The gradual transformation of a transcendent hierarchical order into a modern immanence that is legitimated in popular sovereignty and is characterized by the market, the public sphere, and the nation-state has transformed the role of institutional religion and in some historical instances (but not in others) marginalized it, but at the same time it has freed a space for spirituality. Spirituality escapes the confines of organized, institutionalized forms of religion and thus the Christian model of churches and sects that cannot be applied in most non-Christian environments. It is thus more cross-culturally variable and flexible and defies sociological attempts at model building. At the same time all the concepts that are used in this context (religion, magic, secularity, spirituality) either emerge or are transformed at the end of the nineteenth century and enable both anti-religious communism in China and religious (Hindu and Muslim) as well as spiritual (Gandhian) nationalism in India.

Religion and Nationalism

A central concern in this book is to illuminate the differences between nationalist understandings of religion in India and those in China. In other words this is a study of the relation between nationalism and religion from a comparative perspective. Both nationalisms share common ideas about progress, rationality, equality, and anti-imperialism, but the location of religion in Indian and Chinese nationalist imaginings is very different. In short religion is a valued aspect of Indian nationalism, whereas it is seen as an obstacle in Chinese nationalism. I will argue that such a difference in the location of religion in modernity can be understood by comparing the ways in which India and China have been transformed by imperial modernity. As I have argued in an earlier book about the case of Britain and India, imperial interactions have been crucial to the formation of imperial modernities.[14] In this book I will speak about Western or Euro-American imperialism, with an emphasis on British imperialism, which is the global hegemonic force up to the

World War II. The relation between religion and nationalism is constitutive to Indian and Chinese modernities and forms the general problematic of this book.

Globalization in its current phase has forced us to go beyond nationalist histories, but world history more often than not emphasizes economics and politics and in an established secularist fashion underplays the formative role of religion.[15] What I present here is an interactional history that emphasizes relations between Euro-America (also known as "the West") on the one hand and India and China on the other, with an emphasis on what I call a "syntagmatic chain of religion-magic-secularity-spirituality." I borrow the term "syntagmatic" from Saussurean linguistics and use it in a nonlinguistic manner to suggest that these terms are connected, belong to each other, but cannot replace each other. They do not possess stable meanings independently from one another and thus cannot be simply defined separately. They emerge historically together, imply one another, and function as nodes within a shifting field of power. This syntagmatic chain occupies a key position in nationalist imaginings of modernity.

Obviously, the emphasis on religion in this book is not to deny the importance of the history of capitalism and of developmental politics. However, the problem with an emphasis on economic development is that the history of modernization takes center stage in world history and that within this history a teleologically unfolding story of secularization takes care of religion. What I offer in this book is a nonsecularist counternarrative. In one sense my narrative is secular, since it takes a position of nonpartisanship toward religion. I am not arguing from a religious point of view when I put forward that there is no opposition between being modern and being religious. Surely there are religious arguments against certain forms of modernity just as there are secular arguments against certain forms of religion. These are arguments that need to be studied from a sociological perspective that in itself is possible only within certain secular conditions. The social sciences emerge

within the framework of the modern nation-state, which is in a
number of crucial respects a secular state. Simply put, my ar-
guments about religion will not lead to my persecution by the
state as a heretic. On the other hand, my narrative is nonsecu-
larist in the sense that secularism and secularization are not
taken for granted, but are seen as projects that have to be stud-
ied in relation to other political projects. While this is often
difficult to accomplish because secularism is so much a part of
the modern intellectual worldview both in Asia and in Euro-
America, it is certainly necessary to distance oneself from secu-
larist intellectual projects, such as the Marxist-Leninist party
ideology that is taught in Chinese universities, especially when
they are supported by the power of modernizing states. I do
not take this position in the spirit of a general critique of "the"
secularist state, as some Indian scholars such as Ashis Nandy
and T. N. Madan have done, because I will show that their
critique may apply to the communist state of China, but is not
applicable to the Indian state.[16] What I want to show is that
religion-magic-secularity-spirituality is an integral part of
modernity. Realizing this as an empirical fact rather than as an
ideological statement is necessary for a better understanding
of contemporary society.

Comparative Framework

To understand the connections in what I loosely call the syntag-
matic chain of religion-magic-secularity-spirituality, one needs
an explicitly comparative framework. In fact, social and cul-
tural analysis is always within a comparative frame. Some of us
are acutely aware of this; others less so. In general there is inad-
equate consideration of the extent to which our approaches de-
pend on arguing and comparing with the already existing liter-
ature on a topic, on the use of terms that have emerged in
entirely different historical situations and thus convey implicit
comparison (such as "middle class" or "bourgeoisie," or "reli-
gion"), and also on the ways in which the people we study them-

selves are constantly comparing the present with the past or their situation with that of others. To therefore claim that one is a Sinologist or an Indologist or an Africanist and believe that specialization in a region and subject, given sufficient linguistic and cultural competence, is enough to claim mastery over that subject, as if one is not standing constantly in a reflexive relation to both discipline and subject, gives perhaps a certain confidence, but is untenable.

