Asian Catholicism, Interreligious Colonial Encounters and Dynamics of Secularism in Asia

José Casanova

As indicated by my title, I am going to deal with three different things, but I’m going to address them in the opposite order; one cannot discuss secularism in Asia without discussing religious-secular dynamics. In fact, in an attempt to challenge some of our ingrained modernist assumptions, I propose that we go back to early modernity in order to understand both the birth of secularism within Europe and the parallel process of global colonial encounters in the early modern era. Then I will address more specifically interreligious encounters in Asia, using the Jesuits as a prism. In particular, I’m going to focus on Japan and China to see what kind of secularism may have emerged in both places out of these encounters. Finally, I’ll conclude with some comments on Asian Catholicism today. Obviously, Catholicism is a very “un-Asian” religion. Other than in the Philippines, where it is a majority religion, Catholicism is a tiny minority religion throughout Asia. None the less,
pan-Asian Catholic networks have become an interesting phenomenon since the 1960s, and it's worth looking into them, as a point of entry in understanding contemporary processes of globalization.

So let me start with the confession that in recent decades I've been trying to free myself from my own modernist assumptions as a European sociologist. Basically, sociology was born as a theory of modernity, and modernization theory, which was the dominant sociological theory in the 1970s when I became a sociologist, is the theory of how European modernity became globalized. This may be a simplification, but it is an accurate one. For sociology, history begins with modernity. Everything that came before is tradition, to be superseded by modernity. This is the central, binary distinction dividing history before and after modernity.¹

Here, I would like to start my narrative a bit earlier with early modernity, but I would like to set as the symbolic date not 1500, as does Charles Taylor in his genealogical narrative of A Secular Age, but rather 1492. Taylor uses 1500 as the imaginary line dividing the premodern, enchanted world of Christendom from the emerging modern, disenchanted world of our secular age.² In this respect, his is still a narrative of modernization. For me, 1492 offers a much more interesting date because it serves both as the beginning of the Westphalian model of confessional states and as the beginning of the process of global European colonial expansion. The Westphalian confessional state was based on the principle cuius regio, eius religio—that is, the sovereign (Leviathan) determines the religion of the subjects within his realm. In order to establish a homogeneous Catholic realm, the Catholic kings in 1492 decreed the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain. Similar processes of ethnicreligious cleansing accompanied the process of European state-formation in early modernity and the consolidation of the Westphalian system of sovereign territorial states. Everywhere one finds similar processes of state-led confessionalization.

Northern Europe becomes homogeneously Protestant, Southern Europe becomes homogeneously Catholic and in between one finds three bi-confessional societies—Holland, Germany and Switzerland—unable to eliminate the other religious half, having to coexist, and developing their own patterns of Protestant–Catholic confessionalization: confessional pillars in the case of Holland, confessional Länder in the case of Germany, and confessional cantons in the case of Switzerland.

But parallel to this process of confessional state formation within continental Europe, one finds the beginning of the Iberian global colonial expansion which was legitimated by the juridical fiction of the Pope's jurisdiction over all non-Christian lands. The 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas gave Spain possession of all the newly "discovered" lands within the western hemisphere, while Portugal claimed possession of all the lands to be discovered within the eastern hemisphere. Of course, no other country accepted such a juridical fiction, and other European powers would soon follow the Iberian powers in their competitive global colonial expansion. But nonetheless, it was on the basis of such a fiction that the colonization of the "New World" or the formation of the Portuguese Estado da Índia, a vast primarily maritime empire—extending from Brazil, throughout Africa, all the way to Goa and Macao—took place.

In order to understand the genesis of European secularization, rather than begin with theories of modernization, one should begin with theories of state confessionalization. The so-called premodern religion, before European secular modernity, was by no means a "traditional" kind of religion. Rather it was a modern type of religion, the product of a process of disciplinary confessionalization by early modern confessional absolutist states—whether Calvinist, Lutheran or Catholic. Irrespective of whether we are talking of Protestant Christianity or Counter-Reformation Catholicism we are not talking of traditional medieval, enchanted religion, but of religions which are the product of state disciplinary processes. I would argue that the European process of secularization can be best understood as a process of deconfessionalization—that is, European states becoming deconfessionalized and becoming secular and individuals becoming deconfessionalized, that is, leaving their national state churches and becoming secular. The concept of "unchurching" captures best the process of deconfessionalization and secularization in Europe.

