Panel 1

Robert Yelle

Father-Right: An Inquiry into the Connections among Patriarchy, Property, and Religion

> "[T]he authority of the Patriarch or Paterfamilias over his family is… the element or germ out of which all permanent power of man over man has been gradually developed."
> ~Henry Maine, *Lectures on the Early History of Institutions* (1875)

> "The original meaning of the word 'family' (*familia*) is not that compound of sentimentality and domestic strife which forms the ideal of the present-day philistine; among the Romans it did not at first even refer to the married pair and their children, but only to the slaves. *Famulus* means domestic slave, and *familia* is the total number of slaves belonging to one man. … The term was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism, whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves, and was invested under Roman paternal power with rights of life and death over them all."~
> Friedrich Engels, *Origin of the Family* (1884)

A vast literature, growing especially out of anthropological studies in the late 19th century, has addressed the displacement of matrilineality or even primitive matriarchy by patrilineality and patriarchy, and the connection of this displacement with the rise of private property and of the state. In this line we find J. J. Bachofen's *Mutterrecht*, J. F. McLennan, Lewis Henry Morgan, Henry Maine, Friedrich Engels, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[1] My emphasis will be on tracing the connections, whether real or imaginary (or both), among patriarchy, property, and power. Religion is also an important factor. As Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680) argued already, there is a basis for such connections in biblical tradition and the theological notion of the divine right of kings, which depended upon an analogy between monotheism and monarchy. The Roman paterfamilias' *vitae necisque potestas* (power of life and death) has also often been interpreted as the power to sacrifice, a form of violence that Nancy Jay argued supplanted natural, female birth with a male substitute. Sacrifice in many cultures consists at once of a form of economic exchange, a means of creating binding social ties, and an expression of hierarchy and patriarchy, including sovereign violence. How can we make sense of these historical entanglements in order to explain and, where necessary, to contest contemporary developments in political theology and economy?

---

[1] For a survey see Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon, 2000); and idem, *Gentlemen and Amazons: The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1861-1900* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011).

Michael Kinadeter

Shaping Identity, Constructing Power?
Ancient Japan on her Quest for the Construction of Political Power

The present articles sketches the historical development of a central political authority in Japan, starting with the formation of local clans during the Yayoi period and followed by the transformation from a clan leader to the Heavenly Ruler during the Golden Age of the Imperial Rule; adjacently I will illustrate the eventual decline of Imperial predominance and its substitution by the military class in medieval times, accompanied by the influence of Buddhist, Confucian and bureaucratic concepts from the mainland. This course of events will serve as the basis to trace on a larger scale the development of social hierarchy and the figure of a ruler with absolute authority, as well as the corresponding conceptions of ownership and peonage. To this end, the paper is divided into three parts.

The first part deals with the gradual construction of Heavenly Rulership, emerging from clan leadership and advanced by both domestic and foreign events. Early on, local Japanese clans were keen to extend their influence and bolster their authority through recognition from the Chinese state, and arguably by importing not only material goods and technology, but also spiritual conceptions from the mainland (Cp. Barnes 2014). Despite the significant impact from China as role model for the upcoming Yamato state, the conception of a Heavenly Ruler in Japan essentially differed from the Chinese notion, just like the according conception of property and peonage. The central distinction from the Chinese concept of the Heavenly Sovereign lies in the irredeemable Heavenly Decree of the Imperial court to rule over Japan (through direct descent from the Sun deity Amaterasu), as established by the Yamato court. This constitutes the apex of Imperial authority and the actual political power of the Imperial court.

The second part is concerned with the decline of Imperial predominance starting with the ninth century, its substitution by the military court and the upcoming role of Buddhist cosmology, refined and passed down through the sociopolitical spheres of India, China and Korea over the course of more than one thousand years. The decline of Imperial authority and its centralized power was provoked by different factors, prominently among them the development of private estates as essential requirement for the later forms of decentralized rule. In terms of spiritual legitimization, both the role and worship of Japanese deities or members of the Imperial family (arguably designated as "Proto-Shinto"), as well as the maturing ideals of the Warrior aristocracy (Zen

Buddhism and conceptions such as the *chakkravati* and the *bodhisattva* as protector of the state) were embedded in the sophisticated realm of Buddhist cosmology and soteriology. At the same time, the course of political events on the mainland triggered impulses in Japanese politics, so that

alternative ideas surfaced, which affected the legitimization of political rule in Japan, such as the Japanese spirit 大和魂 (jp. *yamato damashii*), Japan as the Land of the Deities 神国 (jp. *shinkoku*) or the essential unity of the Ise shrine and the state, underlining the mutual dependence of the Imperial court and the (Proto-) Shinto religion. In conjunction, these different models constitute various attempts to legitimize rulership, to advance the notion of the power of the courts and to employ religious ideals to facilitate rule over the Japanese lands and people.