The sociology of India, as conceptualized by Louis Dumont and David Pocock at the end of the 1950s, was meant to place the study of India in a comparative framework.[17] The principle that guided Dumont and Pocock was that the sociology of India, like the sociology of any other society, could be developed as a form of knowledge that is not ultimately determined by a national(ist) framework. While Indian sociology, again like any other sociology, originates in a national space and is developed within it, comparative sociology may transcend that framework.

However, there are serious problems in developing comparative sociology. To give an example that is central to Dumont's work, it would seem obvious that the study of caste is a crucial element of the comparative analysis of class. Nevertheless, there is a strong tendency in general sociology to simply assume that caste, while an essential characteristic of Indian society, is merely a special case that does not shed much light on other societies and thus can more or less be ignored. To an extent, this tendency is reinforced by using caste as a metaphor for Indian society.[18] A similarly unfortunate tendency comes across in discussions on secularization and secularism, in which the secular is a metaphor for modern society. Even in the more recent critiques of Western models of modernization and secularization, one finds only a few examples of comparison with non-Western societies, while the communist world escapes attention altogether in these discussions.[19] The universal pretensions of Western sociology derive from assumptions that are implicit in the modernization paradigm. Because India has been relatively marginal to post–World

War II developments in the West, there has been very little interest in developing a comparative sociology that includes findings and theories from India. It is only in the current phase of globalization that comparisons with India and China, as emerging markets and players on the global scene, become interesting again for those social scientists who are primarily interested in modern, industrial society.

Current forms of globalization have made it important to study forms of transnational interaction that by definition escape the comparative frame of nation-states. Some might argue that globalization makes comparative sociology irrelevant, since global forces shape societies everywhere at the same time and it is these forces that have to be studied. But one may argue that they shape societies in very different ways, ways that need to be compared. To give an example: the information technology (IT) revolution has changed societies worldwide, but this happened very differently in Europe and in India, and even very differently within India in, for instance, Bangalore and Lucknow. In an earlier period of globalization, imperialism shaped Britain and India simultaneously, but quite differently, and the differences and similarities call for comparative analysis. What needs to be compared in relation to the increasing importance of transnational flows is the transformation of nation-states and their relation to transnational forms of governance. The nation-state is not in decline but undergoes significant transformations owing to the globalization of the world economy. The different roles that transnational diasporas can play in these transformations is part of the comparative enterprise. For example, the role of the Chinese diaspora in the development of China after the opening up of the economy in 1978 is significantly different from that of the Indian diaspora (if only already in terms of the size of foreign direct investments from the diaspora), and it is the Chinese model that has inspired the Indian state to develop policies to attract investments from its diaspora.

One of the greatest flaws in the development of comparative sociology seems to be the almost universal comparison of any

society with an ideal-typical Euro-American modernity. It would be a step forward to compare developments in modern India and modern China with each other. That does not imply a straightforward "provincializing" of Europe, since Europe and the United States are crucial in the formation of Indian and Chinese modernity, but an understanding of the ways in which similar challenges and influences have produced very different societies in India and China.[20] Even within the modernization paradigm there is considerable debate about the nature of modernity. While some would emphasize the Western origins of a singular modernity that is exported and responded to in the East, others would emphasize the indigenous development of capitalist modernity without much of a role for imperialism. In the last decade there are more voices arguing for multiple modernities, diversifying both the nature of Western modernity and its impact as well as diversifying the histories in which Western influences have been received.[21] More and more the dynamic character of cultural encounters is also taken into account, as well as the ways in which these encounters are productive in creating new cultural formations. This variety is impossible to capture in one guiding interpretive framework. The step forward is to fully acknowledge variety and multiplicity without losing sight of the need to compare.

Comparison should not be conceived primarily in terms of comparing societies or events, or institutional arrangements across societies, but as a reflection on our conceptual framework as well as on a history of interactions that have constituted our object of study. One can, for instance, say that one wants to study church-state relations in India and China, but one has to bring to that a critical reflection on the fact that that kind of study already presupposes the centrality of church-like organizations as well as the centrality of Western secular state formation in our analysis of developments in India and China. That critical reflection often leads to the argument that India and China (and other societies outside the West) should be understood in their own terms, and cannot be understood in Western

terms. However, Indian and Chinese terms have to be interpreted and translated in relation to Western scholarship. Moreover, such translation and interpretation is part of a long history of interactions with the West. In the Indian case it is good to realize that, despite its foreign origins, English is now also an Indian vernacular. In the case of China it is good to realize that, despite the prevailing notion that everything has an ancient Chinese origin, communism did in fact not originate in the Song dynasty. Any attempt to make a sharp (often nationalist) demarcation of inside and outside is spurious in the period under investigation. And today, because of further evolved patterns of globalization, this field of comparison has been widely democratized by modern media, so that everyone is in mediated touch with everyone else and has views on everyone else, mostly in a comparative sense. Chinese and Indians compare themselves with Europeans and Americans, and increasingly Indians compare themselves with Chinese (much less so the other way around). Whatever we write today falls within the orbit of these increasingly available popular forms of comparison.

