

SPIRITUALITY-BASED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FACING GLOBALISATION IN ASIA AND EUROPE: STATE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PROSPECT

*Darwis Khudori, GRIC (Group of Research on Identity and Culture), University of Le Havre,
France, darwis.khudori@univ-lehavre.fr*

Theme: Social Transformation

Research domain: Spirituality, Social Movements, Globalisation

ABSTRACT

All the forces of moral/ethical/spiritual authorities denounce the harmfulness of globalisation. However, to what extent do they do so? Are there spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe dealing directly with the impact of globalisation? Are there concepts, projects and programmes proposed by spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe that are related to the challenges imposed by globalisation? Where is the place and what is the role of spirituality-based social movements amongst the existing social movements that are dealing with globalisation in Asia and Europe? These are the root questions underlying a workshop dedicated to spirituality-based social movements facing globalisation in Asia and Europe, which was held in Nagoya, Japan, in April 2004. This paper presents some selected findings of the workshop and some ideas for its follow-up.

INTRODUCTION

The "negative" impact of (economic/neo-liberal) *globalisation* [1] is well known and has been denounced by activists of civil society, humanist intellectuals, and spiritual and religious leaders. Since the motivating force of (economic/neo-liberal) globalisation is short-term material/economic profit, it can be expected that the most credible *social movements* [2] against it are not based on the same interest (i.e. on a material/economic dimension), but on the spiritual/human dimension. It would be useful therefore to study how social movements based on *spirituality* [3] react to (economic/neo-liberal) globalisation in order to participate in building up a *human(ised)* [4] globalisation.

Studies on social movements, spirituality and globalisation as a single subject (not as separated subjects) are still rare however. Two "negative" points mark issues around this

matter. On the one hand, people still and often get confused between "spirituality" and "religion", and between "social movements based on spirituality" and "spiritual movements". On the other hand, all the existing studies on "spirituality-based social movements", which are still rare, show this type of social movement as "regressive", "dangerous" and "anti-social", as these movements were represented by religious fundamentalism and sectarian activism [5].

The state of knowledge on this subject is therefore still limited, fragmentary and marked by prejudice. This paper aims, on the one hand, to improve this situation by presenting the findings of the Nagoya Workshop, and, on the other hand, to propose some ideas of action-research on spirituality-based social movements in relation to the concrete problems of mankind and the environment in diverse parts of the world.

SPIRITUALITY-BASED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: NOTION, ROLE, STRENGTH

The classical work of Alain Touraine defined a social movement according to three principles: *identity*, *opposition*, and *totality*. In his own version, Castells explains this notion by using other words: *identity* means the self definition of the movement, what movement is, in the name of whom the movement speaks; *opponent* - the principle of *opposition* - is the main adversary of the movement, which the movement designates consciously as such; *societal objective* - the principle of *totality* - is the idea the movement has on the type of social order, or social organisation, to which it wishes to lead toward a historical horizon of its collective action [6].

By following this basic notion, we can identify the general characteristic of spirituality-based social movement: *that is a social movement that not only has spirituality as its implicit reference, but also as its explicit identity*. This primary identification is very important, because seen from the point of view of actions, the distinction between spirituality and non-spirituality-based social movements is not clear. All social movements are more or less "spirituality"-based, in the sense that they are based on "non-material" interest: all of them are not profit oriented, all of them act on behalf of social well being, all of them are aimed at changing or preserving certain aspects of social system. A Communist trade union and a Christian one can have a same project, programme, and action. What makes them different is that the first identifies itself as Communist while the second Christian.

The distinction between "spirituality/religion-based social movements" and "spiritual/religious movements" is worthy of notice. François Houtart provides a warning on this: *"There is a profound difference between what were and still are nowadays religious movements of social protest and social engagement motivated by religious convictions. The*

first ones put their objective in the translation on earth of a religious order supposed to achieve its perfection, while the second ones join in social struggles with the support of religious conviction. The illustration of the first ones can be found in the numerous peasant movements along the European Middle Age, in the Christian or Muslim Messianism in Brazil, South Africa, or Sudan, in the revolt of Tai Ping, in all the efforts to build a 'Celestial Jerusalem' or in the projects of political Islam. The examples of the second ones: the basic communities in Brazil, or in Philippines, or among the groups of Muslim intellectuals" [7].