Either leaving one's church and the state-enforced confession, or, as in the case of Nordic Lutheran Europe, becoming non-religious and secular while still remaining in the church, are in brief the two Europeans formulas of "belonging without believing," or "believing without belonging," along with the more radically secular formula, "neither believing not belonging." One can also understand the process of European secularization as various ways of dissociation and fusion of two types of religion, the public Durkheimian sacred and private religions of individual salvation. For Durkheim, "sacred" is the public religion of the collectivity, what we tend to call today "civil religion." One can understand the process of secularization as a differentiation or dissociation of the sacred, public religion of the modern state, of modern citizenship, of the modern nation, that is, the modern, secular sacred, which becomes differentiated from ecclesiastical religion. Ecclesiastical religion, in turn, is demoted as a privatized, individual form of religion. But this process may take different forms. In the case of the Nordic Lutheran pattern, one finds a fusion of church, state and nation. Today, still, the Parliament of Norway decides the dogmas of the Church of Norway and elects the Bishops of the Church of Norway. Thus, the fusion of throne and altar, typical of the ancient regime, persists under modern secular conditions of national democratic politics. The secular becomes sacred, while the national church, the ecclesiastical institution, which in terms of Lutheran theology is defined as a state institution, is also secular, while private individual religion and internal spirituality become the measure of true religiosity. The Lutheran Church, the ecclesia visibilis, is not a religious sacred institution, but an institution of the secular state. The secular state and the nation, on the other hand, become the public collective "sacred" in the Durkheimian sense.3

Along with it one finds the privatized forms of spiritual, individual religion, which are separated from both, from church and state.


Ultimately there is little tension between the three institutions—between church, state and nation. Similarly, there is little tension in Nordic countries between individual religion, secularity and Lutheranism. Denmark is probably the most secular of Nordic societies, with the lowest levels of religious belief and practice, yet it is also the society with the highest proportion of the population still belonging to the Church of Denmark and going through the ritual of confirmation as a national ritual.

The Southern Catholic model is very different, shaped as it is by the principle of laïcité, which emerges as an expression of the conflict between clergy and laity. It entails a radical separation of the new secular—sacred, the public sphere of laïcité, and the Catholic Church that becomes privatized and disestablished not only from the state but from the public sphere, creating in the process a rigid boundary between the secular laic, which constitutes the modern sacred public sphere, and the religious ecclesiastical associations, which become privatized. Anticlericalism is the typical manifestation of this cleavage. In between these extreme cases of Nordic fusion and Southern Catholic separation one finds other forms of entanglement of secular "civil" and "ecclesiastical" religions throughout Europe.

What one does not find anywhere within Europe are internal dynamics of religious pluralization. Let me illustrate this point with a critical response to Peter Berger's most recent reformulation of his theory of secularization. Berger offered in the 1960s the most drastic version of the theory of modern secularization. Later he changed his position and offered a counter-theory of desecularization of the world, arguing that Europe was the secular exception, while the rest of the world was "furiously religious." Most recently in his new book, The Many Altars of Modernity (2014), he offered a new revisionist theory arguing that modernity per se does not bring necessarily secularization. What modernity brings is rather pluralization, in the guise of two different types of pluralism: namely, religious-secular pluralism, on the one hand, and multi-religious pluralism, on the other.4
In response to Berger's new thesis, I would argue that European secular modernity certainly produces the religious—secular divide, and in this respect a form of secular—religious pluralization as a kind of spatial divide both institutionally within society and phenomenologically within the individual conscience. While this is an important insight, I think that phenomenologically European secularization is actually characterized by another divide, a temporal one between traditional religion and modern secularity. Within the European consciousness the secular comes after religion. Religion is older, more primitive and traditional. The secular is modern and temporally supersedes, rather than spatially coexisting with, religion. To become modern means to become secular, to leave religion behind, and to overcome past human developments. In Europe this modern form of philosophical—historical secularism merged with older forms of political secularism, which attempted to control religion, restricting it to its proper place. One finds similar forms of political secularism, as it were, in many parts of Asia, before it emerged in the Christian West.

With this we are entering into the complex question of the applicability of the categories of "religion" and "secular" to non-Western contexts before the modern colonial encounters. We know of course that "religion" and "secular" became central Christian theological categories, although originally they were not Christian. Both were older Roman—Latin concepts with a different significance than the one we owe to Augustine's Christian theological reformulation. Sæculum, as in per secula seculorum, simply meant an indefinite, if not infinite, period of time. In Augustine's City of God, the sæculum becomes a crucial theological category denoting the historical—temporal space within the City of Man, between the first and the second coming of Christ. The Latin religio, as it appears in Cicero or Varro, also undergoes a radical reformulation in Augustine's De vera religione. Augustine turns both, religio and sæculum, into central theological categories of Latin Christendom. Both concepts are absent from Byzantine Christendom or Eastern Christianity. Thus, not only most non-Western cultures lack equivalent categories, but they are also foreign to Eastern Christianity. Slavic languages, for instance, had to borrow the category of "religia" from Latin.