Comparison is thus not a relatively simple juxtaposition and comparison of two or more different societies, but a complex reflection on the network of concepts that underlie our study of society as well as the formation of those societies themselves. It is always a double act of reflection.

While there is an impressive literature examining the interactions between India and the West as well as China and the West, there is hardly any attempt at comparative analysis of these interactions. Indian scholars look at the West, and Chinese scholars do the same, but neither looks at each other's societies. There is an enormous dearth of China scholarship in India and India scholarship in China. Stereotypes are amply available, but a deeper engagement with each other's history and society can hardly be found. This is surprising when we consider that India and China are the two dominant societies in Asia, with huge populations and deeply rooted civilizations that have radically influenced all the societies around them. Up to 1800 they not

only dominated their region but were also the motor of the world economy. This picture is more and more confirmed by the new economic history of India and China. In the last two centuries, however, there has been the hegemony of Western power and of modes of thought that come out of the encounter with the West. The relative neglect of each other's society and history can thus be explained by the enormous impact of Western modernity on Asia, including the dominance of Western academic institutions and scholarship. Western societies have been taken to be the model of developmental change in Asia and modernization theory, the long-dominant paradigm of the social sciences, has lent its academic power to this common sense. Much of this thinking is now under revision, partly because of enormous economic growth in China over the last two decades, and, to a lesser extent in India, partly because modernization theory has lost much of its credibility. This has led, for instance, to an insistence on fundamental differences between East and West, particularly on "Asian values," as promoted by Lee Kuan Yew, the long-term leader of Singapore (one of the most modern and "Western" of Asian cities). However, since these Asian values are primarily "East Asian values," this turn to the East has not led to more interest in the comparison between India and China.

Another, related, obstacle to comparisons between India and China is orientalist conceptions of unbridgeable differences. India and China come to stand for the total "Other" in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European imaginations. Such imaginations can be very positive, as in Chinoiserie and Indomania, but also very negative, as in rejections of "barbaric customs" such as foot-binding and widow-burning. Basically, understandings of India and China in the precolonial period were limited and exoticizing, but not without a sense of equality.[22] Different from African or Oceanian societies that are more easily represented as "the primitive" and thus as a stage in human evolution, Asian societies were (and continue to be) seen as civilizations that are potentially equal to Western civilization. With the ex-

pansion of modern power in the East, such understandings are replaced with more precise knowledge, necessary to rule or dominate these regions, but also with a new sense of civilizational superiority. Such sentiments are often based on reified differences, as exemplified in Kipling's "East is East, and West is West and never the twain shall meet." Colonial rule over India has made India and the Indians less of an unreachable Other than China. The spread of English in India among the middle class and the intellectual elite especially has made cultural conversations easier. China, however, despite its radical modernization, has remained more of an Other in linguistic terms, as illustrated by Foucault's famous reference to Jorge Luis Borges's fake Chinese encyclopedia, arguing that Chinese categorizations are fundamentally un-understandable.[23]

Comparison and Translation

It is precisely the Chinese language, with its characters and tones, that provides the West its image of a deeply alien civilization. Sanskrit and the major modern languages of Northern India belong to the Indo-European language family, and were thus seen as linguistically (and racially) connected to Western civilization. Chinese, however, was totally different. Nineteenth-century linguists, such as William Dwight Whitney in 1868, argued that Chinese was hardly a language since it had no grammatical structure.[24] In Wilhelm von Humboldt's foundational text on comparative linguistics *On the Variety of Human Languages* (1836), it is argued that "of all known languages, Chinese and Sanskrit stand in the most decisive opposition. . . . The Chinese and Sanskrit languages stand as the two extremes in the field of known languages, not perhaps comparable in their suitability for the development of the mind, but certainly so in the internal consistency and perfect execution of their systems."[25] Sanskrit, then, is a perfect language (*sanskrit* means "perfect"), with a perfect grammar that is at the origin of Indo-European languages, of which indeed the European languages

are one offshoot. Indo-European was in the nineteenth century often called Indo-Aryan and stood for the uniqueness of European heritage against the total difference of Semitic languages (especially Hebrew) and the Chinese language. Sanskrit in its grammatical perfection showed the original genius of the Indo-Aryan race that created it. While the Indians as a race had deteriorated and were in need of colonization by their Aryan brethren, the Semites and Chinese were totally Other.

While these fascinating and complex theories about language and race have been slowly discredited, especially after World War II, questions about language and thought, about universality and difference have remained with us. The central issue is that of cultural translation and interpretation. Modernity is a universalizing process that has to take on both translation and transformations of traditional conceptual universes. It is precisely that process that produces similarities and differences in a history of power that is the subject of the present book. The difficulties of correct translation of key concepts seem simply insurmountable.