The third and final part of the paper will offer critical thoughts on the impact of transregional fluctuation of thoughts and spiritual ideas with regard to the political development in Japan. Indispensably, this includes the consideration of the critical role of spiritual concepts introduced from the mainland, the impact of continental political events triggering national developments "at the time of national crisis" (cp. Waida 1976) as well as the decisive means of imported cultural and technological superiority (possibly explained as *cuius technica, eius regnum* – whose technics, his reign) for political purposes. Furthermore, the paper not only gives a perspective of the chronological continuities and their prerequisites, but also the agnostic movements as observable by their respective foundation in different ideological backgrounds and their reception by different political communities within the Japanese state. At the same time, the paper will build on the viewpoint of traditional scholarship which often highlights the role of the Emperor and the Imperial court, by considering the attitude towards land ownership and peonage as well. Moreover, a future prospect in this field is to investigate the influence from Japan to the mainland, rather than the other way round. In this regard, the paper will compare and contrast different models of constructing social hierarchy, establishing authority and political power concentrated in the single person of the supreme ruler, by integrating transregional politics, religious belief and conceptions of land ownership and peonage.

Devin Singh

Sacred Obligations: Debt Slavery and the Patterns of Sovereignty

This paper explores the structure and logic of early forms of debt slavery in human communities, with a focus on the ancient Near East, with an eye toward how such forms of bondage relate to the needs of sovereign power in managing populations and resources. One question that arises in the literature is whether debt slavery is problematic for sovereignty or undergirds and aids it. Do forms of centralized, sovereign power emerge in part to mediate, regulate, and contain debt servitude, and even to disrupt such forms of oppression, as Jubilee traditions of debt cancellation might suggest? Might this indicate tensions between debt slavery and forms of political governance associated with sovereignty? On the contrary, I will argue that forms of debt bondage aid sovereign power and that patterns of debt management and distribution appear constitutive of sovereignty. Sovereignty thrives on the skillful administration of debt: both the allocation and redistribution of the debts of the governed and the deflection and dispersal of its own indebtedness. Furthermore, ideologies of sacred obligation to gods and ancestors coincide with subjection to state power, serving to reinforce and support postures of indebtedness to the sovereign. One role of political theology in this context, therefore, is to validate, support, and manage debt. Metaphors of debt slavery as sinfulness and of redemption from debt bondage as salvation ultimately work to support postures of obligation before authority, obfuscate sovereignty's own indebtedness, and vindicate debt economies.

Panel 2

Tanuja Kothiyal

Sovereignty, Authority and Control in the Borderlands: Religious Shrines and Networks in the Thar Desert (c 1400-1800)

The Thar Desert, which constitutes the borderland between the nation states of India and Pakistan, has historically been a shatter zone through which warriors, traders, ascetics and bards travelled over centuries. Traversing this harsh arid terrain remained a difficult enterprise that entailed negotiating multiple kinds of controls and 'sovereignties' exercised by kings, chieftains, warlords, semi-divine religious figures of heterodox nature among others.

My paper seeks to understand the nature of sovereignty and authority in the harsh desert borderlands that Ernst Gellner has described as wombs of sedentary state formation. Unlike James Scott's Zomia as a zone of escape, I view the borderlands as zones of possibility, which permit negotiation with multiple holders of authority. In doing so, I turn my attention towards heterodox networks of religious patronage, pilgrimage and circulation in the Thar Desert.

I examine the remains of intricate networks shrines dedicated to *charani* goddesses, *nath* ascetics, *pirs*, and local pastoral *devtas* in the Thar Desert between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. In examining these networks, I explore the social and political roles played by these shrines, and the groups that managed these. I argue that these shrines, often located on routes of travel, were managed by groups that controlled circulation of people and goods through the desert. Providing shelter, food, water and passage, these shrines represented the ways in which authority was shared and negotiated in the harsh desert terrain. What is also interesting about these shrines is the ways through which the shrine networks seamlessly integrated with each other in the desert, with goddesses, ascetics and *pirs* appearing in each other's narratives. At times, they share authority and at others contest each other's power. Today these shrines stand absorbed in dominant strands of Hinduism and Islam, but their complex heterodox histories reveal the intricate connections between religious and political authority in the Thar region.

