



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 the politics of identity and the politics of Asia, and he is an affiliated research fellow at the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University. 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.

He has served on the executive board of the Canadian Asian Studies Associations and the editorial board of a series on China at the University of Ottawa Press. He has presented his research results in conferences in North America, Europe, and East Asia, including international symposia in the People's Republic on the study of religion in contemporary China. Laliberté was a member of another Major Concerted Research Initiative financed by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada on Ethnicity and Democratic Governance. In the winter of 2011, he 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.

He has published *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan, 1989-2003* (Routledge, 2004), and is presently co-editing a volume with Bruce Berman and Rajeev Bhargava on different models of secular states and religious diversity. He has co-edited a special issue of

*Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* on the State and Religion in China, as well as a special issue of *Social Compass* on new approaches to secularization theory through contemporary China. He has written *The Growth of a Taiwanese Buddhist Association in China: Soft Power and Institutional Learning*, *China Information* (March 2013); *Buddhist Charities and China's Social Policy: An Opportunity for Alternate Civility?*, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* (2012); "Contemporary Issues in State-Religion Relations", co-written with David Palmer and Wu Keping "Social Services, Philanthropy and Religion in Chinese Society", in *Chinese Religious Life* (Oxford 2011), which will be translated in Chinese in 2013; "Buddhist Revival Under State Watch" and "Religion and the State in China: The Limits of Institutionalization", in *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* (2011); "'Beliefs' and 'religion': categorizing cultural distinctions among East Asians", in *How Public Institutions Assess Identity* (UBC Press 2011); "Le monopole d'État du rite en Chine et en Asie de l'Est contemporaines", in *Les religions sur la scène mondiale* (PUL 2010); "The Institutionalization of Buddhist Philanthropy in China," in *The State and Society Responses to Social Welfare Needs in China* (Routledge 2009), "The management of religious diversity in Taiwan: from state control to laissez-faire?" *Journal of Chinese Current Affairs* (2009), "Les religions d'Asie de l'Est mondialisées : le rôle des États," *Revue internationale de politique comparée* (2009), "宗教慈善與災害 重建: 以九二一賑災為例 (Religious Philanthropy and Reconstruction in Disaster Zones)," 民俗曲藝 (*Journal of Chinese Rituals, Theatre and folklore*) (2009), "Entre désécularisation et resacralisation : Bouddhistes laïcs, temples et organisations philanthropiques en Chine," *Social Compass* (2009), "The Political Consequences of Religious Revival in the People's Republic of China," *St-Anthony's International Review* (2008), "'Buddhism for the human realm' and Taiwanese Democracy" in, *Religious Organizations and Democracy in Contemporary Asia* (M.E. Sharpe, 2005), "L'émergence des acteurs religieux dans la Chine des réformes," in *Les enjeux du développement en Chine au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (PUQ 2005), "Democratic Transition and Cultural Diversity: Buddhist Organizations and Identity Construction in Taiwan," in *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia* (Lexington Books, 2004).

## **Research Statement**

All of my research now is 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.

**State regulation of religion and the challenge of diversity within religion.** I will work in the coming year with Ji Zhe on a manuscript for a book mapping the gap between the state management of Buddhism and the development of an autonomous religious sphere in contemporary China, in order to assess critically the emergence of one particular form of religious diversity, what Rajeev Bhargava has termed diversity *within* religion.

**Religion in the moral economy of late capitalist societies in Asia.** The results of my fieldwork in Taiwan and China on Buddhist charities have led me to explore the ways in which

philanthropic associations contribute to the disciplining of the labour force by supporting and ethos that emphasizes compassion and selflessness. I am currently preparing a volume co-edited with Bruce Berman on the moral economy of cultural claims where I will develop the background to this approach.

**The secular state and religious diversity.** In relation to the above, I examine more specifically how the state seeks to manage the moral economy by its regulation of religion. This investigation does not limit itself to the legal framework of religious affairs, but also looks into 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 my research has been comparative within the context of societies shaped by the Chinese cultural heritage, primarily China and Taiwan, and I am looking forward in the next few years to expand the comparative scope of this investigation by looking at other polities with my research team.

**Religion and imagined communities in Asia.** Finally, and in relation to the previous two projects, I am interested by the ways in which religious identity serves to consolidate or blur the frontiers between ethnic and national identities, especially in parts of the world, such as East Asia, where states have deployed considerable energy to reify the boundaries of imagined communities. The definition of religion by state or dominant ethnic group can be used to assert differences and claims of cultural superiority over others within and outside states. I am interested by both the state strategies and the response of religious actors to these attempts to create boundaries. This project would also be comparative and rely on team work. In relation to this, I have received funding from SSHRC to form a research team looking at these issues, looking at the Chinese mode of religious regulation in a comparative perspective and members of the team will look at Japan, Central Asia, and other societies in Asia.