I. A. Richards, one of the most important literary critics before the 1960s in Britain and one of the major influences on American "New Criticism," realized this problem during his visits to China.[26] However, he was determined to solve the problem, because he thought that miscommunication had caused World War I, which had wiped out many of his generation. Solving cultural misunderstandings was one of the great tasks he conceived for linguists and literary scholars as well as the impetus behind his book *The Meaning of Meaning*, co-authored with C. K. Ogden, and behind his attempt to bring Ogden's "Basic English" project to China. Basic English was the invention of the logician Ogden and was simplified English that could be used as a second language for all those who did not already speak English. This was not an artificial language like Esperanto, but based on natural English. It was developed to contain not more than 850 words and 18 verbs and, as such, was easy to learn. In his *Mencius on the Mind* Richards argues that to understand the

way Mencius (ca. 372 to ca. 289 BCE) used language to commu-
nicate meaning, totally alien to the Western mind, is crucial for
the future of world communication and for the survival of Chi-
nese civilization.[27] Both projects, that of promoting Basic En-
glish in China with help from the Rockefeller Foundation and
that of translating Mencius, failed. But it is important to see that
Richards shared with Bertrand Russell and T. S. Eliot, his friends
and contemporaries, a sense that although the gap between con-
ceptual universes was almost unbridgeable, miscommunication,
as a cause of war, had to be avoided at all cost.

This view is less eccentric than it sounds. One of the most
instructive disputes between the British and the Chinese before
the Opium Wars was about the use of the term *yi* in trade nego-
tiations, which has been wonderfully analyzed by Lydia Liu.[28]
In the Treaty of Tianjin of 1858, Article 51 says: "It is agreed that,
henceforward, the character Yi (barbarian) shall not be applied
to the Government or subjects of Her Britannic Majesty in any
official document issued by the Chinese authorities either in the
Capital or in the Provinces." The preceding Article 50 says: "All
official communications addressed by the Diplomatic and Con-
sular Agents of her Majesty the Queen to the Chinese Authori-
ties shall, henceforth, be written in English. They will for the
present be accompanied by a Chinese version, but it is under-
stood that in the event of there being any difference in meaning
between the English and Chinese text, the English Government
will hold the sense as expressed in the English text to be the
correct sense. This provision is to apply to the Treaty now nego-
tiated, the Chinese text of which has been carefully corrected by
the English original." Striking is the language of command used
in what is supposed to be a bilateral trading agreement.[29] But
equally striking is that the British wanted to fix the translation
"barbarian" to the character for *yi* (夷), while the Chinese used
this character for "non-Han people" and were taken by surprise
that the British took it as a sign of disrespect. In an early re-
sponse to British objections against the use of the word *yi* Ad-
miral Wu Qitai quoted Mencius, saying King Shun was an east-

ern *yi* and King Wen was a western *yi* and both were a virtuous model for later kings, so how could it be wrong to apply this word to the British? The issue here is not that of correct translation, since the use of the term *yi* has a complex history in China, just as the use of the word "barbarian" in English has a complex history. The issue here is that this term is part of a set of interactions between the Chinese authorities and the British that centered around notions of honor and respect and that culminated in the Opium Wars. It is this kind of inimical connection that Richards tries to prevent by his efforts to create possibilities of translations that bridge differences.

The concept of cultural translation is, obviously, foundational for comparative analysis. In an important critique of Ernest Gellner's view that cultural translation should not be excessively charitable (arguing basically that primitive nonsense stays primitive nonsense in translation as well), Talal Asad starts with the way the concept is used by Godfrey Lienhardt: "The problem of describing to others how members of a remote tribe think then begins to appear largely as one of translation, of making the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it really lives in, as clear as possible in our own," but then goes on to point out that translation always happens within a history of power.[30] Languages are unequal, especially in the production of desirable, universal knowledge. Cultural translation thus requires an exploration of this inequality and of the power relations that are inherent in them. This means that cultural analysis and comparison is always itself a product of power. This recognition does not lead to paralysis but perhaps to a realization of how power works. Social science is a modern discipline, originating in the West, and the translation of the way people express their way of life in social science language is one of the elements of Western cultural power. The universalization of social science language, however, also implies that this form of knowledge is applied by practitioners in Indian and China and elsewhere to understand their own societies. It is no longer the old problem of anthropologists visiting a place where people do not read or write, but

a new situation of increased cultural contact in everyday life virtually everywhere (but primarily in the West) thanks to international migration, as well as of the development of social science disciplines in the places the West compares itself with.

The Study of Civilizations

While this is a study in comparative historical sociology, it differs from the influential model, developed by Max Weber, in that it does not assume civilizations as units that can be compared, but looks at a series of interactions between Western imperial power and Indian and Chinese societies to compare historical choices and consequences.