Even within Latin Christendom, through the process of secularization, both categories undergo continuous hermeneutic transformations. In medieval Christendom one finds first the fundamental divide between the religious spiritual realm of the monastery and the sæculum, the secular "world" proper. Thus, the fundamental canonical distinction between "religious" priests, who lived in monasteries, and "secular" priests, who lived in the world. The Protestant Reformation will put an end to this distinction, secularizing the monasteries and turning monks, priests and laity equally into inwardly ascetics, while simultaneously turning the secular world into the place for religious activity. Latinité, in turn, frees the secular world from ecclesiastical control and turns it into a civil public realm.

This is obviously a great simplification of much more complex historical dynamics. The point, however, is that those were particular historical dynamics shaped in part by the very Christian theological categories, but more importantly also determined by concrete power struggles. So rather than conceptualizing the process of Western secularization as a universal process of "functional differentiation," as sociological theories of secularization have tended to do, it is more helpful to conceptualize it as a particular historical process. If it was not functional differentiation that shaped secular religious dynamics in the West, but rather particular forms of power relations and institutional conflicts, the more so the dynamics of secularization outside the West cannot be understood as the result of functional differentiation, but rather as the outcome of historical colonial encounters. It may be true that what Charles Taylor calls the immanent frame of secular administrative nation-states, market economies and mediatic public spheres has now become globalized. But this has not happened through processes of functional differentiation, but through concrete historical colonial and post-colonial dynamics, whereby the secular immanent frame, enters into contact, becomes superimposed, or is transformed by the encounter with other forms of structuring the sacred/profane or immanent/transcendent boundaries and relations in non-Western societies.

With this we enter into the second part of my paper dealing with what could be called "interreligious" colonial encounters. Going back to the beginning of the Iberian global colonial expansion in 1492,
it is obvious that one must differentiate between two different types of colonial encounters. There was, on the one hand, the conquest and colonization of the “new World,” in the Americas but also in the Philippines, where the Iberian “conquistadores” were able not only to colonize the indigenous population, but also to impose their spiritual conquest through enforced Catholic confessionalization. It is true that the confessionalization in the New World was more superficial than in Catholic Europe, and could not erase completely the deep substratum of Indo-American or Afro-American religions. This may be one of the reasons why modernization in post-colonial Latin America is not so much accompanied by widespread secularization but rather by increasing religious pluralization. The transformation of Brazil in the last 50 years may serve as dramatic illustration. Brazil has been deconfessionalized. Catholicism has lost its hegemony, but unlike in Catholic Europe the result has not been widespread secularization but rather religious pluralization. There has been a dramatic expansion of various forms of Protestant-Christianity, particularly of Pentecostalism. Catholicism itself has become much more internally pluralistic, with the dramatic growth of Charismatics and other forms of “catolicos renovados” along with currents of liberation theology and individualized spiritualities. Many other religions are also growing and have become much more visible publicly, such as Afro-Brazilian religions, Indo-American religions, Judaism, Islam, and Asian religions first associated with immigrant groups—Chinese, Japanese, Arabs—but now entering a new dynamic of conversion.5

In this respect, Latin America seems to replicate a model of religious pluralization closer to the United States than to the European model. The United States never had an established national church nor did it go through a process of state-led confessionalization. The Federal state was born as a modern secular state and never had to go through a process of deconfessionalization. American secularism was born not as a strategy of state control of religion, but rather as a means of protecting


religious pluralism without privileging any particular denomination. American denominationalism followed the sectarian model of congregational religious associations, free from both from church and state.

As a counterpart to the ethnoreligious cleansing accompanying the European process of confessionalization, the United States became the refuge of every religious minority fleeing Europe. Catholic minorities had to flee from the Protestant north, Protestant minorities had to flee from the Catholic South, and the radical sects and Jews had to flee from both. At first, many of the religious minorities found refuge in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. But eventually most of them had to seek more permanent refuge in the New World.

Turning to Asia, however, it is obvious that the first colonial encounters in the early modern era took a very different dynamic. Only in the Philippines and to a lesser extent in the Portuguese colonial enclaves of Goa and Macao could the Iberian colonizers reproduce the Latin American model: in the rest of Asia, they couldn’t do it. This was the high era of the gunpowder empires in Asia. The European powers were not in a position to subjugate any of the Asian empires (Ottoman, Persian, Mughal, or Chinese), nor any of the Kingdoms of East, South, or South East Asia. In this respect it was an era of globalization and of colonial encounters before Western hegemony. But this in itself makes those encounters particularly relevant as we are entering a new age of globalization after Western hegemony.

