virtual' spaces of mediatised life that Southeast Asian urban animisms can now become translocal and form part of national-level religious life. This capacity for urban animisms to become translocal—enabled by new media—permits them to move into social and political spaces that were formerly the domain of 'world religions' as socially integrative national-level modalities in Southeast Asia. Indeed, it is mediatisation that permits 21st century urban animisms to fulfill sociological 'functions' that Rehbein and Sprenger argue were previously the domain of world religions, and in some cases can now even be appropriated by the Southeast Asian state (Jackson 2009).

On another critical note, while I have followed Rehbein and Sprenger in using 'animism' in this review, I am not sure that this term is the best descriptor for all forms of non-orthodox urban religiosity in contemporary Southeast Asia. Some forms of non-orthodox religiosity are not directly related to communication with spirits. For example, the Thai cult of amulets, which emerged in its current form only after World War II and whose followers imagine as being an integral part of Thai Buddhism, is based on ritual blessing and empowerment by formally ordained Buddhist monks. Here the 'mainstream' 'doctrinal, scriptural tradition' (p. 8) is the foundation for new forms of 'animism' based on empowered objects. If this phenomenon is 'animist', then perhaps we need to describe the sociologically

dominant form of 21st century Thai Buddhism as animist, not as a religion, with animism becoming the foundation and starting point for understanding urban as well as rural Thai religiosity. However, terminological debates aside, I agree fully with the authors' statement that we need to reverse "the image of animism" that appeared in earlier studies of Southeast Asia, "What appeared as a residual category from a point of view that prioritises world religions, now becomes a perspective in its own right" (p. 8).

Furthermore, I would not describe 21st century urban supernaturalisms in Southeast Asia as demonstrating 'resilience' (p. 8). 'Resilience' tends to imply that the power and relevance of contemporary modalities of religiosity are based primarily on a continuing connection with the past. While I do not deny the ongoing influence of established forms of animism, a central issue in developing theoretical models that imagine Southeast Asian religiosity in its own terms is to see urban supernaturalism as a contemporary phenomenon that emerges out of the conditions of marketised, mediatised life in the city. Urban forms of supernaturalism are not mere transplants from rural villages, but emerge as part of the cultural life of the 21st century Southeast Asian metropolis. Understanding this requires an additional theoretical reversal of 20th century European sociology. It requires a theory of 21st century urban life as productive of re-enchantment, rather than disenchantment.

A parting question: Is there in fact any broader perspective that can relate all the phenomena of Southeast Asian religiosity into a single model? Or is it perhaps the case that there is no unity to what we see, but only a multiplicity of context-specific processes that overlap, *à la* Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance, but which do not share any functional or rationally discernible core? Is the real challenge awaiting us that of taking the animist perspective seriously, and using it as the basis of a re-imagined epistemology that abandons attempts at universal intellectualisings and instead seeks out pragmatic ways of conceptually negotiating the irreducible multiplicity of a world that, to date, has refused all attempts to have its diversity reduced to singularities and unities?

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Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger have produced an invigorating essay concerning the articulation of various forms of religious life in mainland Southeast Asia. This would be ambitious enough, but they link it to other complex issues—including but not limited to a broad conceptualization of animism, an account of the development of modernity in Europe and globally, and an argument concerning the definition and manifestation of religion more generally. All this makes for very stimulating reading and invites a lot of discussion, including the insightful responses already on hand (to which the original authors offer thoughtful replies, even if they appear to gloss over some of the deeper criticism). For reasons of space I attend primarily to early parts of the essay.

The document also appears to be the culminating report on the research organized by the DORISEA research network. It stands as testimony to the great success of a programme that included a set of independent yet related ethnographic projects within a framework of collective theoretical discussion. This is surely a model that other groups could follow.

The essay at hand is one of a number of manifestations of a shift in the anthropology of religion from a nominalist and interpretivist phase back to stronger model building. Such models come in many forms and from many quarters, including cognitivist, neo-structuralist, and social evolutionary thought. Rehbein and Sprenger's model draws, indirectly and ambivalently, from the latter two. There are 'neo-structuralist' inclinations in the metaphor of the kaleidoscope, the significance of binary oppositions (inside/outside), and the productive idea that animism "produces and manages differences" (p. 10). Despite the authors' accurate disclaimers, I take the model to be also evolutionary in the sense that it describes a largely irreversible growth in complexity of form and system (among many other indications, the nod to the concept of the axial age). Phrased without value judgments, teleological assumptions, notions of 'progress', or biological and other reductionisms, and following multilinear paths, there is nothing wrong with evolutionary models. An attractive feature of their model is that successive configurations do not simply replace each other so much as embed and decenter earlier ones that continue to be relevant and salient in certain contexts.

I agree with the authors that the general definition of religion we have now is problematic, not least because of its vague quality. However, I disagree with their response insofar as they appear to assume that there *is* a right definition and that they have found it. This enables them to pinpoint exactly when religion begins and what it comprehends. I think they could be clearer that their definition is heuristic and hence that for other purposes other definitions might be equally useful. (It also fits too neatly with the missionizing proclivities of those powerful institutions that are granted their identification as 'religions'.)