The concept of civilization is problematic because it is difficult to historicize and obscures the ways in which nationalisms have produced teleological histories of the nation as the result of civilizing processes. However, we cannot ignore the enormous influence on the study of religion of the concept of civilization especially thanks to the theoretical understanding of civilizations and their possibilities to become modern developed by Weber and his followers. Weber's understanding of Western modernity is based on a theory about the rationalization of religion in Europe, which he compares with processes of rationalization in India and China. It has inspired a group of scholars around the late S. N. Eisenstadt to suggest a deeper history of civilizational (religious) patterns that lead to differences in their modernities. Eisenstadt argues that a disjunction (but not a split) between the transcendental and the mundane was for the first time made in a number of civilizations in roughly the same period, the first millennium before the Christian era.[31] These civilizations include Ancient Israel, Ancient Greece, Early Christianity, Zoroastrian Iran, early Imperial China, and the Hindu and Buddhist civilizations. Sociologically this development assumed the emergence of intellectual elites (for example, Confucian literati, Brahmans, and Buddhist sangha) that wanted to

shape the world in accordance with their transcendental vision. Moreover, Eisenstadt and his colleagues included theories by the anthropologists Tambiah and Redfield to point at a concomitant development of a galactic network of sacred centers and of a Great Tradition in them. This revolution in civilizational thought that occurred in all these civilizations in a relative short time span around 500 BCE was called "the Axial Age Breakthroughs," using a concept developed by the philosopher Karl Jaspers, who argued that in this period a shared framework for universal historical self-understanding emerged.[32] The central idea in this theory is that in the Axial Age a new emphasis on the existence of a higher transcendental moral order was developed across civilizations as well as the concomitant emergence of the problem of salvation and immortality. How this problem is addressed differs from civilization to civilization. The philosopher and social theorist Charles Taylor calls this "the Great Disembedding," in the sense that the Axial Religions break at least one of the ways in which religion was embedded: social order, cosmos, human good. In early religion "human agents are embedded in society, society in cosmos, and the cosmos incorporates the divine," according to Taylor, and the Axial transformations break this chain at least at one point.[33]

The emergence of world renunciation in Indic religions (Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism) is, in principle, a perfect example of this disembedding, since the renouncer leaves society and in some radical versions of Nirvana even the cosmos. What one should, however, keep in mind is that every disembedding is specific. The dyad of immanent-transcendent is configured in every civilization in specific ways and cannot be subsumed under an abstractly conceived (ideal-typical) universal dyad. The problematic of the transcendent in India is intimately tied to the specific immanence of caste hierarchy. On the one hand we have the caste society under the aegis of the Brahman priest (and the Vedic fire-rituals), and on the other hand we have the Axial religions (the Upanishads, Buddhism,

Jainism) under the aegis of the renouncers. Both are inextricably connected, so that what Taylor calls disembedding gets it specific meaning from what it is disembedded from. Ultimately, what happens in India is a creative use of the notion of renunciation for all kinds of social and religious innovations that in the end do not fundamentally challenge hierarchical society, although they may challenge it. While the emergence of the renunciatory idea is certainly of great significance in world history, one needs to avoid essentializing its nature by ignoring the ways in which it is related to a particular society. Similarly, if one would like to include Confucius's thought among the Axial Breakthroughs (as Jaspers and Eisenstadt do), one needs to see that his teachings and those of his fellow literati develop a worldview that seems to create a dyad of the transcendent Heaven and the immanent World, but at the same time emphasizes its ultimate unity and embeds the sociopolitical order in it. While in India the renouncer is different from the priest and the king, in China we do not find a renouncer, but a king-priest who executes the Mandate of Heaven. Unfortunately, his generalization of the notion of the Axial Age Breakthrough leads Eisenstadt to suggest in a totally expected (if not cliché) manner that Hinduism and Buddhism stand for an entirely transcendental (otherworldly) approach to salvation, while Confucianism stands for an entirely this-worldly approach.[34]

Jaspers and Eisenstadt's Axial framework is the background to Charles Taylor's work on Western modernity, which he characterizes as "a secular age" without prejudging what might have been the evolution of, for example, Chinese civilization. In this connection Taylor mentions in passing that "one often hears the judgment that Chinese imperial society was already 'secular,' totally ignoring the tremendous role played by the immanent/transcendent split in the Western concept which has no analogue in China."[35] In Taylor's view the Axial dyad of immanent-transcendent (these two belong to each other) was radically split

in European thought from the seventeenth century onward, and
that split gave rise to the possibility of seeing the immanent as
all there is and to seeing the transcendent as a human invention.
This-worldly in the Chinese case then does not mean exactly the
same as secular in the Western case. All these ultimately Webe-
rian arguments, however, essentialize civilizational units that
can be compared without exploring the highly fragmented and
contradictory histories of these societies. They also tend to un-
derestimate the influence of thought that does not fit easily in
the immanent-transcendent framework, such as all those reli-
gious movements in India and China that emphasize the Unity
of Being and the denial of Difference.