While the histories of the Thar have been examined through the histories of kingdoms that it was divided into, and the clans that ruled, the study of these shrines also suggests the ways in which the idea of kingship clashed and redefined itself in relation to the challenges it faced in the borderlands. The period that I examine witnessed the rise of Rajput fort capitals, which aligned themselves variously in relation to the Mughal empire. In doing so, while the ruling clans extended patronage to a range of local deities and shrines, this period also witnessed the steady rise of patronage to *Vaishnavism*, with emerging models of kingship shaped around *vaishanava bhakti* or

devotion, as argued by Norbert Peabody. *Vaishnavism* also found resonance with the Mughal emperors, who too extended patronage to *vaishnava* shrines much more than they did to others. Thus, I argue in this paper, that increasing patronage to *vaishnava* deities and shrines allowed greater integration of clans from the Thar region into the Indo-Gangetic heartland of the Mughal empire, while steadily marginalizing the heterodox networks of religious-political authority in the desert.

Aditi Saraf

Hifazat – Law, Land and Security in Kashmir

In the summer of 2008 the Jammu and Kashmir government under Indian administration transferred 100 acres of forest land to the Amarnath Shrine Board for constructing temporary facilities for Hindu pilgrims. This caused the Muslim majority Kashmir valley to erupt in protests that became a rallying point for Kashmiri opposition to colonization and aggressive religious politics by the Indian state. In my paper, I juxtapose the 2008 land transfer dispute with the legal vigilance exerted, and the rituals enacted, by the Kashmir ruling house (Darbar) under Princely rule to maintain the inalienability of immovable property in land. While the idea of the king as supreme landowner has a strong legacy, the Kashmir Durbar was exceptional in guarding ownership of immovable property particularly in view of the large number of long term European visitors that Valley attracted. I argue that vigilance regarding the inalienability of immovable property went hand in hand with control over the movement of commodities across the kingdom's own "customs frontier" to shape distinct norms of rule encapsulated by the term *hifazat* – "to protect and guard" – that helped the Darbar consolidate the slippery frontier as 'territory'. In so doing, I trace alternative alternate genealogies of states, markets and corresponding ideas of autochthony and circulation at the colonial frontier between South and Central Asia. My attempt is to address the larger question of how to think the frontier not as a legal and territorial periphery but as constituting a distinct spatial order or nomos (Schmitt 2006) that shapes political impasses of the present day dispute.

Milinda Banerjee

Divine Subalterns and Sovereign Labour: A Manifesto for Revolutionary Being and Action

This paper puts varied texts and contexts, especially from modern Bengal and Europe, into conversation to outline a new theory of revolutionary being and democratic politics, embedded in the recognition of the divinity of all selves – and especially of subaltern selves – and of the ability of labour to constitute not just property, but also sovereignty. It begins by examining an argument from the Bengali intellectual Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1920) about the power of the state to make ownership and property – understood by him through Sanskritic and European concepts, including *mamatva*, *svatva*, *proprium*, *suum*, and *Eigentum* – sacred. I demonstrate how this high-caste Hindu conservative-nationalist discourse, which transtemporally drew on (and occasionally challenged) earlier sources, from the *Mahabharata* to Hobbes, and Manu to Rousseau, deliberately suppressed the significance of labour and of subaltern classes in order to create a nexus between the (nationalized) state and sacralized property, with enduring implications. In challenge to this view, the rest of the paper will shift the gravity away from the sacredness of elite property to the divinity of labour and of the (labouring) self.

The socialist revolutionary poet Kazi Nazrul Islam suggested in 1922 that divinity (*bhagavan*, *devatva*) was present in everyone: this self-knowledge (*atmajnana*) enabled actors, especially colonized and subalternized ones, to attain autonomous rulership (*svaraj*) by removing their slavery (*dasatva*, *golami*) and loss of self (*sva-hin*) to external masters and gods (*devata*). I put this dialectical movement of extinguishing servitude – through the recognition of divinity within oneself rather than in an exterior master-god – into dialogue with Ludwig Feuerbach's works, and especially *The Essence of Christianity* (1841). I then analyse critiques of Feuerbach by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and show how these critiques were appropriated by Bengali socialists like Bhupendranath Datta (1954), to denounce Indian theologies. In response, I suggest that there is still something to recuperate in the idea of the divine as being present in everyone, and that, far from being an idealist chimera, such visions have historically grounded massive democratic movements. Returning to Nazrul Islam, I show how his 1922 dialectic should be contextualized in relation to his other works which drew on precolonial Indian and Islamic theologies, as well as offered strategies for revolutionary action through the agency of peasants, pastoralists, other working-classes, and women. Varied strands of anti-colonial Indian militancy as well as transregional events, including the Russian Revolution and decolonial modernisms in the Islamicate world, as in Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, shaped his social theology.