Let me offer a few comments about the early modern colonial encounters mediated by the Jesuits in Japan and in China. Japan is undoubtedly the most interesting case. The Jesuits arrived in feudal warring Japan in 1549 certainly sponsored by the Portuguese padroado. The Jesuit mission was staffed mainly by Portuguese and depended greatly on the Portuguese colony of Macao for its financial and material support. Yet, once in Japan, the Jesuit padres could go where Portuguese merchants and soldiers had no access and were able to start a process of cultural and religious encounters that shaped what has been named “the Christian century” in Japan.6 The large number of Japanese

Christians, estimated anywhere from 300,000 to 1,000,000, in all walks of life from the highest *daimyos* to the lowest outcasts, in itself was significant. But more significant was the impact that the encounter with Western Christianity, or rather with Catholic Europe, had on Japanese culture and on the determined effort of the Tokugawa regime not only to repress and to exterminate Christianity but to erase any memory of the previous encounter and to construct an authentic Japanese culture purified of any hybrid accretion from the Christian West. *Sengoku* Japan was undergoing at the time a radical transformation from a feudal “Country at War” to a centralized absolutist state, and the *Kirishitan* played an important catalytic role in this transformation. From a comparative historical perspective what is striking about absolutist state formation in Japan is the role played by the ethnoreligious cleansing of the Christian minority, by anti-Christian state ideology and by the confessionalization of the entire Japanese population through the Buddhist and Shinto temple registration system first introduced in 1635. The state-enforced disciplinary effort continued through the institutionalization of the “Christian *arashime*” practices through the second half of the seventeenth century, after Christianity had been wiped out, requiring Japanese to “prove” that they were not Christian. As Kiri Paramore points out, “the establishment of this system represented much more than just an instance of anti-Christian activity: it established an institutionalized system of social control extending to the entire population, a system of control that continued to function until the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate in the late nineteenth century.”

Striking is the fact that the persecution of Japanese Christianity happened after the Jesuits had been expelled, and the state-enforced anti-Christian measures to erase any memory of the Christian century were implemented after all Japanese Christians had been exterminated, had apostatized, or were driven underground for several centuries. In this respect, the anti-Christian measures had the character of a negative confessionalization, in order to homogenize the entire Japanese population, indeed making them authentically “Japanese.”

Later interpretations, by Japanese as well as by Western scholars have taken this Tokugawa Japanese ideology for granted, as an explanation for the ultimate failure of the Jesuits and of Christianity in Japan, as well as a justification for the radical isolationist policies of *Sakoku* (“closed country”) Japan introduced by the Tokugawa, as the need to protect Japan not only from a foreign and un-Japanese religion, but from Western colonialism. Catholic Christianity was rejected naturally as a dangerous foreign body which, besides being an inferior and questionable form of Christianity, was essentially “other” and therefore ultimately unsuimblable without undermining Japanese culture and Japanese identity.

The argument presupposes that the “national” Japanese culture and identity was already firmly fixed and not subject to change at the time of the colonial encounter with European Catholic culture. One could present the alternative hypothesis that Japanese culture at the time was rather fluid and open and that the construction of Christianity as the radically “other” played a crucial role in the process of constructing a Japanese national identity. This identity could be now be projected onto the remote pre-historical past of Japan as a unique, particularistic, unchanging and unchangeable Japanese essence.

The interesting thing about the Christian century is not so much the number of Japanese converts, and the extent to which Japanese seemed to be open to a radical change in religious identity. More interesting is the fact that the material, textual and pictorial evidence that remains from the Christian Century, mainly in Western archives because Japanese archives were purified of any Christian presence, shows how fluid, open, and hybrid Japanese culture had become: Japanese art, particularly painting, fashion and dress codes, food, language and even the most Japanese of rituals, the tea ceremony, had been significantly transformed by the encounter between the Jesuits and Japanese culture.

---


---


2 Robert Bellah's and Shmuel Eisenstadt's theories of Japanese culture as "pre-axial" feed on such a modern national Japanese myth.
One can of course interpret the isolationist Sakoku policies as the first prototypical anti-colonial and anti-imperialist fundamentalist nativist rejection of Western globalization. The problem with such interpretation is not only that more recent revisionist historians have questioned the radical fundamentalist character of the Sakoku isolationist closure, but more importantly that it implies an anachronistic reading of the fear of Western colonialism before Western hegemony, at a time when neither the Portuguese nor the Spaniards were in a position to colonize Japan. In fact it was a time when Japan was initiating an aggressive expansionist maritime policy which anticipated later pan-Asian Japanese imperialism. The attempt to invade Korea twice with Japanese armies led by Christian daimyos carrying Christian standards of Christ and the Virgin Mary, and other Japanese excursions overseas, ultimately proved abortive and were reversed by the Tokugawa Sakoku policy. Rather than the Iberian colonial powers representing a real military threat to Japan, Boxer offers a radically different hypothesis, namely that were it not for the reversal in Tokugawa state policy, "the Japanese, whether peacefully or otherwise, would have established themselves in the Philippines, Indo-China, and in parts of Indonesia by the turn of the seventeenth-century; and they would, in all probability, have been able to share in the fruits of Europe's industrial revolution, for several decades before they actually did." Global history could have been radically different. The importance of such "what if" conjectural historical hypotheses is to challenge our modernist, teleological and Euro-centric assumptions concerning processes of globalization.