Weber's historical sociology compares processes of rational-
ization in Europe, India, and China, but arrives at a conclusion
that is similar to that of Hegel's philosophy of history, according
to which personal and collective rationality (Spirit) develops in
the West and cannot develop in the East because of a lack of
individuality in India and China. In the Hegelian argument it
is in India the caste system that robs people of their individual
rationality, while in China it is the overwhelming power of the
state.[36] It is remarkable how much of this basic conceptual
scheme still informs our understanding of the differences be-
tween India and China. Let me give two recent examples. The
economist Pranab Bardhan's recent interpretation of democracy
in describing issues of governance in India and China focuses
on the fact that in India society can be constantly mobilized for
a number of issues, while the state lacks central commanding
authority, whereas in China it is the opposite. This seems to
simply reiterate Hegel's observation that China is all state and
India is all society.[37] The anthropologist James Watson, in his
elaborate reflections on Chinese ritual, argues that the Chinese
state unified the forms of Chinese ritual practice and thus cre-
ated a cultural unity, and remarks that in comparison there is no
unification of ritual in India. According to Watson one does not
find in India a state-regulated pantheon nor can caste ideology

provide a unified culture.[38] In short China is all state unification and India is all religious and social diversity.[39]

To assess these Hegelian assertions that have become common sense one would need to compare state formation in India and China. When one examines the empires that preceded the modern political formations of colonized India and republican China, it is remarkable that both are empires ruled by "outsiders" to the Hindu or Han civilizations and that the Mughals kept to Islam while the Manchu (Qing) assimilated to the Confucian worldview. There are structural tensions at the heart of these empires: Manchu-Han and Muslim-Hindu. When one examines contemporary society one needs to avoid interpreting the contemporary communist state as representing ancient ideas of state power in China, since it understates the fragmentary nature of premodern empires as well as the importance of the "warlord" period of half a century between the fall of the Qing and the foundation of the communist state. Similarly, to explain the weakness of the Indian state in terms of caste as the essence of Indian society underestimates the enormous transformations of caste under British rule and in postcolonial India under conditions of democratic rule.

Weber, despite all his subtlety and genuine insights, offers a historical analysis of oriental deficiency or, in other words, what the East lacks to develop modernity, and in that way essentializes its differences with the Modern West. Hegel and also Marx see a historical role for Europe in transforming the East, but understand this simply as an impetus from outside to create change. A history of the interactions between East and West has to open up the fragmentary and contradictory nature of imperial encounters as well as the ways in which they produce new formations at both sides of the interaction. This is not a plea for providing more "local histories," but a plea for doing "interactional history" of modernity. One continues to have a need to engage with the traditions that are central to societies and the ways in which they have been interpreted to form the civilizational core of national history, but one needs, at the same time,

to acknowledge the contradictory and fragmentary nature of discursive traditions.

Wounded Civilizations

The imperial encounter with the West has produced, to use V. S. Naipaul's term, "wounded civilizations" in India and China.[40] Of course, it is above all the military superiority of Western powers, enabled by economic growth and technological progress, that was the immediate cause of the defeat and humiliation of the powers that were prevailing in India and China. But more subtly, it is the encounter with Western modernity that has left a much more lasting wound, creating deep emotions of insignificance and backwardness, of hurt pride. Such feelings are still very much alive today long after national independence and a more recent history of spectacular economic growth.

An important field of culture in which the clash with imperial modernity has created such wounds is that of artistic creation. This is a field that is in important ways interwoven with that of religion, since image, icon, imagery, and artistic representation as well as iconoclasm are central to devotional practices. As we will see in chapter 2, modern art is also deeply connected with the notion of spirituality. In discussions of the imperial encounter this cultural battlefield is seldom mentioned, possibly because the wounds are so deep. The arts of India and China, ranging from miniature paintings and calligraphy to sculpture and architecture, were not only rich but in a number of technical aspects also superior to Western art, especially in applied arts, such as textiles and porcelain. They not only had lost patronage with the decline of indigenous empires, but, more significantly, they also had lost their command over the politics of distinction and cultural power. While there is some interaction between Western and Chinese and especially Japanese art, one is struck by the ways in which Western paintings have been able to absorb oriental art, give it a place within its own overall structure without imitating it, as in Van Gogh's *Le Père Tanguy* (1887), which

features several Japanese prints that serve as the background of van Gogh's portrait of Tanguy. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was the West that produced modern art and thus the power to give meaning to modern life, while it was the East that seemed condemned to mimic it (with all the ambivalence and instability of mimicry that produces something "that is almost the same but not quite").[41]

Although there are constant attempts at creating a Chinese and Indian modern art after the decline of traditional art, these attempts have not yet succeeded in producing a space that is rooted in regional aesthetics and producing an alternative cosmopolitanism to the Western one in the way cinema has done.[42] Certainly in Chinese art this seems to be quickly changing today. One way in which this change is indicated is at auctions of contemporary art, where works by artists such as Zhang Xiaogang fetch prices that continue to rise drastically and achieve international recognition. Another indication is the development of independent studio sites, like Dashanzi (Factory 798), located in disused factories in Beijing.[43] The question of whether contemporary Chinese art is produced simply for international (predominantly Western) taste is deeply contested. At the same time it should be clear that typical Chinese art traditions, such as ink painting, continue to be practiced and appreciated by millions in China today.[44] The transformation of Chinese and Indian conceptions of beauty and art into modern ones shows the complexity of the imperial encounter.