I think the authors could clarify what distinguishes their account from the somewhat parallel but by no means identical efforts of, on the one hand, Philippe Descola (2013a; 2013b), and on the other hand, Talal Asad (2003) (of course, each very different from the other). One question is in what sense the referent of 'religion' is an object in the world. To oversimplify their subtle accounts, for Asad religion is a product of circumscription by the modern state; for Descola it is perhaps a secondary phenomenon characteristic of analogic ontologies. Such models leave one asking, what then produces the feeling there is still something in common among a broader range of forms—or better, a Wittgenstein family, as Rehbein and Sprenger rightly suggest? One way to avoid objectivizing tendencies is to turn to verbal or adjectival forms rather than nouns. I am in sympathy when Rehbein and Sprenger undermine their attempt at precision by using the adjective 'religious' in a broader fashion. But then, it has to be said, there remains some question as to what it describes.

I am on common ground with Rehbein and Sprenger when they write about the articulation of immanence and transcendence. I have talked about using the pair of terms in two ways—first, in respect to distinguishing where 'religion' itself can be understood to be immanent or transcendent to society (the former being the case in most premodern contexts and the latter under modernity); and second in respect to distinguishing whether religious forces and beings are conceived or located primarily within the world or outside it (corresponding very roughly to the distinction drawn by Rehbein and Sprenger between animism and world religions such as Buddhism) (Lambek 2013). In my address to the last DORISEA conference I suggested that one way to conceive religion is

> *"as precisely that sphere of human activity concerned with articulating (in thought and practice) the boundaries and relationship* between *immanence and transcendence."*
>
> Lambek 2015

This frees us from identifying religion or the religious with transcendence per se. But it is important to keep in mind that immanence and transcendence are best seen relative to one another and in dynamic, recursive relations, operating at a number of levels of inclusion. This conforms to the authors' ingenious depiction of transcendence as (marking) "a specific form of difficulty in communicating" (p. 10).

I am not clear why (except from scholarly habit in the region) the term animism is applied to religious activity at the community level, here defined as "collectives which link human and non-human beings together" (p. 7 and p. 9). The definition is not the one used by Descola, which has the virtue of precision, and which appears to apply primarily to people who draw heavily on hunting and gathering as a mode of subsistence. Hence I am uncertain whether the term animism best applies—or applies differently—to the few remaining forest peoples of Southeast Asia and whether the authors imagine the 'experimental' village to be of this order, i.e. relying primarily on a foraging mode of subsistence, and whether the practices of primarily agricultural and settled communities should be conceived differently, perhaps along the lines of Descola's ontology of analogism. However this would be unhelpful in distinguishing this world from the Brahman and Buddhist ones that encompassed them. As an aside, although Descola is very shy about linking his ontologies to social complexity or the kinds of ecological and political organization outlined by evolutionary anthropologists in the school of Julian Steward, in fact it is remarkable that the societies in the Americas he describes as characterized by analogism rather than animism are precisely those that were called 'civilizations' or that had pre-Columbian states. Incas and Aztecs both had empires, but ostensibly without 'world religions'.

In any case, if the models of Rehbein and Sprenger, on one hand, and Descola, on the other, do not match up, their respective virtues and problems may be complementary. Unlike Rehbein and Sprenger, Descola cannot show what the nature of the articulation of distinct forms (ontologies) might look like in actual social formations.

Much of the current manifestation of Southeast Asian 'animism' concerns spirit possession. In Descola's model this is found under analogism. Animism is characterized by the performance of shamans who take on the perspectives of other beings rather than by spirit mediums who are temporarily displaced by other beings, but perhaps the difference between them is not so clear everywhere in the region. I do not see that classifying spirit possession as either animism or analogism is a particularly helpful way to understand it.

With respect to the attraction of the world religions for responding to or making sense of the enlarged worlds of village communities encapsulated first in expansive land-based states and then in the colonial and postcolonial global market, it might prove useful to examine the comparable argument made by Robin Horton (1967; 1982) with respect to Africa and subsequently criticized for its intellectualist assumptions.

Incidentally, I note an intellectualist bias in Rehbein's and Sprenger's account of religion, one that begins with how people think about the world, thus with questions of rationality and meaning, rather than action. Different approaches might prioritize either experience or ritual. If the focus were on ritual I am not certain the manifestations found in the original village communities would look distinctly animist or that such a sharp line between the animist and what follows could be drawn. This is also perhaps one place where the absence of women's voices among the authors and original respondents might be significant. One cannot help wondering to what degree the perspective on religion might look different if gendered perspectives were made explicit?

At the other end of the spectrum of historical complexity, Descola's model of naturalism might help avoid some of the ambiguity concerning whether science or capitalism has been the prime mover in compartmentalizing religion and how these continue or not to articulate with one another. Certainly Rehbein and Sprenger are right in suggesting the process is not one of full displacement or replacement but rather how the religious gets reimagined in light of science or capitalism and how such re-imaginings take different forms or have different emphases among different sectors of society, just as Weber said. More broadly the question is how these various forms articulate with one another and whether primarily through competition and conflict or complementarity and coexistence.