In the era of globalisation, spirituality-based social movements are supposed to play a leading role among the other types of social movements for three reasons. Firstly, the revolution of information technology and the restructuring of capitalism have provoked the emergence of a new type of society, which Castells called *a network society* [8]. It is characterised by the globalisation of strategic economic activities; the flexibility and instability of work; the individualisation of manpower; a new virtual culture led by diverse medias communicating with each other and penetrating everywhere; the transformation of the fundamental material dimensions of life, space, and time;... In this situation, the value of the individual, of a human being, of the "self", of the "meaning", is in danger of disappearing or being reduced to a commodity good having no power of decision, the power being confiscated by the "network", the "function".

Secondly, in the era of industrial capitalism, during the 19th and 20th centuries, social movements lived in the logic of class struggle: confrontation of forces between capital and work. The basic power of social movements was through the union of workers capable of slowing down or stopping production. In the era of globalisation, this principle does not work anymore. The workers' movements are weakened by the new mode of production based on ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and characterised by the flexibility and instability of work, and the individualisation of manpower.

Thirdly, in the industrial era, the point of conflicts between workers and employers was basically economic. It is true that the trade unions were in open war against capitalism. However they did not have any doubts about productivity and material progress, and their objective, like that of capitalism, was to control its development and to increase their part of the harvest. In the era of information, the dominant logic of networks penetrates everywhere, so that the only means of escape from their domination is to get away from the logic and to build up another logic based on an entirely different worldview, system of values and beliefs. In other word, the point of conflict is no longer economic, but cultural.

In this disconcerting and uncontrolled situation, the individuals tend to regroup around primary identities: religion, ethnicity, territory,... Religious fundamentalism, be it Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, or even Buddhist, is probably the most tremendous force of

personal security and collective mobilisation for this period of trouble. The general destruction of organisations, the loss of the legitimacy of institutions, the fading away of great social movements,... have made identity become the main, if not the only, source of meaning.

Spirituality-based social movements, together with other social movements based on identity (ethnicity, gender, locality,...), offer a promising means to people who are looking for alternatives to the present social order. The strength of these movements is even greater than that of classical social movements. While the classical social movements (workers, trade unions) are based on the same interest of that of their adversary (capitalists, industrialists), which is economic interest, the spirituality-based social movements are based on a completely different interest. Their strength lies therefore in their autonomy from the State's institutions and from the logic of capital. Even if they are defeated, their spirit of resistance and their ideas resonate through the whole of society.

FINDINGS FROM NAGOYA

Forty-eight academics and activists of social organisations based on spirituality gathered at the Nagoya workshop. These were mainly from Asia and Europe. All participants contributed actively in the workshop, either as paper presenters or discussants. Twenty-four papers and twenty-four responses were presented in the workshop. The followings are selected findings of the workshop relevant to the topic of this paper.

Existence of spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe dealing directly with the impact of globalisation

The existence of social movements based on spirituality in Asia and Europe was revealed through most of the papers in the workshop. They appeared clearly in the so-called case studies (based on a single project, a single activity, or a single organisation), such as the activities of the Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA)-International in Asia, the Pacific and South America (Yukio Kamino, Japan) [9]; of the Catholic Church of Austria in addressing "global changes in times-structures" (Markus Glatz Schmallegger, Austria) [10]; of a group of Buddhist nuns in human, community and nature healing (Parichart Suwanbubbha, Thailand) [11]; of the Catholic Church in Singapore in taking care of migrant-workers (Theresa W. Devasahayam, Singapore) [12]; of the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace taking care of the problems of violence against women (Musdah Mulia, Indonesia) [13]; of the indigenous people of Mount Apo opposing a geothermal power plant project (Albert E. Alejo, the Philippines) [14]; and of the YWCA

(Young Women Christian Association) empowering women across social, ethnic and national boundaries (Hilda Rømer Christensen, Denmark) [15]. We can also see their presence in more general or transversal studies (based on a territory or a group of organisations in which spirituality-based social movements take part), such as the works of Michiaki Okuyama (Japan, on Buddhist activism in Japan) [16], of Massimiliano Andretta (Italy, on spirituality-based social movements in the European Social Forum) [17] and of John Lannon (Ireland, on spirituality-based social movements and Internet) [18].