This picture emerges also from the field of literature, in which India's single Nobel Prize winner in literature Rabindranath Tagore rode the wave of interest in Eastern Spirituality at the beginning of the twentieth century but is almost entirely forgotten now (except in Bengal), while Gao Xingjian, who received the Nobel Prize in literature in 2000 as the single Chinese recipient for literature, is hardly recognized as an important novelist in China itself (but is recognized in Taiwan and Singapore). This situation is the more remarkable given the enormous historical

depth and richness of Indian and Chinese literary traditions. To an extent it is a product of the complex relation of culture and language—which partly explains that Indian literature written directly in English is so much more appreciated all over the world than translated Indian literature, originally written in vernacular languages—and thus raises the question of the translatability of these cultures. To put it differently, it raises questions about cultural diversity and universality and therefore about modernity as a process of universal abstraction from concrete difference that we will address later.

How do we understand tradition? Modernity is often seen as a break with the traditional past, and the attitude toward what is seen as "tradition" in India and China is one of the central issues in this book. Talal Asad has given the following definition of tradition:

> A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to a past (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a future (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term. Or why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions).[45]

Central to a tradition is therefore the debate about authenticity and transgression. Traditions project themselves as timeless, transcending history, and their discursive authority lies precisely in that claim. It is thus not so much that in the modern period traditions are cast away in a process of Westernization, but that the debate about how indigenous traditions relate to the necessity to measure up against the modern power of the West becomes central.

Themes and Perspectives

The relation between spirituality, secularity, religion, and magic in Indian and Chinese modernity is the main theme of this book. The emergent form of Indian and Chinese societies in which these relations are taking shape is that of the modern nation. While both sociology and political ideology have tended to conceptualize the modern nation-state and its democratic form of governance as secular and its emergence as dependent on a replacement of religious sentiments of community, the present study does not want to assume any given relation between nationalism and religion. Similarly, assumptions about secularization and secularism that are inherent in sociological theories of modernization and ideological views of the nature of Western modernity are not taken at face value. As Jose Casanova has shown, the democratic nation-state can emerge and thrive in societies with public religions.[46] To give a personal example, I was born in a Dutch society that was dominated by religious groups and parties but has had democratic elections from the end of the nineteenth century. There are several possible connections between democracy and secularity, but there is no necessary one. Secularity can be promoted in a society by democratic means, which was Jawaharlal Nehru's aspiration, but it can also be promoted by authoritarian means, which happened in China under communist rule. The establishment of democratic rule is relatively independent from a process of secularization.

While there are various forms of state secularity, only in Western Europe can we find some secular societies in which religion no longer plays a major role. As a form of political participation and representation, democracy is typical for the liberal modern nation-state, a particular state formation that emerges in Europe and the Americas in the nineteenth century and has been spreading over the world ever since. Liberal secularists may demand that the state is secular and that it treats religions equally and neutrally, but they will have to acknowledge that if one allows

freedom of religious expression, religion more often than not
will play an important role in the democratic process. One there-
fore needs to distinguish between the relative secularity of the
state and the relative secularity of society and make clear how
one defines that secularity. Modern states like England, Hol-
land, and the United States all have had their own specific ar-
rangements for guaranteeing a certain secularity of the state, but
these states have found their legitimation in societies in which
religion plays an important public role. To give one clear exam-
ple: it can be safely said that the wall of separation in the United
States is a demand that has emerged not from secularists, but
from religious dissenters who were persecuted in England and
therefore that, at least in this case, the secularity of the state is
in fact a religious demand.[47] The cases of India and China are
relevant for a more complex understanding of the relation be-
tween nation and religion. China has witnessed a continuous
secularist attack against religion for a century but has not been
secularized, while India has made religion a core element of its
national culture and, at the same time, has created a secular state
that attempts to take a neutral stance toward religion. None of
these developments can be understood within the framework of
existing theories of secularization, but their comparison can
throw light on how religion and the secular relate to processes
of state formation.

Second, the category of religion that has been critically de-
constructed in recent anthropological and historical writing as
well as in religious studies is a prime example of the productive
character of the imperial encounter. It is a Western category that
undergoes an enormous transformation in this encounter before
it can absorb and produce "religions" like Hinduism, Daoism,
and Confucianism. In such a transformation not only Christian
missionaries and Western orientalists have agency, but also In-
dian and Chinese thinkers are as much involved in creatively
producing new concepts and configurations. Moreover, this is
not a history of ideas and their effects only, but very much also
a history of state power and institutional change. It is not pos-

sible to see the transformation of concepts like religion as the
passive reception of Western categories in the rest of the world.
Indians and Chinese are actively involved in this transformation,
as are Europeans and Americans.

Third, the emergence of a public sphere is crucial for the prob-
lematic of nation and religion. I have argued in earlier work on
religion and the nation-state in nineteenth-century England that
the secular perception of the public sphere, as argued by authors
such as Habermas, is a secularist prescription rather than a his-
torical description.[48] In fact, one can easily discern the mobili-
zation of religious groups at the end of the eighteenth century
for causes that were both religious and secular, such as the mod-
ern missionary movements that protested against East India
Company support of Hindu temples in India and the anti-
slavery movements that protested against England's involve-
ment in global slave trading as well as slave labor in plantations.
These religious groups transformed the public sphere and made
the modern nation form of society possible.