Next, I examine the political speeches of the celebrated anti-colonial feminist Sarojini Naidu across the late 1910s. I argue that the recognition of women and female labour as divine or sacred was an ideological tool for asserting "the sisterhood of woman", emphasizing women's agency, and gaining for them voting rights – as part of transnational suffragette movements – and broader

social autonomy in late colonial India. Further, I turn to writings produced by 'lower-caste' actors in early 20th c. Bengal, especially the peasant-origin Rajavamshis and the pastoralist Gop-Yadavs. I focus on figures like Panchanan Barma and Nabinchandra Ghosh Yadav, among others, to show how these actors transformed the idea of the divinity of peasants, pastoralists, labouring nonhumans (especially cattle), and peasant-pastoral labour, into insurrectionary tools for fighting against high-caste Hindu dominance, and to (often, successfully) gain democratic political representation, improvement in social status, and betterment of education and material conditions of life within contexts of colonial-global capitalism. I show how peasant-pastoral actors turned action/labour (*karma*, *kaj*, *shrama*) from a category of servile degradation into a signature for constituting sovereignty, for gaining mastery over their own embodied selves, and for fighting against alienation of labour and land. The labouring actor thereby became a divine sovereign.

In conclusion, I offer a brief overview of the importance of parallel theologies in postcolonial eastern India, and show how such perspectives continue to fuel anti-elite subaltern politics for maintaining material and ethical autonomy in the face of predatory land-grabbing capitalism and authoritarian state violence. I also emphasize the transtemporal (precolonial to colonial and postcolonial), as well as transregional, social formations and intellectual pathways through which the discourses I have analysed have taken shape and continue to have traction. Finally, I turn to Giorgio Agamben's recent opus *Karman* (2017), and expand on a model of emancipatory action very briefly hinted at there in relation to the discourses about divinity of self and labour I have outlined in my paper. I suggest that notions of everyone being divine can offer a practical tool today, in India and beyond, to form new horizons, not merely of critical theory, but of practical solidarity and democratic militancy, in fighting against the subjection of labouring selves to regimes of statist and capitalist heteronomy.

Panel 3

Kresimir Vukovic

Warriors, Priests, and Cattle in some Indo-European Myths

The concept of 'Indo-European' refers to a distant language and culture that was the ancestor of many Eurasian languages. It is based on comparing linguistic features shared across different historical cultures in order to arrive at a hypothetical Indo-European source. Linguistic reconstruction allows us to infer that pastoralism was central to Indo-European social structure. Myths of cattle raiding appear in many traditions such as Celtic, Roman and Indian. The struggle between powerful warrior figures and priests betrays a strong tension within the framework of Indo-European theology. In some myths warrior figures represent a strong sense of wilful self that threatens to endanger the theological framework in which cattle belong to priests and are offered to the gods. The contrast between the two is most strongly expressed in myths that poise warlords against powerful priestly figures such as Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭa in India. As another example, I analyse a series of striking taboos which bound the ancient Roman priest figure (*flamen Dialis*) and his Vedic equivalent (*brahmin*) and which contrast with the actions of the putative candidates for the Indo-European warband groups (traditionally called *Männerbünde*). I suggest that the myths indicate a framework of power relations within a carefully structured system of political theology that the Indian and Roman religions inherited from a common Indo-European ancestor.

Annabel Brett

From the Image of God to Commercial Society: The Use of Animals in the Western Natural Law Tradition, 17th and 18th Centuries.

In the Catholic natural law tradition stemming from Thomas Aquinas, use marks the point of intersection between the image of God and the material world. God, of course, does not use anything (neither do angels). Use is a characteristic of a physically-embodied being and is not in itself god-like. However, use is drawn into the image through being characterised as a rational activity and thus the exclusive activity of those embodied beings that possess reason, i.e. human beings. Animals are merely used, not users. This paper explores the ways in which this theology was reworked and challenged in the European natural law of the 17th and 18th centuries – by Catholic theologians themselves, by Protestant natural lawyers, and by 18th-century political thinkers both influenced by, and opposing themselves to, the natural law tradition. It will analyse how different conceptions of the relationship between the natural and the divine affected the justification of the use of animals. It will further explore whether 'use' in fact remained the central concept in play, that is, what happened to the notion of 'use' itself. The conjunction of 'use' and 'animals' in the use of animals makes it a peculiarly rich site of investigation for mastery, ownership and divinity.

Day Two

Panel 4

Ananya Vajpeyi

Śūdra: A History

My work considers the trans-temporal discursive life of a key category of social inequality in the Indic world, the category of the Śūdra.

