

Independent Catholic Movements in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Asia

The “Independent Catholics of India, Goa, and Ceylon” and the “Iglesia Filipina Independiente” in the Context of Religious, Political, and Social Movements of Emancipation in Colonial Modernity



Conférence d'Adrian Hermann
Chaire Religion et société,
Université de Bonn

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Université du Québec à Montréal
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The project is concerned with a comparative analysis of two Rome-independent Catholic movements in Asia around 1900 from a religious studies and history of Christianity perspective. The focus lies on the “Iglesia Filipina Independiente” (IFI) which was founded in the Philippines in 1902, shortly after the transfer from Spanish to American colonial administration, as well as on the “Independent Catholics of India, Goa, and Ceylon” which emerged in the late 1880s in reaction to the end of the Portuguese king's patronage over the Catholic bishoprics in Goa and Ceylon. These movements will be analyzed in three regards: 1. The connections between religious, political, and social movements of emancipation among the local indigenous-Christian elites; 2. Their transregional and transcontinental contacts with each other and with other Rome-independent Catholic groups in other parts of the world; 3. The way in which their advocates were involved in contemporary discourses on “religion” and attempted to locate themselves and their respective cultural contexts in the universal religious history of mankind. In the development of these two movements many similarities and parallels can be observed. The independence from Rome was in both cases pursued by, on the one hand, a former Roman-Catholic priest – Gregorio Aglipay (1860-1940) in the Philippines and Antonio Francisco Xavier Alvares (1836-1923) in Goa and Ceylon – and on the other hand by lay activists. The two laymen, Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938) and Pedro Manuel Lisboa Pinto (1857-1898) were not only religious activists, but also central figures in the founding of local worker's movements. Additionally, they were journalists and publishers and edited the first official periodicals of their new churches. In 1903 there also was a direct exchange of letters between the “Independent Catholics” and the IFI. This connection, as well as additional transregional and transcontinental contacts which have not yet received much scholarly attention, will be explored in detail in this project. Central historical sources for this investigation are not only diverse archival sources but especially the periodicals and other early books and tracts published by the two movements around 1900. By focusing on two Catholic colonial contexts it will also provide new insights regarding current debates in religious studies about the globalization of the discourse of “religion” that are too often focused exclusively on Protestant missionary history.

Adrian Hermann's short biography

Adrian Hermann will be appointed to the Chair “Religion and Society” at the Forum Internationale Wissenschaft (FIW) of the University of Bonn on 1. February 2017. With the new department for comparative research in religion, the FIW is expanding its interdisciplinary, social-scientific profile. As a scholar of religion, Adrian Hermann deals with theoretical and historical questions regarding the globalization of the concept of religion and the religious history of the globalized world. His first book *Unterscheidungen der Religion. Analysen zum globalen Religionsdiskurs und zum Problem der Differenzierung von 'Religion' in buddhistischen Kontexten des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts* was published in 2015. Currently he co-chairs a five-year seminar of the American Academy of Religion on “New Perspectives on Religion in the Philippines”. In Bonn he will be heading a new research project on “Independent Catholic Movements in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Asia” funded by the German Research Foundation.