We tend to assume, in my view erroneously, a certain teleology of the systemic structures of globalization by capitalism and by Western colonialism. But such a world system, what the British historian C.A. Bayly has aptly characterized as "the birth of the modern world," began to emerge only at the end of the eighteenth century. Early modern globalization from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century did not have yet global systemic structures, neither economic, political or cultural.

It is a globalization better characterized by the term and concept "globally connected histories." It is a globalization before Western hegemony, based on global encounters between cultures and societies which, in Asia at least, were still relatively equal. The Jesuit attitude of accommodation to Asian cultures reflects precisely such a relative symmetry. Certainly, Jesuits were convinced of the superiority of Christianity over other religions, but this is not translated, as was to happen in the nineteenth century, into a perception of the superiority of Western culture tout court. In fact some of the more open-minded Jesuits recognized that Japanese culture was in many respects superior to their own European cultures. Alessandro Valignano's method of accommodation was, of course, grounded on the realization that they could never succeed in their mission to convert the Japanese to Christianity unless they themselves made an effort to adopt a Japanese habitus. But this should not be read in purely instrumentalist terms; rather it was an expression of a true openness to the culture of the other grounded in a genuine respect for a different culture. The Jesuit method of cultural accommodation was, moreover, grounded on a deeper theological reflection. Jesuits not only realized that they could never succeed in Europeanizing the Japanese, given their self-esteem and perception of European culture as "barbarian"; the Jesuits also became convinced that in order to take roots in Japan Christianity itself would have to become Japanese, in the same way as Christianity, originally Hebrew, had to become truly Greek and Latin. If primitive Christianity could undergo such a fundamental translation and accommodation to Greek and to Roman culture, there was no reason why it could not become also Japanese, Chinese, etc. Christianity could only become truly universal.

---

and global by becoming freed from its European cultural habitus and accommodating the particular habitus of each culture. Irrespective of one’s judgment concerning the feasibility of such an intercultural project of religious conversion, one can certainly ascertain that such was the premise of the method of accommodation first initiated by Valignano in Japan, and implemented by Matteo Ricci and others in China, and by Roberto de Nobili in India. Ultimately the project failed, or rather it was defeated by competing projects of global Catholicisms. There were first the competing projects of imperial national Catholicisms sponsored respectively by the royal Portuguese, Spanish and French patronage. But more importantly the Jesuit global missionary project was ultimately defeated by the alternative project of global Catholic Romanization promoted by the Pope, by the Roman Congregation De Propaganda Fide and by other Catholic religious orders.

The relevant point about Jesuit intercultural encounters in early modern Japan is not whether Japan, or large sectors of the Japanese population, could ever have become Christian. Relevant was the fact that the modern history of Japan was significantly shaped by this encounter and, even more importantly, that Japanese and possibly global history could have taken a different course. In any case, the history of modern Japan can be interpreted and understood differently if one takes into account this early modern global encounter. Japan represents the first non-European absolutist, secular state which developed not in imitation of the West, or consciously following the principles of Hobbes’ Leviathan, yet followed a pattern similar and parallel to the European confessional states. The Tokugawa state itself was non-confessional and in this respect it could be characterized as “secular.” Yet it introduced a policy of confessionalization of its population by enforcing the registration of every Japanese subject in Buddhist or Shinto temples, akin to the European parish registration system. Again, what was important was not that everybody had to become Buddhist, but that everybody had to become Japanese, as defined by the state. The aim of the anti-Christian state crusade, which continued for a century after the expulsion of Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries and after Japanese Christians had ceased to exist publicly, was not the establishment of Buddhist “religion” per se, but the Japanization of the population. Buddhism was only a national instrument of Japanization. After the Meiji restoration the Japanese state easily switched from Buddhism to nationalist Shinto in order to enforce an even more rigid policy of Japanization, while renewing its anti-Christian ideology.