Śūdra is the fourth and lowest of a four-tier social hierarchy, attested in the oldest texts of cosmogony and law of the Brahminical literature: the Dharmaśāstra of Manu, the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, and the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

In the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Ṛg Veda (X: 90), the Śūdra is said to spring from the feet of the mythical Puruṣa or Cosmic Man, the victim of the gods' primordial sacrificial ritual that gives rise to a world that is already always caste society. The first sacrifice naturalises the social order as the original form of creation. Thereafter, Śudra characters appear as servants, dissidents, students, ascetics, renegade warriors, and fallen kings, scattered all over the Sanskrit canon concerned with Dharma, or Law.

Starting in the 14th century, a new genre of didactic and legal treatises in Sanskrit begins to appear, concerned purely with the origins and identity, rites and observances, occupations and professions, duties and qualifications, rewards and punishments of the Śūdra. A small corpus of such texts about śūdra-dharma is composed on the Gangetic plain, mainly in Banaras, Mithila and Bengal, between 1300 and 1700 CE, by individual authors as well as families of Brahmin experts. This corpus has not been studied in the contemporary scholarly literature on social inequality or in the historiography dealing with caste in pre-colonial India.

These works define, elaborate, justify and strengthen a normative claim about the low status of the Śūdra – a claim that existed in a relatively brief, nebulous and controversial form in the millennium leading up to the period under study. This is precisely the historical juncture when the cultural-political landscape of peninsular India abounds in both Śūdra rulers and Śūdra saint-poets. Social theory as enunciated in the late medieval dharmaśāstra texts, and empirical social reality of that same time, seem to be on a collision course.

The life of Shivaji (1630-80 CE), founder of the Maratha dynasties, exemplifies the possibility of Śūdra kingship even while illuminating its contested meanings. In Maharashtra after Shivaji, the Śūdra enters the legal archive and political discourse as a category that at once demarcates the lower limits of an unequal society, and iteratively transgresses the place assigned to it by the Brahminical social imagination.

The Maratha dynasts repeatedly face legal and political challenges to their royal authority; in the years of Peshwa rule that follow, a substantial body of legal disputes maps the continuing career of the category of the Śūdra.

By the mid-19th century, colonialism has begun to impose on India its own theories of hierarchy and inequality, nation and empire, subjectivity and justice. The social reformer Jotiba Phule (1827-90 CE) reimagines the Śūdra and especially the figure of King Shivaji in a radically new way, as a son of the soil with exceptional native intelligence. Prying it out of the bedrock of religious orthodoxy and juridical scholasticism, Phule renders the Śūdra resourceful and mobile, poised on the brink of equal citizenship.

Building on the foundations laid by Phule, the final and definitive transformation of Śūdra identity, and the raising of the fundamental question -- "Who is a Śūdra?" – is one of many essential tasks taken up by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956 CE).

In my account, Ambedkar completes what Shivaji started. My narrative runs from the coronation of Shivaji (1674 CE) to the Constitution of Ambedkar (1950 CE): a bold and buoyant arc of political emancipation and social justice that refashions a traditional or indeed a primordial category into a thoroughly modern one, within the space of 300 years.

My study is focused on texts, persons, and events located for the most part in the cultural region of western India that today we call "Maharashtra". Similar, parallel and echoing histories of the Śūdra may also be adduced from other parts of the Deccan throughout this volatile period, which begins before the advent of colonialism and ends with the inauguration of the new republic, at the mid-point of the 20th century.

The story of the Śūdra captures several important themes permeating Indian history: expressions and dimensions of caste in pre-colonial society; discursive and ideological structures which have enabled for centuries the forms of social inequality considered peculiar to India; and the work of language, especially Sanskrit, in creating and sustaining regimes of truth that rely on violence and exclusion for their power, in the past but also in our own time.

To chart the trajectory of the Śūdra as a cultural signifier is also to understand how the very category marked out as the furthest boundary of the social order, contains within itself the potential to subvert that order, replacing it with emancipatory and egalitarian arrangements of society and polity.

