



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Biography

André Laliberté is full professor at the School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, where he teaches on comparative politics and the politics of China and Taiwan. He is an affiliated research fellow at the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University, and since the Fall of 2013, he is associate at the Groupe Sociétés, Religions, et Laïcité, in Paris. He has received his doctoral degree from the University of British Columbia in 1999. He also taught at the Université du Québec à Montréal, and was lecturer at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University. He is doing research in Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, and Hong Kong.

Since 2012 he is co-investigator in a partnership funded by SSHRC, on 'Gender, Migration, and the Work of Care in the Asia-Pacific', in which he looks at how religious traditions and cultural shape and frame the policies of care. From 2007 to 2012, he was a member of another Major Concerted Research Initiative funded by SSHRC on 'Ethnicity and Democratic Governance,' where he looked at issues of religious and ethnic diversity in China and Taiwan. He served for years on the executive board of the Canadian Asian Studies Associations and is now vice-editor for the Journal of Religion and Chinese Society. He has presented his research results in conferences in North America, Europe, East Asia, and Australia, including international symposia in the People's Republic on the study of religion in contemporary China. In the winter of 2011, Laliberté was at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC to work with other scholars funded by the Henry Luce Foundation on a project researching the role of religions in international affairs. Between January and June 2014, he was the UBC Asian

Institute's Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation visiting scholar on the Buddhism and contemporary society program.

He co-edited with Bruce Berman and Rajeev Bhargava *The secular state and religious diversity* (UBC Press, 2014). Recently, he has written "The Politicization of Religion by the CCP: a Selective Retrieval", in *Asiatische studien/Etudes asiatiques* (January 2015); "Legal pluralism and the universality of freedom of conscience: a comparative historical sociology of the secular state in the Euro-American and Sinitic Worlds", *Taiwan Human Rights Journal* (December 2014); "The Five Worlds of Religious Establishment in Taiwan", in *Varieties of Religious Establishment* (Ashgate, 2013); "Lessons from the Management of Religious Diversity in Chinese Societies: A Diversity of Approaches to State Control", *Multiculturalism and Religious Identity* (Montréal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press 2013); "Buddhist Charities and China's Social Policy: An Opportunity for Alternate Civility?", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* (2012); "'Beliefs' and 'religion': categorizing cultural distinctions among East Asians", in *How Public Institutions Assess Identity* (UBC Press 2011).

Research Statement

Most of my research in the last few years has focused on looking at religion from the perspective of comparative politics. I am interested in the state's response to religious pluralism in Asian societies, where states have sought to simultaneously delineate the limits of 'acceptable religions' and promote a self-image of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. I believe that the varieties of policies adopted by East Asian polities deserve careful study as they may emerge as sources of norms for the management of religion in many societies in other regions of the world.

Religions and Welfare Regimes in East Asia: a contribution to the role of religion in the moral economy of late capitalist societies in Asia, this project results from my fieldwork in Taiwan and China on Buddhist charities. This particular project is part of a research funded by SSHRC for a partnership looking at gender, migration, and the work of care in the Asia-Pacific, for which I act as co-investigator. How governments in the Western side of the Asia Pacific make use of the religious and spiritual capital existing to shape and frame social policies and, more broadly, build welfare regimes? How this intersection of policies and existing beliefs frame the work of care? What are the modalities of this framing in societies where there are many different forms of religiosities, from communal religions to new religious movements? Students examining the role of religious associations in the provision of disaster relief, and the importance of Confucianism in post-Mao China are contributing to that research agenda.

Issues of religious diversity in East Asian democracies: within the project "the secular state with Chinese characteristics in a comparative perspective," which has received funding from SSHRC, I look at the regulation of religion in societies influenced by Chinese religiosities such as Japan and Taiwan, and in societies dealing with the institutional legacy of Marxist-Leninist structures of governance in Central Asia. Debates about the secular state in Japan, the views of Chinese Christians and Muslims on democratic politics, the representation of religions in

school textbooks in Taiwan, and finally the path dependency of Soviet-era religious policies on current policies are among the themes explored by students working under my supervision on this theme. Together, they examine through the lenses of comparative historical sociology the relevance of political regime and culture in the *longue durée* in shaping the conditions allowing for the political participation of religious actors in consolidated or transitional democracies. They also shed light on the conditions favoring the institutionalization of a variety of secular states.

The religious in authoritarian regimes: this other dimension of the project the “secular state with Chinese characteristics in a comparative perspective” looks at the interactions between the state and actors in the religious field in an authoritarian regime. How much the state and religious institutions work in tandem to delineate their respective boundaries to establish their respective authority over citizens and followers, and how each legitimizes what should be ‘acceptable’ forms of religiosity, through policies of recognition and regulatory practices? In other words, what are the modalities and paradoxes of religious diversity within a highly regulated environment? Within this project, I work with Ji Zhe on a manuscript for a book mapping the state management of Buddhism and the development of categories such as ‘philanthropy,’ ‘tourism,’ and ‘cultural heritage’ in which unrecognized forms of religiosity develop on the margins of the norms promoted by the state.

The religious dimension of legal pluralism in the Chinese cultural realm: this project in course of development uses a comparative historical sociology in the perspective of multiple modernities to develop an archeology of the secular state in a Chinese cultural context. Its goal is to establish the diversity of legal frameworks possible on the basis of the wide diversity of resources from different spiritual and religious traditions, as well as communities of practice and rituals. It will pay special attention to the role of the epistemic communities of scholars, people in the media, and lay associations and the ways in which they try to shape the views of governments on religion. The focus of this research is comparative within the context of societies shaped by the Chinese cultural heritage, primarily China and Taiwan.

Geopolitics of Buddhism. This project, still in its exploratory stage, would map the contemporary networks of Buddhist international organizations and transnational movements from a political perspective, addressing in particular the issue of engaged Buddhism, an intellectual construct more than a coherent group of individuals and associations. Its purpose is to identify the variety of trends and perspectives, ranging from “dhammic socialism” to religious nationalism. It will look into the competing international Buddhist networks based in Beijing, Bangkok, and Delhi, and one key issue is the implications for religious diversity and peaceful coexistence of a growing militancy on the part of some Buddhist associations and leaders.