The extraordinary disciplinary measures which the Japanese state had to introduce in order to erase any memory of the Christian Century and to enforce a Japanese national identity inimical to Christianity would seem to indicate that the Japanese identity was constructed in response to the early modern encounter with Catholic Christianity. The fact that the kakure Kirishitan (crypto-Catholics) reemerged in 1685 in Nagasaki over two hundred years after they had been driven underground by the Tokugawa Inquisition can also be used as evidence that early modern Japanese culture was relatively open to foreign barbarian Christian culture.15

Moving on to the second illustration of the Jesuit encounters with Chinese culture and religions in the early modern era, it is obvious that China represented a very different type of colonial encounter. China was a huge empire, stable and relatively pacified, governed by a civil imperial bureaucracy of cultured literati. Yet, the Jesuit method of accommodation was also introduced with relative success first under the Ming dynasty and later continued under the Qing dynasty. But it is important to stress that “accommodation” was not a cunning strategy devised by European missionaries. It was a practice that emerged out of intercultural encounter. In Japan as well as in China their local friends, the first Christians, taught the Jesuits the need to go “native” and to accommodate the local culture if they wanted to succeed. It was his friend and disciple Chü Ju-k’uei (or Chū T’ai-su) who first convinced Matteo Ricci of the need to abandon the habit of a Buddhist

15The structural similarities between Japanese crypto-Catholics and Spanish crypto-Jewish marranos are indeed striking, as are the similarities between the Spanish and the Japanese Inquisition, both being state organs created to purify the national blood and the national religious culture from the contamination of a supposedly foreign body which had traumatically penetrated them and persisted even after their voluntary or enforced conversion as “New Christians” or as “Japanese Buddhists.”
monk which he had adopted at first upon entering China with Michele Ruggieri and to assume instead the habitus of a Mandarin scholar (ju). 16

The ultimate goal of Ricci and the Jesuits who followed him was to penetrate the imperial court of Beijing and to convert the Chinese emperor. The Constantinian model of imperial conversion from above was indeed taken for granted by European Catholics. But Ricci soon realized that he had to become first Chinese before the Chinese could possibly become Christians. It demanded an arduous enterprise of double translation, of translation of Latin texts and of European culture into Chinese and of translation of Chinese texts and Chinese culture into Latin and into European culture. Ricci himself, through his own sinicization, was the key to this collective enterprise in which European Jesuits as well as Christian Confucian scholars participated. Ricci’s translation of Euclid’s Elements into Chinese, his Treatise on Friendship introducing famous aphorisms from Greek, Latin and Christian authors into Chinese, his Catechism T’ien-chu shih-i (True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven), and his World Map “of the myriad nations of the earth” fusing Western and Chinese cartography, are the most famous illustrations of Ricci’s contribution to this collective translation enterprise. The effect of the translation of Chinese classics and culture first into Latin and then into European languages and cultures, mediated primarily by the China Jesuits, was probably even more crucial for European historical developments. 17 Ricci and other Jesuits played a crucial role in the “manufacturing” of “Confucius” and Confucianism and in their significant reception in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. 18

But it is important to stress that this dual and reciprocal process of inculcation which crystallized in a novel form of Confucian Christianity or Christian Confucianism was the result of synthetic collaboration and intercultural dialogue between European Jesuits and Chinese scholars such as Yang T’ing-yün, Li Chih-Tsao, and Hsu Kuang-ch’i, widely known as “the Three Pillars of Christianity in China.” 19 Jacques Gernet famously argued that those Chinese scholars were not truly “Christian” because they did not know the true European Christianity. Moreover, the whole encounter was based on a fundamental misunderstanding between two supposedly incommensurable cultures and conceptions of “religion.” 20 But Gernet’s evaluation is based on a post-Enlightenment secularist conception of Christian “religion” and on a modern essentialist conception of Western and Chinese civilizations as fixed and radically different totalities.

The encounters of early modernity show precisely that civilizational boundaries were by no means fixed and firm, but they would become so as a result of the very colonial encounters. In retrospect, reexamining the Jesuit encounters, we can certainly assume that the Christian impact on China was probably much less relevant and certainly less lasting than the Chinese impact on Christian Europe. The Jesuit translation and introduction of Chinese culture into the European public sphere, particularly as it was mediated through the Chinese Rites controversy, played a crucial role in shaping what became the Enlightenment critique of religion, and in this respect affected the European process of secularization. 21

The distinction that the Jesuits introduced in China between religion and culture was crucial: between, on the one hand, universal Christian religion, which per se is non-European, and therefore can become inculcated in any and all particular cultures, and, on the other, those components of the particular religious cultures which are idolatrous, and therefore cannot become Christianized. Those idolatrous components