Place and role of spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe among the existing social movements in the two continents dealing with globalisation

There was no paper dedicated directly to these issues. Some papers suggested, however, that the place is more and more important, at least quantitatively, as indicated by their increasing number on the Internet (the work of John Lannon mentioned above) and in the European Social Forum (the work of Massimiliano Andretta mentioned above). Theoretically, globalisation that leads to the alienation and exclusion of the "self" will push "identities" (religion, ethnicity, gender, locality) to be the final point of reference for social movements, thereby making spirituality-based social movements foremost among the social movements as suggested by the work of Darwis Khudori (France/Indonesia, on spirituality-based social movements facing globalisation) [19]. For Adrian Pabst (Luxembourg/Germany/UK), "only a new humanism and spirituality can liberate mankind from the constricting shackles of the nation-state and the vagaries of the global market place" [20]. Empirically, this tendency was well illustrated by Mayfair Yang (USA) who witnessed the "sprouts of civil society" in China based on traditional religions [21]. The collective conclusion suggested that the place and the role of spirituality-based social movements among the existing social movements are very important, due to the fact that their base is stable, durable, and sustainable; their approach is holistic; and their primary motivation is ethic/moral (and not economic or social).

Existence of concepts, projects and programmes proposed by spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe related to the challenges imposed by globalisation

Some case studies spoke about social movements or social actions based on a concept, a project and a programme related to globalisation. These were especially clear in the work of Yukio Kamino, Markus Schmalleger, Parichart Suwanbubbha and Theresa Devasahayam mentioned above.

Emergence of social movements based on "non-conventional" spiritualities

The workshop revealed the existence or the emergence of social movements based on "non-conventional" spiritualities [22]. The "non-conventional" spirituality as a base of social movement, social action, or social organisation, was revealed in the works of Yukio Kamino (multi-religious and multi-cultural social movement started in Japan inspired by Shintoism), of Mayfair Yang (indigenous/traditional/tribal belief in a region of China), of Albert E. Alejo (indigenous belief in a region of Philippines), and of Musdah Mulia (collaboration of several religions and "non-conventional" spiritualities in making an interfaith movement) mentioned above.

Positive Contribution of Spirituality-Based Social Movements

There are some well known cases of social movements based on identity (including spirituality or religion) that have presented danger for humanity: the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan, ethnic cleansing in Rwanda and in ex-Yugoslavia,... diverse currents of extremism based on Islam (in Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan,...) or on Hinduism (in India), etc. The workshop demonstrated the contrary cases of spirituality-based social movements: all the presented case studies revealed the noble contribution of spirituality-based social movements in humanising globalisation. Moreover, the works of the presented social movements are not aimed at promoting their respective community but are dedicated to the improvement of human and environment conditions through social and environmental issues related to globalisation. These include migration (Theresa W. Devasahayam), trafficking in women (Siti Musdah Mulia), working conditions (Markus Glatz Schmallegger), environment (Yukio Kamino), world social forum (Massimiliano Andretta), women empowerment (Hilda Rømer Christensen) and human rights (John Lannon).

Possibilities for collaboration between scholars and actors of spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe in dealing with globalisation

No paper addressed this question directly. The only paper dealing with the relationship between Asia and Europe was the one from Elisabeth Gerle (Sweden) that discussed clashes and convergences between Asian and European models of thought in relation to human rights [23]. She did not speak however about collaboration between Asians and Europeans in any field. It was the workshop participants who expressed, during the collective conclusion and recommendation, their wish for developing collaboration between scholars and activists of spirituality-based social movements in Asia and Europe. It was suggested that this could be done through building networks, joint study projects, joint action-research, more dialogues,

exchanges of experiences and bridging the diverging gaps between and within Asia and Europe.. It was also suggested that spirituality-based social movements set-up domestic and international political agendas in order to deal with governments (in Asia and Europe).