The comments by other members of the DORISEA network considerably clarify the picture, notably by pointing out the fact, unperceived by me, that the paradigmatic case here is Laos. Demarcating the unit of study is always difficult for anthropologists; in this case it is unclear to me whether the differences between Laos and neighbouring Vietnam, say, might not be as large as those between Laos and Indonesia, or even Laos and Sri Lanka. I am not an expert on Southeast Asia so I must speak cautiously, but I agree the authors could distinguish more explicitly influences coming from South Asia, such as the model of the galactic polity, from those coming from China, such as Confucianism, and how these articulate with one another in various places. With respect to Islam the question is whether polities based primarily on trade rather than agricultural production, and maritime rather than land-based forms of empire, produce their own distinctive configurations. Here again arises the tension we all face as scholars between acknowledging the historically particular tendencies and building comprehensive models as so ably handled in the configurations developed by Rehbein and Sprenger.

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Louis Pasteur, the unquestioned founder of the study of modern European chemistry and disease pathology, became famous for the study of microbial fermentation and germ theory. He was also a devout Catholic. He was motivated to study science by the death of three of his children by infectious disease. He wanted to figure out how life (i.e. bacterial growth and viruses) could cause death. He was also motivated by what he believed was an anti-Catholic and patently un-scientific theory prevalent in the 19th century—the theory of spontaneous generation. Proponents of spontaneous generation argued that mold growing on rotting vegetables was proof that life came from nothing. Pasteur wanted to prove that only God could create life. He showed that bacterial growth that results through the rotting of fruits, vegetables, and animals was not a sign that life comes from death. The slow rotting death of grapes don't create new life. Only God, Pasteur argued, could create life out of nothing. Bacterial growth was not life from death or life from non-life, but the sign of germs present in the atmosphere that were already alive and used the rotting fruit as a platform to grow. Life came from life. The first life came from God (Debré 2000).

Pasteur was not the only major scientist influenced by religion and the supernatural. Thomas Edison, the modern inventor of electronic light and a whole host of electric-based inventions, was a student of telekinesis, telepathy, and the study of ghosts. He undertook spiritualist and psychical research. Isaac Newton was a member of the Society for Psychical Research and was a practicing alchemist who believed in a spiritual plane of existence. William Crookes, the founder of the study of spectrosophy and inventor of the vacuum tube, spectral analysis of chemicals, and discoveries which led to everything from the possibilities of televisions, forensic science, and the detection of nuclear radiation, was so disturbed by the untimely death of his brother, that he practiced séances, joined the Theosophists, believed in realms of ghosts, gods, and monsters (who were like, he argued, different colors on a spectrum). Most of these basic biographical facts are commonplace to historians of science and medicine, like Projit Mukharji (who has taught me most of these facts over always enlightening conversations); however, they are inconvenient facts to historians and anthropologists of religion like me who are very comfortable with the way we separate religion and science.

The line between religion and science is a major subject of Boike Rehbein and Guido Sprenger's sophisticated reflection on religion in Southeast Asia. I was inspired by their thought experiment and creation of the 'virtual village' to offer my own thought experiments on how we think about science and religion. While I found myself continually inspired by their essay and was particularly impressed with their section on capitalism, there were two ideas that got me thinking about Pasteur and Crookes and how we think about Southeast Asian Buddhism. First they write: "We argue that the concept of religion in the sense in which it is mostly used only applies to a particular European configuration and not to the ones studied in this paper" (p. 7). Furthermore, they state: "Religion thus produces and answers important questions which capitalism and science cannot address" (p. 8). What if we took this idea further and didn't call Buddhism or animism religions at all. What if we simply saw Buddhism and animism as problem-solving technologies that can only be understood within their own very specific (and not virtual) networks of knowledge collecting, storing, retrieving, and scheming (i.e. epistemes)? What if we abandoned the categories of science and religion (and 'animism' for good measure) in our studies?

Scientists are not part of a special class of people that don't ask questions they can't answer. Indeed, as Crookes, Newton, Edison and hundreds of other scientists have shown, scientists ask similar questions about the nature of existence that non-scientists do—those questions that aren't easily answered by mere observation. Crookes wanted to know why his brother died and if he could communicate with him. He approached this through his studies of the light spectrum. He observed that some people were born with the ability to see a wide range of colors and the differences between them, while others could see only a limited range. He figured that some people (mediums, ghost hunters, spiritualists, mystics) just could see a greater range of reality and that ghosts and god were simply out of the range of most humans. Spiritual entities weren't different in kind. They were real and research was the way to prove that (e.g., Crooks 2012 [1874]). Edison believed in different types of waves, cathodes, radio, ultraviolet, etc. Why couldn't telepathy simply be a way of manipulating another type of wave across long distances just the way he could use electricity to communicate and control objects over long distances? For many scientists, the Big Bang is true, but also is the idea that some entity caused it to 'bang' in the first place. Like Pasteur argued—something can't come of nothing.

Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia possess what scientists possess: technologies of communication (Pali, formulaic incantations), technologies of recording data (palm-leaf and mulberry paper, paintings and drawings), lab coats (*jivara*/robes), instruments (bowls, statues, incense, body postures), impressive resumes (stories of their teachers, a lineage of experts from faraway lands), recommendation letter writers (other monks), manuals of best practices and 'published' papers (astrological,

protective, ritual, and medical manuals), institutions, daily regimens, annual reviews, etc. Moreover, how different really are Buddhist monks from 'animist' experts who used similar tools, had their own uniforms, their own teaching lineages, their own manuals, and their own regimens of practice? Buddhist monks also communicated with ghosts, gods, monsters, and spirits and used protective and healing magic long before migrating to Southeast Asia as shown by DeCaroli (2004), Kinnard (1999), and many others. There is very little evidence that monks replaced animist practitioners (*weikza*, *mo wiset*, *phra brohm*, *mo du*, *nak xin*, *nak bot*, *siddhi*, etc.) in Southeast Asia. They both operate today and often perform rituals together, train with similar teachers, and many monks, because of temporary ordination, were animist practitioners and vice versa. Many monks practice what we might call animism as well. Most animists in Southeast Asia practice some sort of asceticism, take vows, have their own initiations, and read Buddhist texts. In the early days of Buddhism(s) in Southeast Asia, monks brought their own protective, prognosticatory, mneumonic, astrological, and healing technologies. They were better organized, had nicer uniforms, had more published papers, and eventually had more impressive universities and laboratories than most animists. However, they were simply another local group of experts, not a members of a world religion that answered questions the animists could not. Both sets of experts were trying to answer questions about the nature of the human body, the meaning if any of the stars and planets, the ability to live on after death, and the way to avoid pain from loneliness, disease, violence, and heartache. There were no virtual or general animists or Buddhists, there were individuals and specific teaching lineages that possessed their own, as Donna Haraway (1988) would say, 'situated knowledges'. Knowledge doesn't enter into a village divorced from the material vehicles of texts, oral commentaries and sermons, ritual implements, teaching lineages, etc. As Bruno Latour has shown through many studies, the scientific discoveries of people like Pasteur would have been impossible without the institutions of laboratories, the concept of published papers and academic lectures, as well as personal motivations/tragedies, previously held/familial beliefs, and the like (e.g., Latour 1993; 2010).

This situated and highly technical knowledge brought by individual Buddhists and their particular teaching lineages is clearly seen from any cursory investigation of the manuscript libraries throughout the region. The most popular, oldest, and widespread texts include, mostly vernacular, chronicles of the lives of famous nuns, monks, cosmological maps, astrological guides, and stories of the previous lives of the Buddha (*jātaka*). There are guides for classical dancers and musicians replete with paintings of instruments and costumes. Many texts contain recipes for magical elixirs and herbal medicine. There are even entire collections of manuscripts which contain illustrated manuals on how to care for elephants, cats, and horses. These manuscripts are often the only visual witness we have to pre-modern Burmese, Siamese, Cambodian, and Lao culture and provide information to not only religious studies and scholars of jurisprudence, but also environmental historians and botanists. These types of protective and healing manuals, vernacular stories, and ritual instructions far outnumber Pali texts, philosophical reflections (almost none), didactic ethical sermons, and meditation guides, or speculative texts about the nature of *nibbana*. The manuscript libraries throughout the region not only contain many more vernacular and bi-lingual manuscripts, they also contain 'secular' texts like medical, astrological, romances and adventures, etc. and these secular texts are often bound with Pali and vernacular 'religious' texts. These genres are so mixed that dividing them along secular/religious lines is untenable. For example, I was surprised when one manuscript I opened in Lampang (Thailand) contained a *suat mon* (Pali ritual chanting book), a *waiyakon*/*vyākaraṇa* (a vernacular text explaining some minor grammatical points), and a vernacular medical text (See the collection held at the Center for the Promotion of Art and Culture in Chiang Mai (CPAC): LP 0470008100.). The training at these monasteries was non-standardized. Orthography, colophons styles, votive declarations, choice of what texts to copy or sponsor, and vocabulary in manuscripts all point to highly independent teachers and students whose training was more organic than systematic. There seems to have been no standard as to when a novice or monk was considered 'trained'. There seems to have been no standard examination system, and there is no evidence of social events like 'graduation'. Before the modern period, we have very little evidence of how Buddhist monks taught about *nibbana*, the nature of the self, impermanence, and other 'higher' (if we follow a particular type of Protestant idea of religion as non-ritualistic, metaphysical, and non-material) ideals, but we extensive evidence of how they taught ritual, local history, the value of giving, medicine, astrology, cosmology, and protection against poison, starvation, and the like. Finally, there was no overarching standard curriculum at these or other monastic schools. These teachers and others did not systematically copy, translate or comment on texts that fall into any discernable chronological, regional, or thematic order. Buddhism was not a complete package that was sized up to an animist package.