Anastasia Piliavsky

Bhrigupati Singh

Psychic Sovereignty – Perspectives from Mental Illness and the World of Spirits

At different moments, without necessarily planning it as such, I have been led to spiritual formations of sovereignty. In an earlier phase of work in rural central India, I found that the first step to understanding popular Hinduism and "syncretic" religious life in South Asia was to investigate the ways in which troublesome, untimely dead ancestors are "policed" by local sovereign-warrior (Vir) and ascetic (Pir) spirits. In my current work, on urban poverty and mental health, based at the Department of Psychiatry of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Delhi), in tracing patient trajectories beyond biomedical settings, I was led to shrines, in particular Sufi shrines that provide avenues of treatment seeking for the mentally ill across India. Treatment seekers and healers describe two distinct varieties of Sufi shrines, *durbar* (court) where supplicants might go for a *mannat* (request) such as the most prestigious Sufi shrines in India including Ajmer Sharif. As distinct from a *darbar*, cases of mental illness, referred to as *asrat* (an "effect") go to an *adalat* (a legal court). In this paper I describe the journeys of patients and healers between AIIMS Psychiatry and one of the most popular *adalats* for mental illness in north India, the Sufi shrine of Badaun. The spiritual power of Badaun arises from the graves of two Sufi saint brothers, Chote (the younger) and Bade (the elder) *Sarkar*. The term *Sarkar* literally means ruler/sovereign. How might we understand this mode of sovereignty and its impact on psychic life?

While discussing patient trajectories and modes of power in Badaun, I also try to compare the form of sovereignty at Badaun with the warrior and ascetic spirits that I described in my earlier work. Rather than "Muslim" and "Hindu" I find the difference to be more complex. The best-known Hindu healing shrine for mental illness in north India, for instance, Mehendipur Balaji quite closely replicates the rituals of Badaun, and is considered to be a "branch" of Badaun among Sufi healers, because of the presence of a "minor" Pir Divan Sarkar on the premises of the Hindu temple, said to be a relative of the Badaun Sarkars. Rather than taking these overlaps as evidence of syncretism or pluralism, I ask: how do we write an "intellectual" history when the theological and textual archive does not necessarily account for or dictate these practices that are replicated across extremely distant territories? And further, in relation to Badaun and the worlds of mental illness, I ask: is "sanity" a secular concept imposed upon theology? How do we understand the psychic economies of desire in a *mannat* as distinct from an *asrat?* Can there be a political theology of psychic life that is not implicitly or explicitly dictated by Freudian/psychoanalytic conceptions of the self and Oedipal/paternal ideas of power?

Panel 5

Simon Yarrow

Material Religion or Religious Materialism? Money, Relics and Christian Agonism in Twelfth-Century Latin Christendom

The material turn in historical scholarship, including the fruitful work of material religion in addressing imbalances based upon the Descartian fossilization of earlier theological binaries of sacred and secular, is yet conspicuous in its reluctance to figure historical materialism and related critiques of political economy in its analyses. This paper explores the cult of saints' relics in twelfth-century Latin Christendom in the light of the emergent conjuncture of political theology, theo-political economy, the anthropology of value, and Global Intellectual History. In doing so it will consider the benefits of a shift of emphasis in the field from the study of material religion to that of religious materialism. If we adopt the broadly Marxian premise that matter is prior to religion, but thought prior to matter, then the actions of those pilgrims of diverse and diffuse origins captured interacting with relics in miracle narratives might be explored as formations of 'religious material selfhood'. The phrase is intended to implicate pilgrims in the originary work of embodiment, cognition, intellection, and self-making according to particular regimes of value prompted by the spatio-temporal conditions of saints' cults. The paper will explore pilgrim ontologies in terms of mimetic agonism and the negotiation of value-relations, addressing religious experience to wider social contexts in which power and discourse are at play.

Jules Gleeson

Athanasios of Athos and Normative Shaming Practices at his Great Lavra: 'Moderating' Ascetic Hierarchy, Monks as Limbs & Submission as Activity

A considerable body of Middle Byzantine sources survive recording the normative regime Athanasios of Athos installed at his *Megiste Lavra* (Great Lavra). As well as three texts written by Athanasios himself (at various stages of his career as founder), historians have access to two hagiographical *Vitae*, and archival material, as well as two imperial interventions which attest to the controversy the Lavra (and its imitators) had on the better established form-of-life it clashed with across Athos.

After the Lavra's foundation in the 950s, it quickly became the largest collective institution at Mount Athos (previously predominately settled by monastic eremitic families, and solitary ascetics), growing to 700 monks by the second imperial intervention of 1045 (and c.2000 men by the end of the Byzantine Empire). In notable contrast to other Athonite Monasteries (such as the Georgian monks of Iveron, or Russians of Saint Panteleimon), from its earliest years the Lavra is described as having attracted monks from all regions of the Byzantine Empire, and beyond. In other words, the varied sources relating to Athansios recount him founding an exceptionally successful institution, in the remotest point of an already exceptionally sanctified location. But they are also in accord in admitting the intense contention his organisation caused, with both imperial interventions reporting petitions to the Emperor against the Lavra's encroachment against those following older, more reclusive forms-of-life.