State of knowledge on spirituality-based social movements facing globalisation

It is clear from the workshop, which involved academics and activists from Asia and Europe, including eminent scholars in fields related to spirituality (Theology, Religious Studies, Philosophy, Anthropology, History, Sociology, Political Sciences,...), that our state of knowledge on “social movements based on spirituality facing globalisation” is still very poor. A general overview on the subject is not yet available at the level of Asia or Europe, let alone at the world level. Bibliography, concepts, theories, cases, conferences, workshops,... dealing with this subject are still rare, and exploratory research is still needed in order to build a general knowledge in the area. Our workshop is a part of it, if not a pioneer in the field.

CLOSING REMARK

The Nagoya Workshop constitutes a very rich source of knowledge on spirituality-based social movements facing globalisation in Asia and Europe. Some of its findings need to be underlined and developed:

1. It is clear that spirituality-based social movements have a potential to be a powerful type of social movement in the era of globalisation.
2. They can be "progressive" or "regressive" when seen from the point of view of the common interest of mankind and environment (not from the point of view of the movements themselves).

In order to participate actively and positively in building up a humanised globalisation, spirituality-based social movements need to organise themselves. This means forming a kind of Forum, Group, Federation or Association of Spirituality-based Social Movements, at different levels, from local, national, regional to global. It is through this kind of organisation that spirituality-based social movements may develop their "progressive" elements and eliminate or control their "regressive" ones. As a "progressive" group, their action can be "constructive" (by promoting alternative concepts and projects/programmes of development, as in the case of "GNH-based community development"), "curative" (by mediating the opposing parties in social conflicts, as in the case of the interfaith dialogues in the Southern Thailand), or "supportive" (by supporting oppressed people who are claiming their rights, as the Burmese monks defending the oppressed people under the Military Junta did).

In that respect, an alliance with the academic world, especially with researchers interested in spirituality-based social movements, is essential for several reasons:

1. The academic world remains the institution that is still respected by all the actors of development (government, private sector, civil society).
2. It is in the academic world that knowledge (including spirituality-based social movements as an object of study) is studied, documented, accumulated and developed.

In this case, "action-research" may be the most appropriate working method to use. The actions of spirituality-based social movements can be prepared, carried out and evaluated together by their "researchers" and "actors". In this way, the result of their "action-research" can be beneficial for both sides. It will enrich the "body of knowledge" necessary for the academic world, and at the same time improve the "tools for actions" needed by the social movements.

REFERENCES

- [1] *Globalisation* can be understood as a process of penetration/movement/displacement of flows (of people, goods, services, capital, information, ideas, thoughts, ideologies, beliefs, religions, spiritualities, arts,...) from place to place/country to country/nation to nation, beyond the conventional boundaries, at a global scale, motivated mainly by economic reasoning, and facilitated/enabled by the information and telecommunication technologies.
- [2] *A Social Movement* can be understood in its simplest definition as a collective effort aimed at either changing or preserving some aspects of a social system. Such a movement is characterised by:
- its objective: social well-being (not political power)
 - its means: social organisation (not a political party)
 - its actors: a group of people united more by their interest in a particular (social) "value" than in (political) "power"
- [3] *Spirituality* can be understood as a character and a foundation of a way of life. As a character, it refers to what is spiritual, what is to do with the spirit, which is beyond or independent of other matters (e.g. the spirituality of a literary work). As a foundation of a way of life, it designates beliefs and practices related to the "beyond" (often called God, the Absolute, the Truth, the Divine, the Sacred, the Transcendent,...) as the primary source or the primary reference of ethical/moral values (e.g. Javanese spirituality). It is the basic principle of religion, but not the religion itself. It is often described as the "inner" aspect of religion (the "outer" aspect being the doctrines, the

rites, and the institutions). One can follow a (personal or collective) spirituality without following any religion. To link oneself to the "beyond" or to be in conformity with the values coming from or derived from the "beyond" is the primary aspiration of every human being whose way of life is based upon spirituality (which is not necessarily religion).