of culture have to be rejected. However, those components of culture which are not idolatrous, which are civil rather than religious, are neutral and therefore can become Christianized. This is the way in which Confucianism, as interpreted by the Jesuits, was understood not as an idolatrous religion, but as a humanist culture, as a natural morality, and as a civil cult. Unintentionally, once the distinction was incorporated into European debates, it signaled the beginning of the breakdown of the monotheistic distinction between "true" and "false" religion on which the entire structure of Christendom had been based. The global Catholic missionary expansion of the early modern era began with the customary distinction between true and false religion. The Catholic religion was, of course, the true religion. The other religions were differentiated between Christian "schismatics" (the Eastern churches), Christian "heretics" (Protestants and other "sects"), "infidels" (Jews and Muslims) and the rest (pagans, heathen, idolaters). In their global missions, the Jesuits developed a much more dialogical and open method of accommodation in their encounters with the religions of Asia than in their encounters with Muslim infidels, with Christian schismatics in Ethiopia, India or Eastern Europe, or with Protestant heretics in Europe. This points precisely to the relevant distinction between cultural and theological (i.e. religious) accommodation. As Daniel Madigan has pointed out in his analysis of Jesuit encounters with the world of Islam, inculturation becomes much more difficult when one is dealing with what is viewed as a heretical form of one's own tradition.

The distinction between religion and culture was at the core of the Chinese Rites controversy. Other Catholic missionaries (Dominicans, Franciscans), and the curial officers at the Propaganda Fide rejected the Jesuit interpretation of the Chinese Rites as cultural, civic rites, insisting that they were idolatrous religious rituals which Chinese Christians had to reject. The European "philosophes," however, accepted the Jesuit distinction but turned it against them and against Christianity and all revealed

their religions. Having learned from the Jesuits that Confucianism represented a kind of deist natural religion before revelation, they gladly affirmed those elements of the Chinese rites which the Jesuits interpreted as civic customs, not as religion, to insist that this is what was needed in Europe, a deist natural religion based on civic customs, while rejecting the supernatural theist superstitious rites of revealed Christian religion. Confucian culture was indeed superior to Christian religion. This explains the Chinese craze of the European Enlightenment and deism. They could recognize the superiority of Chinese Confucian culture over European Christian culture. In the nineteenth century with the triumph of Western colonialism and secular modernity, the European attitude towards China and all oriental civilizations radically changed. Now the hegemonic military and technological superiority of industrial capitalism and political and economic liberalism proved the superiority of modern Western civilization over traditional Asian cultures and justified the imperial "White Man's Burden" and its mission civilatrice.

In China, the Chinese Rites controversy was experienced as a conflict between the authority of the Pope in Rome over Chinese Christianity and the authority of the Kang-hsi emperor over religious affairs in his realm. In his meetings with the various papal legates Kang-hsi, who had decreed the edict of toleration of Christianity in 1692, questioned again and again how the Pope, without knowledge of the Chinese language or beliefs, could judge Chinese affairs when he (the Emperor) does not judge European affairs. Once the Emperor read the Chinese text of Pope Clement XI's 1715 decree Ex illa Die, condemning definitively the Jesuit position, he retorted that the only Christianity he would tolerate in China was the one introduced by Li-ma-teu (Matteo Ricci), prohibiting therefore the propagation of Christianity by Westerners. A few years later, in 1724, his son, the Yongzheng emperor, issued a countervaluing edict declaring Christianity a heterodox sect, closing the churches, and expelling most of the Western missionaries.

Again the relevant question is not so much the fate of Catholic Christianity in China, but the closure of a type of dialogical non-hegemonic intercultural encounter between China and the West which could not be continued to the nineteenth century, when the
Opium War battered the Chinese Walls and all the Western colonial powers imposed a new kind of Western hegemonic colonial encounter which was experienced by the Chinese as "the century of humiliation." One of the lessons from the early modern Jesuit encounters is the realization that there was a different type of globalization before Western hegemony and before Western modernity. This recognition should help to free the social sciences from the Western modernist assumption that all that is relevant begins with modernity, that modernization is Westernization, and that contemporary globalization is a continuation of Western modernization.

In terms of the "dynamics of secularism in Asia," the Jesuit encounters in China raise two different questions concerning the extent to which one may talk of two separate though interrelated internal Chinese endogenous dynamics of what could be called premodern protosecularism. There is, on the one hand, the kind of protosecularity present in the Confucian immanent humanist moral tradition carried by the literati, their agnostic indifference towards questions of otherworldly religious salvation, and their elitist contempt for the magical and superstitious beliefs and practices of the Chinese folk religions. There is, on the other hand, the protosecularity of the Chinese imperial state, which despite the sacro-magical function of the emperor as "Son of Heaven" and its mandate to rule "all under Heaven" had also a more worldly mandate to regulate and manage all "religious" affairs, and most importantly to determine at any given time what was right and harmonious "orthodoxy" and what were heterodox sects or evil cults. One may certainly interrogate the extent to which those protosecular traditions may have influenced the widespread secularity of post-colonial Chinese society. Equally, one may question whether in spite of all the revolutionary ruptures, one may not discern some continuities in the way in which the Chinese communist state manages the religious question in contemporary China.24 Without questioning the crucial importance of the modern colonial encounter for shaping post-colonial developments, such interrogation frees us from the modernist and Western-centric assumption that relevant history begins with the Enlightenment, the modern democratic revolutions and nineteenth-century Western hegemonic colonialism.