Scholars of Buddhist Studies spent a considerable amount of time trying to prove that Buddhism is a religion assuming that religion, animism, and science are natural categories. However, what if we spent our time trying to show that Catholicism,

Islam, Shinto, etc. were bodies of situated knowledges/sciences (or epistemes) like Buddhism with their own instruments, traditions, institutions, technologies of data collection, etc. Just like religions, science(s) thrive not on truth, but developing theories and technologies to uncover mysteries. Without the very notion of the 'unknown', neither science nor religion would continue. They are both mystery dependent. Both confront and try to solve similar problems of everyday living and human speculation.

The second idea that Rehbein and Sprenger presented that caused me to reflect on the divisions between animism and Buddhism was: "what purpose could the adoption of a so-called world religion serve for the villages a specific social formation?" I believe that the term 'adoption' here assumes a great deal. Adoption, from the Latin *optāre* (to choose/to select), leads one to believe that Buddhism was intentionally chosen one village at a time, one leader at a time. We have some vernacular and Pali chronicles that state certain leaders choose one teaching lineage and ordination ritual from among different Buddhist groups, but nearly no evidence that leaders chose or rejected a particular Buddhist ordination/teaching lineage instead of 'animism' or rejected a particular Buddhist lineage because they wanted to adhere to 'animism'. Buddhists had to honor local deities and local spirits. The very idea of intentionally choosing Buddhism as one of two choices both reifies Buddhism as one thing and animism as one thing, each with their own definable parameters. The idea of this choice at a particular place and time can only be assumed through the mental exercise of the virtual village. We have no evidence that any actual village made this conscious choice or know the names of the people chosen and doing the choosing. When the chronicles do talk about the origins of a particular Buddhist lineage in a specific place in Southeast Asia they almost universally include a story in which there is not a 'choice' to adopt Buddhism as a general religion, but a particular historical (and fantastic) event that causes them to establish a particular Buddhist stupa or a particular Buddha image in a specific place. People did not write about consciously choosing one philosophical, ethical, or religious set of ideas over another one, but usually about having a particular material item and its attendants thankfully grace them with their presence. Establishing a particular lineage meant establishing a particular powerful object under the guidance of a local ruler.

This leads me back to the idea that Buddhism is a set of technologies and well-organized group of technical experts that can be useful in all sorts of daily situations. We do not wonder why, for example, why a small town in South Korea or Peru consciously decides to choose to adopt a computer or, perhaps, more broadly, the 'internet'. We can sometimes trace exactly how they did it through the construction of infrastructure, the purchase of equipment, etc. However, we rarely speculate on why. Why does a particular town in the California or Italy consciously chose to adopt yoga or mental health care? These regimes of knowledge, these technologies for better living and their accompanying experts, uniforms, rituals, institutions, stories of past success, etc. are slowly incorporated into a place through one-to-one contact, the quiet setting up of small offices, clinics, and studios, people who explore and become curious slowly overtime. Only after a regime of knowledge and the emissaries of larger epistemes become commonplace do higher level authorities have to make choices to allow larger institutions to be built and budget lines to be developed. Buddhist practice is popular in Argentina, France, Israel, Australia, Denmark, South Africa, etc. Perhaps over time whole neighborhoods in Lisbon or Canberra will become 'Buddhist'. It won't be a conscious choice of the village as a thinking block and it won't be one type of Buddhism in that is adopted wholeheartedly and completely. More likely, it will be a slow process characterized by the slow popularity of different Buddhist stories that circulate, the gradual immigration of ethnic Asian and Buddhist families, the slow purchase by lots of individuals at different times of meditation mats, incense sticks, and small Buddha images, and the subtle opening of small Buddhist centers for reading of texts, practice of rituals and meditation, and hearing of stories and sermons. All of these small things will happen before the first monastery is built and long before, if ever, the political leaders of these places decide to 'adopt' Buddhism for themselves and start to place Buddhist symbols on the side of buildings, pay for the education of masses of Buddhist students, and approve standardized Buddhist curricula.

All of the above is, of course, my own mental exercise, for we know precious little about the history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, especially its earliest history. Chronicles are not daily news reports, but after-the-fact reasonings and ideal narratives that force a series of disparate past events into a singular narrative that justifies the present. Rehbein and Sprenger have given us an intricate and useful tool to think about how the jumble of the present animism, Buddhism, and capitalism makes sense *thinking together* and *thinking apart*.

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Because I did not participate in the DORISEA project and being a relative outsider with regard to the debate in this paper, I will restrict myself to a few points.

This paper examines religious change in mainland southeast Asia in the context of a seemingly evolutionary development from local attachments to global capitalism. For me as a historian—and lacking the in depth expertise in religious studies—it would have been helpful to know what broader debates in the field of religious studies are addressed here. Reading the papers and the comments I do not get a clear picture where it features on the international agenda of religious studies, nor with whom the authors explicitly intend to engage.

Although the paper suggests a historical sequence running from local/animism to global/capitalism, the paper is in a strange sense also very a-historical. The very abstract nature of the paper does not offer room for an agency-oriented approach which clarifies what specific forms religion took in particular historical contexts. I do not mean to suggest that the authors should have written a handbook, but even given the limited scope of this paper there should have been more sensitivity for important historical circumstances in which people performed particular religious practices.