Between these documents, much can be discerned about both the impact this importation of coenobitic monasticism had on Athos, and (more immanently) about the disciplinary regime and internal character of the Lavra itself. This talk will focus on the latter concern, and address the distinctive development of earlier 'Stoudite-style' monasticism found in Athanasios' writings, and career as founder.

Both Athanasios' own writings, and hagiographical sources, suggest that he sought a fine grained level of control over the community he founded: both general and in specific instances rebuking harshly those who did not actively provide him with confessions of non-normative behaviour. It seems that Athanasios sought a thorough-going command over the monks of the Lavra, down to the level of mentality and passing expression. While such a totalising level of control has surely been sought by any number of monastic founders, our sources provide us also with a number of institutional mechanisms Athansios put in place, which might have brought him close to his stated aim of 'complete dominion' over his community. From collective shaming practices (where willful monks would be bullied by one Lavriote after another, under Athanasios' covert direction) to daily confessional rituals

(where Athanasios would make himself available both *ad hoc*, and at scheduled 'last chance' sessions after evening service, which I will explore in detail), the early Great Lavra seems to have featured striking structures for the pervasive monitoring and influence of monks Athanasios explicitly sought.

Athanasios was also most aggressive toward (and according to his hagiographers, exclusively enraged by) a divisive term: *xeno-kourites*. Translated as 'foreign tonsure' (or perhaps outsider-initiate), this slur was addressed with a lengthy diatribe in Athanasios' own writings, which provides considerable insight into his own theology (heavily informed by Pauline universalism). These *xenokourites* passages are one place that Athanasios' over-arching metaphor of punishment -- the removal of disobedient monks as if 'gangrenous limbs', in an amputation to spare the monastery-as-body as a whole -- surfaces.

I will consider these shaming practices, and metaphors of amputation, in light of the elaboration of Hegel's 'reciprocal recognition', recently performed exegetically by American Pragmatist philosopher Robert Brandom. I'll consider firstly a reading more in line with unreconstructed Enlightenment prejudices (that the Lavra was an obvious, extreme example of a pre-modern hierarchy), and then a more subversive one (that a careful reading of hagiographical and normative texts shows clearly that Athanasios demanded an active subordination of the will from each monk taking part, drawing them into a tiered relation of resemblance which was suitable for his true overriding concern: the Lavra's *inter-generational* survival.) As recorded in historical documents from various genres and perspectives, Athanasios' work was defined by its determined efforts at rigid normative ordering. And as such, can be best illuminated with reference to contemporary breakthroughs in 'inferentialist' understandings of meaning as defined through institutional exchange, and participation.

Lorenzo Bondioli
Tributary State and Islamic Justice in Fatimid Political Theology

The ismaʿīlī daʿwa, "call", originated as a revolutionary movement within and against a firmly established imperial state – the Abbasid Caliphate. The proclamation of the Fatimid Caliphate in North Africa in the early tenth century represented the crowning success of the daʿwa, the fulfillment of long-nurtured apocalyptic expectations. Yet, as many a revolutionary movement, after its spectacular military triumph on pro-Abbasid forces, the ismaʿīlī daʿwa found itself disciplined by, rather than disciplining, the state apparatuses which it had taken over.

Materially, this move from revolution to state coincided with the take-over of the state apparatuses inherited by previous regimes. In particular, this paper will stress the significance among them of the complex fiscal machinery on the functioning of which the reproduction of the Fatimid ruling class quickly came to depend. The tributary mode of production that had characterized in the Abbasid period thus survived intact into the Fatimid. Social relations of exploitative domination continued to be articulated around the tributary imperative, though now in the service of a different ruling class. Yet as revolution foundered, and state apparatuses once more consolidated, the potential for purely coercive enforcement of such relations quickly foundered.

With the growth of Fatimid tributary administration, and of the coercive mechanisms necessary to back its fiscal demands, also came the necessity for the articulation of a new hegemonic discourse – a process that was neither linear, nor uncontested. Ismaʿīlī scholars found themselves operating in the context of an already largely consolidated discourse of Islamic governance, a sunnī political theology to which Fatimid ismaʿīlīsm was expressly contrary – if not inherently counter-hegemonic. As a result, Fatimid political theology developed in close dialogue with the prevailing sunnī notions of legitimate Islamic rule. Ismaʿīlī scholars employed a lexicon common to their sunnī counterparts, and drew from a shared intellectual tradition, while at the same time disrupting some of the core tenets of that tradition.