Let me now turn briefly to the final topic of Asian Catholicism. Catholicism has taken roots in Asia through three distinct phases that correspond to three different phases of globalization: (a) the first phase of early modern globalization from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, which we have already discussed; (b) the modern Western hegemonic phase of globalization from the 1780s to the 1960s; and (c) the contemporary phase of globalization, in our global age, after Western hegemony.

It is only at the end of the eighteenth century that global Protestant missions began in earnest, accompanying first the British then the American global imperial expansions. Throughout the nineteenth century there was also a renewed expansion of Catholic missions throughout Asia and the Pacific carried out by the restored Society of Jesus, as well as by new male and female missionary and teaching religious orders and congregations. Many of them, such as the Mission Étrangères de Paris (MEP), the Marist and Spiritans were primarily French orders which accompanied the global expansion of the French colonial empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century France became the preeminent Catholic colonial power in Asia. Persecution of Catholic priests in Vietnam, in China and in Korea became the pretext for colonial interventions in all three countries. Colonial France assumed the role of Protector of Catholicism in Asia and the Pacific. Even during the Third Republic, when at home Catholicism and anti-clerical, laicist republicanism were often at loggerheads, the French Catholic Church and the French colonial state collaborated closely in the mission civilatrice in French Indochina as well as in French Polynesia. France became the primary source of Catholic male and female missionaries throughout Asia and the Pacific and even non-French Catholic missionaries functioned under the French Protectorate. The nineteenth-century was also a time of global expansion of Anglo-Saxon (Irish and American) Catholicism, accompanying first the British and then the American global imperial expansion.

Beginning in the 1920s, following Pope Benedict XV's encyclical Maximum Illud (1919), which calls for a renewal of Catholic missions that should foster local inculturation instead of exporting European cultures, one can also witness the formation of native post-missionary national Catholic churches throughout the region which will play various roles in independence movements and in post-colonial processes. In the case of the Philippines, the prominent majoritarian Catholic country in Asia, the process had already started a few decades earlier after independence from Spain, with the consecration of Jorge Barlin as the first native Filipino bishop in 1906. With the passage from Spanish to American imperialism, the Philippines becomes relevant insofar as it offers the first case in Asia of colonial imposition of the American model of state secularism in a majoritarian Catholic country. The Catholic Church, though hegemonic, had to learn to live with state secularism and accommodate Protestant and Muslim (Mindanao) religious minorities.

In terms of the global transformation of Catholicism, the contemporary phase of globalization was initiated by the Second Vatican Council, the first truly global ecumenical council of any Christian Church. The process of Catholic aggiornamento connected with Vatican II had tremendous repercussions in the transformation of Catholicism around the world. In Asia and the Pacific it inaugurated a new Pan-Asian phase of Catholicism connected with the formation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in 1973 and later in 1992 the Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO). Those processes led to the development of new pan-Asian and Pacific Catholic networks, theological discourses and new global, regional and local identities.

Clearly, the Catholic Church is a minority religion in Asia. Yet one could also argue that remarkably, no other Asian religion has assumed such a clear and persistent general Pan-Asian voice for all the peoples and cultures of Asia, especially for the poor, immigrants and refugees, and for those who are the greatest victims of the contemporary globalization of indifference. So in this respect, the FABC has adopted the identity not of a self-referential Catholic Church in Asia, protecting its particular interests and those of the Catholic minorities, but rather the identity of a Catholic Church for Asia. Its organizing principles have been those of the triple dialogue: dialogue with the cultures of Asia, dialogue with the religions of Asia, and dialogue with the peoples of Asia, particularly with the poor. The Catholic Church in Asia was forced to abandon the notion of Christian exclusivity, recognizing that Asia is not going to become a Christian continent. It wants to become "the voice of the voiceless," of the poor, of the Dalits, of indigenous groups, of tribal groups, of the marginalized, of people on the periphery of each and every society. One can assert rightly that some of the most serious documents addressing the fate of the people marginalized by processes of globalization anywhere in Asia, and lately also addressing ecological and environmental issues across Asia, originate in the FABC.

In all of this the pan-Asian Catholic Church only reflects some of the issues and concerns of the global Catholic Church. But there is one particular pan-Asian Catholic network which has had a significant impact upon the contemporary development of Asian Catholicism, namely pan-Asian networks of Filipino migrants which are affecting the local Catholic churches particularly in the most developed countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and which serves as an additional important factor in the development of a pan-Asian Catholic identity and perspective.