In that context emerges the question whether we can actually speak of 'Buddhism' as a rather coherent, unproblematic, and for that matter hegemonic category in pre-colonial Southeast Asia. Like Hinduism, Buddhism was made into a single category by 19th European orientalists, who gave priority to a textual approach, and in doing so, displayed little interest in specific local practices. Orientalism reinforced to a large extent political processes which moved religious practices into orthodox frameworks.

It is in this context risky to use the term 'integration' in a rather unproblematic way to indicate that local beliefs and notions of Buddhism were apparently mixed into a new integrated(?) system. Integration suggests a new balance and totality and excludes the possibility of tensions, contestation and unequal power relationships.

What strikes me further is that towards the end of the paper the discussion on global capitalism lacks a clear Southeast Asian context. It even gives me the impression that the main, and abstract line of thought in the paper could have been presented without any reference to mainland SEA at all. A more detailed reference to new forms of piety which emerge alongside and in close connection with global capitalism in contemporary Southeast Asia deserves for instance careful attention and analysis.

To exclude the *longue durée* of state formation in mainland SEA as a decisive factor in the shaping of new religious regimes and to ignore the work by Victor Lieberman (2003; 2009) is a serious omission. I also miss here references to other important historians like Barbara and Leonard Andaya (2015) and Anthony Reid (2015), who make clear that processes of state formation created important contexts within which we should understand changing belief systems and religious practices.

The most striking shortcoming in both the paper and the following discussion is the absence of gender as a central theme. Over time, gender roles changed fundamentally with regards to religious practices and doctrines and affected directly the lives of men and women throughout Southeast Asia. Because women in Southeast Asia enjoyed compared to other parts of the world more autonomy gender should be written into any discussion of religion in this region (Andaya 2006). I fail to see why the *male* authors of this publication should be less sensitive to this crucial issue.

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REPLY TO THE 'EXTERNAL' COMMENTS

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The inspiring and often necessary comments contain two main tendencies. The first points to the empirical boundaries of our model, by reminding us that our bold generalizations only partially meet the historical and ethnographic data. We did not intend to reveal universal truths, but to construct a *configuration* that would work better or worse for a number of different situations that were not usually considered under this perspective. As some commentators have pointed out, our model is implicitly derived from our numerous case studies in Laos. Empirical contradictions derived from other cases are important and should modify our configuration but do not render it entirely invalid.

The second type of comments goes along with the thrust of our argument, which aimed at the construction of a configuration that explains the case of Laos but might be applicable to more cases, especially in Southeast Asia. This experiment resulted in a configuration that necessarily builds upon terms with debatable general validity, like world religion, animism or the state. Much of the critique of this kind questions the applicability of the terms we chose—and this touches upon some central debates of DORISEA, those that cannot be resolved by empirical data only, but demand the testing of concepts. By suggesting alternative approaches or laying bare some of the implicit epistemological foundations of our text, this strand of critique helps to contextualize and improve our configuration.

Janet Hoskins and Henk Schulte Nordholt precisely outline many of the ethnographic and historical lacunae of our argument. Thus, Hoskins points out that world religions have been found to be highly attractive for non-state groups, thereby offering counterevidence to our proposed scheme. But even in these cases, it seems that the attractiveness of world religions comes very much from its relationship with the state. Conversion as a means of resistance to the state is only meaningful when the state has some relationship with world religions, either by adopting one (Buddhism) or by being explicitly atheistic. Converting to a world religion thus became a means to converse with the state for marginal or minority groups—even if that conversation is framed not by affirmation, but by contrast.

But Hoskins is right in pointing out that not all states are founded on a world religion, citing Japan and the Roman Empire. However, we were not trying to say something about these places but more specifically about Southeast Asia, where state building developed in relation to the arrival of world religions and administrative orders from the outside. However, it is true that the influence of the Chinese Empire, which did not necessarily depend on a world religion to expand, on state building in Southeast Asia is not yet fully understood.

Henk Schulte Nordholt asks which academic debates our paper refers to, as he is unable to assess what it contributes and against whom it argues. This is a very appropriate question. We do mention Max Weber, who is our main partner of conversation. However, we did not review the many debates about his theory because we wanted to present our argument instead of delivering another discussion of Weber scholastics—something which Wolfgang Schluchter has done much better than any of us would ever be able to do.

Our paper also contributes to the debates about spirits in Southeast Asia, in particular the perennial question how animism and world religion, or localized and globalized religion relate to each other, probably the central issue of the study of religion in the region. Many of the participants in these debates are mentioned in the paper. Finally, the paper partly summarizes some of the debates we carried out during the five years in which DORISEA received funding, and partly summarizes our specific points of view in these debates.

Furthermore, Schulte Nordholt claims that our paper is a-historical. This point is true as well—to a certain degree. Our paper aims at structures and does not suggest a universalist evolutionary scheme. However, we do suggest a temporal sequence. All elements of the configurational structure emerged historically but continue to persist, albeit in modified shape. The paper could have been written without reference to Southeast Asia in some respects, but the specific configuration of spirits, Buddhism and capitalism does not exist elsewhere. The relation between states and non-indigenous religion—religions that arrived via transregional communication—is also not unique, but quite specific to Southeast Asia. Therefore, we would claim that we outline a local configuration, which has some more general aspects. We extend these general aspects to all other cases in order to receive

empirical criticism, which reveals the general components of our configuration as well as its limits.