This paper proposes to investigate the articulation of such a distinctive Fatimid ismaʿīlī political theology. My focus will be on a particular facet of such political theology, namely the rightful exercise of sharīʿī justice as a direct emanation of the caliphal/imāmic prerogative of adjudication and legal interpretation. Crucially, I will argue that the exercise of justice represented a key element (in both discourse and praxis) for the establishment of hegemonic domination underpinning tributary relations. I will equally argue that the safeguard of individual property rights represented a necessary counterweight to the fiscal demands of the tributary state. Both elements were ultimately guaranteed by the legal arbitration of the Fatimid caliph-imām, the very role of whom represented the most salient features of Fatimid political theology vis-à-vis competing sunnī formulations.

Panel 6

Ceyda Karamursel

Person-things of the Reform-era Ottoman Empire

In June 1909, when the constitutional amendments were underway in the Ottoman parliament, three deputies presented a formal proposal that the Ottoman constitution—like its equivalents in the globe, they underlined—should include a clause that would ban the sale and purchase of individuals. Their proposal was rejected almost immediately by a majority who believed that all Ottomans were already in full possession of their freedom and any violation to that effect was punishable by criminal code and the codified *sharī'a* law known as *mecelle*. Those who proposed the addition of the clause thought otherwise, however. For them, not only the imperial palace and the elite households continued to buy, sell, and gift slaves for domestic (including sexual) services, but the ongoing sale and purchase of the Armenian and Kurdish peasants (and the extralegal practice of multiple taxation) in the eastern provinces such as Muş, Kozan, and Erzurum injured the liberal constitutional order and its 'market rendition of the individual' in significant ways. Moreover, they noted, *mecelle* was too ambiguous to say anything definitive about the matter. It was thus they insisted to tie the issue to what they thought would be a more clearly defined, all-encompassing law rather than the common or criminal law, which was ordinarily dismissed by the local elites and the high ranking state officials, let alone the sultan.

This proposed (and subsequently dismissed) amendment came at the very end of decades-long debates around the slaves' intrinsically paradoxical status in the 'era of freedom,' a paradox which was made all the more complicated by the *sharī'a* principle that gave mastery and ownership a deeply religious character. For Ottoman slaveholders (and the state that habitually backed them), the right to own slaves was divinely established by numerous *āyā*t (verses of the Quran) and *hadith* (deeds and sayings of the prophet Muhammad) and could in no way abrogated. For the reformers and slaves themselves on the other hand, continuing sale and purchase of persons constituted a grave contradiction that undermined the new order as a whole. Tracing these debates in the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries, this paper explores the ways in which the Ottoman state, slave-owners and slaves themselves linked and contested the notions of person, thing, and property and investigates how the liberal right to own and freely dispose of one's property was understood, translated (or failed to be so) into legal categories, and vernacularized in the reform-era Ottoman Empire.

Magnus Fiskesjö

Sovereignty and Self in the Era of Total Surveillance: The Political Theology of China's "Orwell 2.0"

China's rulers outwardly present themselves as secular-scientific, but in the Chinese Party-State, the all-pervasive Party displays unmistakable characteristics of a church, complete with its own secret internal judicial regime and a public orthodoxy that tolerates no opposition. The policing of any divergence or open dissent among subjects, including especially in terms of competing "religions" or politics, is currently developed as a neo-Orwellian totalizing system which deploys AI-driven monitoring of all communications, tracking by face recognition, DNA, and much more. The presence of state power in everyday life has been realized far beyond anything previously seen on Earth, drawing both on new technology and on earlier authoritarian political and familial-monarchical traditions. In this paper, I seek to explore the externalized punitive aspects of the new surveillance sovereignty, as in the fear-inducing spectacles of forced confessions in which oppositional figures are disappeared and then coerced to self-present on state TV, with scripted confessions of personal immorality and wrongdoing towards the Party-State, often force-presented as an either Motherly or Fatherly authority. But I am also inspired by Hannah Arendt's powerful reminder that Kafka in Der Prozess was speaking as much about the crowd surrounding "K" actively enabling the injustices against him, as of the inner doubts and tormenting of "K" himself, as an individual. I seek to define the place of the enabling crowd in China's new political theology, including in terms of the massive numbers of "netizens" flourishing on China's heavily censored fraction of the global internet. In particular, I want to link our research into how today's China is ruled under a new form of political theology, to the online breeding and channelling of narcissism, such as in self-streaming, that has exploded in China much as in the West. Does the crowd enable the system by succumbing and going along, because its inherent narcissist urge is allowed expression in self-worship? Or what is this new cyberworld self, force-created as the denizen of classically obedient, yet newly self-centered masses?