

Transnational giving:

Evolving paths of religion, community and citizenship in globally connected Asia

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Keynote Address: Prof. Daromir Rudnyckyj (Univ. of Victoria)

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Call for Papers

This workshop will engage with ethnographic and historical instances of transnational giving within, to, and from Asia. We deploy the concept of giving as a broader category of relations of exchange, encompassing philanthropy, charity, and gifts, along with their social, religious, and moral obligations. While anthropological theorising of the gift, reciprocity and exchange have been important themes of study in Asian contexts, few look at the links between giving and community formation on a transnational scale. This workshop therefore attempts to bring together researchers whose work examines different forms of transnational giving in historical and contemporary Asian contexts.

Scholars have pointed to a shift in the way charitable giving or philanthropy have operated over time, away from charity for the poor (often religiously motivated) to more targeted, rationalised and professionalised forms of giving (Payton 1989; Gross 2003). Nevertheless, more informal forms of giving still co-exist alongside such professionalised philanthropic approaches and structures. In another vein, Smart (1993), through the example of *guanxi* in China, elucidated that gift giving and other forms of exchange should not be seen as radically different from each other. Despite these differences, scholars agree that giving in its multiple forms emanates from deeply moral and ethical considerations that bind the giver and the receiver in complex and sometimes contradictory ways (Mauss 1990; Callon 1998; Fourade 2007).

Building partly on Mauss's work, a rich scholarship has studied the role of gift-giving in structuring Asian societies, in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial contexts. Scholars have examined how gifting practices have helped assert the authority of kings (Cohn 1996), how welfare provision has mattered in establishing legitimacy to rule and nation-building (Watt 2005), and the multiple ways in which gift giving has worked to maintain patronage or dependency relationships between different communities (Haynes 1987). Others have focused on giving as a part of kinship and religious obligations that shape collective life, and on giving as a mode of transmission of specific moral values, often built on middle-class or elite social and economic ideals (Osella 2009). Giving can also be understood as a way to position oneself within particular networks, whether humanitarian, pious or other. Although some have argued – bringing new layers to Mauss's theory – that donations given to the poor, such as Hindu *daan*, do not necessarily create an obligation of reciprocity (Parry 1986; Laidlaw 2000; Bornstein 2012), gift-giving nevertheless plays significant and complex roles in tying people together. Extending this lens, we ask what kinds of obligation does transnational giving bring with it?

Paying attention to transnational relationships of charity/philanthropy/giving is especially important given that with intensifying global connections, transnational giving has emerged as a small yet significant source of global welfare aid. Economic liberalization and receding of the welfare state have been paralleled with increased privatisation of social service provision and moralized discourses of citizenship emphasising individual voluntary labour and philanthropy (Muehlbach 2012). In other contexts, where states have limited capacity to provide welfare or demonstrate biases in dispensing public goods, non-state actors, like religious or communal groups, play a crucial role in ensuring that basic forms of social security are provided for. These and other considerations are transforming configurations of giving throughout the world - from the growing presence of professional, transnational philanthropic networks to global flows of migrants sending resources back to support their families and kin. They unsettle conceptions of a pastoral, care providing state at the top and “civil society” at the bottom (Mitchell 1991, 2006; Ferguson 1998).

In this workshop, we will pay specific attention to non-state actors such as ethnic, caste or kinship-based networks, family trusts, religious organisations, hometown associations (among others), and explore the diverse forms of transnational giving they engage in. More specifically, the workshop will explore the ways transnational welfare provided by non-state actors influence conceptions of citizenship and belonging. We ask: how do transnational non-state philanthropic or charitable agents affect citizens' relation to the state? What kind of imaginations of the state do transnational giving trigger? In which ways does transnational giving mediate religious, ethnic, national and other forms of community building?

Submissions can address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

- Historical evolution of ethnic, caste, kinship or religious-based transnational giving networks
- Community (trans)formation through transnational philanthropy/charity
- The role of giving networks and changing pastoral care
- Effects and limits of state regulation on transnational giving
- Transnational giving and evolving forms of citizenship
- Shifting social or material obligations as a result of transnational giving
- Transnational care provisions

Please send abstracts (300-500 words) covering one or more of these themes by **March 20, 2019 to asiagiving2019@gmail.com**. Selected abstracts will be duly notified by **March 28, 2019**. As this is a workshop, **original papers of 5-6000** words are due by **May 27, 2019**, and will be pre-circulated to all participants before the workshop to facilitate discussion. We propose to bring out a special issue or an edited volume of selected papers that fit into the workshop theme. In cases where financial assistance is not available from a researcher's university, travel and accommodation will be provided.

Keynote address

The workshop will end with a keynote address to be delivered by **Daromir Rudnyckyj**, University of Victoria, Canada, author of *Beyond Debt: Islamic Experiments in Global Finance* (2018).