Schulte Nordholt also criticizes us for speaking of integration, thereby precluding internal tension. We should have clarified that we do not intend to say that integration implies harmony or lack of conflict. Rather, integration makes elements of social life cohere with each other and react to each other—and conflict, tension and contradiction are thus means to bring elements of social structure into reaction with each other. This is certainly the case with religion, animism, the state, etc.

Furthermore, Schulte Nordholt points to the fact that Buddhism is a construct, mainly by Westerners. We agree. This is part of our argument. He adds that we do not deal much with state formation in Southeast Asia. We agree that our account is too sweeping, abstract and remote from empirical sources. But a full analysis of all available data was not our main focus. Our focus was on the relation between religion and animism in Southeast Asia, especially in the contemporary world of capitalism. To discuss Lieberman and Reid here would go beyond the scope of our effort. The same is true for gender—and for numerous other important issue we do not discuss.

Alain Forest criticizes that we neglect French scholarship. This is indeed a serious omission. We did read the important scholars he mentions (as our other publications prove) but our discussion of religion in Southeast Asia would have taken a slightly different turn if we had included the French contributions. This has to be done on another occasion.

Forest also mentions the problematic history of the term animism. It is indeed important to mention that the term comes with significant evolutionist baggage stemming from the colonial era. We have chosen to use it anyway, for two reasons. First, animism has filled the role of world religion's significant other in Southeast Asian studies virtually continuously since the late 19th century, and we find it among authors as far away from evolutionism as Clifford Geertz (1964) and as recent as Andrew Alan Johnson (2014). Our text is another attempt to deal with the relationships between the two terms which, admittedly, not always reflect local Southeast Asian classifications of religious ideas and practices. Yet, sometimes the difference is also clearly drawn by Southeast Asian, using their own classifications. Secondly, the term animism has gained new analytical value in recent decades in anthropology, starting with French authors like Philippe Descola (2013), as Lambek also points out. The analytical potential of these new approaches has not been fully applied to Southeast Asia.

Forest also addresses the intersections of two distinctions important for our argument—the distinction between humans and non-humans, and the distinction between inside and outside. There are non-humans on the inside—like ancestors—which need to be related to. This draws attention to our point that we can only grapple with these distinctions when we do not use them as absolute bounded categories with homogenous content, but rather as situationally applied (this also speaks to Goh Beng Lan's arguments, see below). Thus, the inside-outside distinction may appear in a context that is altogether inside from the point of view of a different context.

We agree with Forest that Brahmanism works like a type of animism in comparison to Buddhism. It creates and then 'transcendentalizes' local differences, while Buddhism holds rather universalist claims. It is therefore significant that Brahmanism was an obvious option for some Southeast Asian societies to adopt. But it is equally plausible that others might turn to Buddhism (or Islam and Christianity, for that matter) in order to solve similar problems of inside and outside in a different manner.

Forest then argues that there is a greater continuity between animism and Indian religions in Southeast Asia than our paper suggests. He adds—just as Janet Hoskins—that the application of Eisenstadt's term 'axial age' to Southeast Asia constructs a flawed frame of reference. These are very good and important points. However, we do not imply a universalization of Buddhism, as Forest interprets our paper. We rather argue that Buddhism can be more generally applied than animism by including insiders and outsiders. Therefore, it has more explanatory power in an extending, 'globalizing' society.

Justin McDaniel firmly places his comment in the second category of comments that engage in conceptual experiments. He questions the division between animism, religion and science altogether and subsumes them under the concept of 'problem-solving technologies'. This at once unifies and atomizes the issues we were dealing with, in a manner that we find very relevant and promising. It is probably a good idea to adopt this more general and philosophical point of view. Interpreting all human thinking with Donna Haraway as 'situated knowledge' actually comes very close to our own 'configurational' approach. It is extremely helpful to dissolve the conventional boundaries between Western science and other ways of dealing with the world. Only then can we succeed with a meaningful analysis of these types of knowledge.

But even from this perspective, the projects of animism, religion and science do not only share commonalities. We argue that there are some important differences. McDaniel points out how some scientific discoveries were made by pious, even 'superstitious' men, but that does not mean that in order to believe in the results of science one has to be religious or believe in ghosts as well. The very fact that the originators of scientific ideas and the results of their research are ultimately independent of each other rather proves than disproves the separation

of religion and science—not on the level of persons, but on a systemic and epistemic level.

We would also like to stress that the adoption of Buddhism was never to the exclusion of animism, as McDaniel seems to think we are saying. Because Buddhism was an option for relationships beyond the local level, it was an important *supplement* to local relations. Indeed, there is an almost necessary complementation between local and translocal types of relationships, and to a degree, both could be handled by the 'problem-solving technologies' of Buddhist relations and animist relations in different ways. However, Buddhism—and 'world religions' in general—seemed to work better for many translocal relationships. This was presumably, like with all technologies, a matter of trial and error—for which reasons there are no ultimate, but only situational choices, no village turning to Buddhism in its entirety, etc. In this respect, our argument is closer to McDaniel's than he suggests in his comment's second part.