- [4] *Human* as an adjective can be understood as having or bearing the character of human beings as it can be identified through its specific dimensions (i.e. economic, social, and cultural/spiritual). Humanised can be understood as a situation that results from actions that make human beings the focus of preoccupation, providing a fulfilment of the conditions needed for the continuous improvement/development of humanity, which can be manifested by the equilibrium of economic, social, and cultural/spiritual dimensions at all levels of existence. The word "human(ised)" has been applied for a long time in conjunction with "development" and more recently with "globalisation" in order to stress the importance of the integrity of human beings, meaning the equilibrium of their multiple dimensions, especially in connection with the fact that their social and cultural/spiritual dimensions have been dominated by the economic dimension in such a way that economic interest has come to dictate the destiny of humanity.
- [5] See for example the work of Castells, Manuel, on religious fundamentalism and cultural identity, on the American Militia and the patriotic movement in USA, on the sect Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, in Castells, Manuel (1997), *The Power of Identity*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- [6] Castells, Manuel (1999), *Le pouvoir de l'identité*, Fayard, Paris, p. 92.
- [7] Houtart, François (2002), "*La protestation religieuse et ses dimensions éthiques*" in Amin, Samir and Houtart, François (eds.), *Mondialisation des Résistances - L'Etat des luttes 2002*, L'Harmattan, Paris / Budapest / Torino, p. 323.
- [8] Castells, Manuel (1996), *The Rise of Network Society*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.
- [9] Kamino, Yukio (2004), *Beyond 'Self-Interest': Spiritual Values into Action in a Japan-based Transnational NGO*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [10] Schmallegger, Markus Glatz (2004), *Religions addressing global changes in time-structures*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [11] Suwanbubbha, Parichart (2004), *Religious Organization, Civil Society and Globalisation. The Case of Mae Chee's Dhamma Centre*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [12] Devasahayam, Theresa W. (2004), *Commissioned to Care: the Catholic Church in the Lives of Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [13] Mulia, Siti Musdah (2004), *Globalisation and Trafficking in Women: The Unique Roles of Women of Faith (The Case of ICRP)*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [14] Alejo, Albert E. (2004), *Cultural Energy as Spirituality: an Indigenous Approach to a More Humane Global Protest Movement*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.

- [15] Christensen, Hilda Rømer (2004), *Empowering Women across Social, Ethnic and National Boundaries: The YWCA in Postcolonial and Global Perspectives 1900-2000*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [16] Okuyama, Michiaki (2004), *Buddhist Activism in Japan and the Challenge of Globalization*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [17] Andretta, Massimiliano (2004), *Will the dead survive to globalisation? Religious activism against neoliberal globalisation*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [18] Lannon, John (2004), *Towards Global Humanisation: Spirituality-Based Movements and the Internet*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [19] Khudori, Darwis (2004), *The Challenge of Globalisation for Spirituality Based Social Movements: A View from Europe*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [20] Pabst, Adrian (2004), *For a Global Commonwealth of Religions: Some strategies to enact religious alternatives to the secular conceptions of humanism and spirituality*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [21] Yang, Mayfair (2004), *Secular Sovereignty and the Re-Sacralization of Rural Communities in Southeast China*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.
- [22] The word non-conventional is put between quotation marks as a sign that it is a temporary term not elaborated in the workshop. It is used in its distinction with the "classical" or "conventional" spirituality, which is religion, especially supranational religions like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It is also chosen to avoid the possible confusion with "alternative" spiritualities already used and known in academic world. In this respect, "alternative" spiritualities are a part of "non-conventional" spiritualities, but "non-conventional" spiritualities are not only "alternative" spiritualities. They include also the association of conventional religions making "non-conventional" spiritualities.
- [23] Gerle, Elisabeth (2004), *Religious Diversity and Human Rights-Clashes and Convergences in Asian-European Dialogues*, paper presented in Nagoya Workshop.