To make sense of the differences from the perspective of situated knowledge, Peter Jackson introduces the notion of 'contextuality'. We consider his elaboration on the term entirely appropriate, especially since he contrasts our configurations with those in India and other places. This is exactly what we were hoping for in terms of epistemology: constructing an empirically informed configuration, drawing theoretical conclusions and contrasting both with other configurations. If Jackson finds that our ideas apply to India as well as Southeast Asia, we might have succeeded in constructing a model that is more general than our empirical case—albeit not universal. That our idea does not apply to some parts of Southeast Asia, as Hoskins argues, is a call for further empirical studies.

As the configuration is supposed to have some validity for both historical and contemporary issues, we do not think that the idea of a virtual or ideal/model village is useless just because an increasing number of Southeast Asians live in cities (in Laos, population growth mostly occurs on the countryside). Even in some modern Southeast Asian cities, identity is constructed along village-like structures like neighbourhoods and town quarters. However, the point of the animist village is to provide a thought figure that highlights something about the role of world religions in relation to animism—while previous accounts used to argue about animism from the point of view of world religion. Peter Jackson, however, suggests a closer, more serious and more contextualized study of 'animisms' in the contemporary world. We agree that this would be a relevant endeavour, which certainly expands and refines our argument. Jackson's reverse question, "Why should adherers of world religions in mainland Southeast Asia increasingly take up animism?" is indeed one that will produce fertile further studies. Part of the answer would probably be: "Because animism does a pretty good job in managing certain types of human-non human relationships."

Goh Beng Lan takes the critique of our epistemology even further than Jackson and McDaniel, aiming at the core of the theory of science we apply. She asks for less difference thinking (or structuralism or Western logic) and more flexibility (or family resemblances or configurational thinking), a point also advanced by Michael Lambek. Thereby, Goh Beng Lan very correctly and sharply demonstrates an internal ambivalence or tension in our paper, which is due to the fact that Rehbein and Sprenger diverge on this point. While Sprenger would argue for a logic of difference, Rehbein would agree with Goh. This tension thus mirrors the saying common in some parts of Southeast Asia: "Same same but different".

But there is another level to her critique. As Lambek points out, ours is an effort towards stronger model building, after a phase of interpretivist approaches, and Goh Beng Lan criticizes this as a hidden attempt to return to an omniscient, detached, objectivist language. In our conception, both statements are true to a degree, and it is important that Goh raises this issue. However, the new models that Lambek mentions differ from older ones in that they are designed with the idea in mind that models are not competing revelations of truth but in themselves elements of communicative practice. Each model primarily represents a proposal for further communication that elucidates certain central issues. They encourage a general discussion in which they figure as nodes of discursive currents. The diversity of the responses and their critique testify at least to the model's potential to evoke statements of principle from our readers.

Among these is also Goh Beng Lan's final point of critique, as she asks us to engage with the ethical and political consequences of our argument. We agree that this demand is relevant. However, almost nothing on this issue is included in the paper for two reasons. First, the internal DORISEA debates hardly touched upon the topic, its importance notwithstanding. Second, dealing with these issues would shift the entire thrust of the paper. This is legitimate but in this case, we restricted ourselves to proposing one general argument on the relation between animism, religion, science and capitalism as well as a particular argument referring to their specific configuration in Southeast Asia.

Some of the comments question the term 'animism', our seemingly unifying interpretation of it and its clear separation from religion. We do speak of animisms in the plural or of 'animist relationships', in order to avoid the impression of a singular, closed system. But the criticism may still hold, as some of our statements are indeed too generalizing, in spite of our attempt to stick to our empirical material. Against Michael Lambek, we would distinguish animisms from religion, as the latter aims at

more general, if not universal, explanations and is associated with complex, anonymous societies. This is somewhat supported by the history of the term that was initially defined by Edward Burnett Tylor (1958) not as religion but as a philosophy of nature and currently by Philippe Descola (2013) as a mode of ontological identification.

Concerning the latter, Michael Lambek raises the question of the relation between the term animism as used here and as used by Descola. These are indeed very different, as Kaj Århem has recently demonstrated (Århem 2016). There are a few hunters and gatherers who approach the type of animism outlined by Descola, but in general, the term is used for the numerous rice farming communities which also raise animals and go hunting. This demands a broader and more flexible definition of animism that is outlined partially in negative terms—lack of doctrine, lack of overarching truth, lack of an organized class of priests—and partially through features like personalization as a process, the manipulation of life-forces and sacrifice to spirits.

The anthropologists among the commentators detect several instances of conventionalism in our argument, e.g. a scriptural bias in the treatment of religion, tendencies of evolutionary thinking, unclear definitions of the object of study and attempts at clear delimitations of the observed phenomena. We are grateful for these hints. They prove the difficulty of thinking outside the box. This type of criticism, like that of all contributors, is absolutely vital for the further development of our thoughts and ideas in general.

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