An important development accompanying the rise of the
modern nation-state in England was the nationalization of reli-
gion. Religion became less a form of political identification that
pitted Protestants against Catholics than an element in unifying
the nation under god and in giving the state a moral purpose.
In my view this also implies a major shift in the understanding
of "religion." Rather than opposing "true religion" against "false
religion," pitting all kinds of groups against each other, religion
emerged as an umbrella under which different persuasions could
be active without violent conflict. The emergence of the category
of "world religion" as a moral category that transcends actually
existing churches and religious groups as well as the emergence
of "spirituality" as alternative to institutionalized religion were
elements of this transformation that imply a pacification of reli-
gious conflict. At the same time, however, in the Indian colony
Hindus and Muslims were pitted against each other with the rise
of nationalism, while in China religion became the object of
secularist persecution. The new, universal concept of religion

encompassed the pacified religions of the Western nation-states and the communalized religions of South Asia as well as the politically repressed religions under communism.

Fourth, the issues in this book are connected to a history of power, primarily of the state, but also of social movements that sometimes transcend the boundaries of the state. Religions like Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism have always been formations that transcend ethnic and territorial boundaries. In the age of empire, however, this transcendence of boundaries was transformed by modern imperialism. In Europe we see in the nineteenth century an emergence of a religious concern for the heathens who came under imperial rule. This connects with the civilizing mission of empire, although in an uneasy way, since the colonial state always had to prevent being seen as a Christian state bent on converting the colonized. Despite its professed neutrality, empire had to intervene in society, already for the simple reason that it had to be largely ruled by natives and thus had to educate the natives. There is an enormous expansion of missionary activity under the umbrella of empire that focuses on education. Through the effort to produce modern Christians by converting and educating the colonized to both Christianity and modernity, the missionary societies had a lasting effect on colonized societies. This effect is less to be measured in terms of converts (relatively few in countries like India and Indonesia) than in terms of producing modern forms of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Daoism, and Confucianism and so on as countermovements against Christianity. It is these so-called revivalist, but basically modernist movements that one encounters everywhere in the colonial and postcolonial world. What we see today as political religion in the postcolonial world is very much a product of the imperial encounter.

While the nation-state is to an extent the territorial container of much of what is discussed in this book, it is itself a product of globalization and always interacting with the global system of nation-states.[49] Many of the groups that are in an uneasy relation to state hegemony are related to worldwide movements

of, for example, Christianity and Islam, but at the same time they operate within the framework of the globalizing effects of ideas, money, labor, and consumption. In the current phase of globalization, religion continues to connect people and societies over great distances that are now more readily connected by various new forms of communication. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism have developed several new global missionary movements that connect to this phase of globalization. They can all be called evangelical movements. Some of these worldwide movements are connected to minorities in the nation-state. The nation is not only the product of its interaction with the wider world but also of the constant processes of homogenization and heterogenization that are a necessary element of nationalism. Nation, like religion and modernity, is never finished, never already there, but is produced by its contradictions and tensions.

This book, then, is about the effects of universalizing categories such as spirituality, magic, and secularity on ideas of the nation in India and China. Chapter 2 shows how in the nineteenth century the category of spirituality received a global modern meaning. It became part of an alternative modernity in different places around the globe. In India and China indigenous forms of spirituality were invoked as alternatives to Western imperialism and materialism. Spiritual superiority became part of Pan-Asianism in the writings of some Indian and Chinese intellectuals. At the same time state-centered religious ideologies as well as nation-centered ideologies focused on spirituality as part of national character. These ideologies are crucial even today in China, India, Taiwan, and Singapore.

Chapter 3 addresses the making of oriental religion. This chapter explores the emerging field of oriental studies and comparative religion, especially the project of Sacred Books of the East, headed by Friedrich Max Müller. It builds on recent reappraisals of the Indologist Friedrich Max Müller and the Sinologist James Legge. It goes beyond the study of orientalist scholarship by examining the role of the World Parliament of

Religions in Chicago in 1893. The major analytical issue is the
extent to which these products of Western scholarship and imag-
ination have produced forms of religious categorization that
have had an actual impact on religious belief and practice in
India and China.

In chapter 4 conversion to Christianity and the impact of mis-
sionary movements in India and China are discussed. Christian
missionaries have played a major role in the creation of modern
vocabularies and modern attitudes in India and China. Reform
movements but also popular resistance movements derive much
of their discourse from Christianity. This chapter analyzes the
different trajectories of Christianity in India and China. It ex-
amines the concept of conversion in relation to the discourse of
modernity.

Chapter 5 engages the question of "popular religion" and the
relation between religion and magic in India and China. The
categories of popular belief, superstition, and magic have been
used by modernizers in India and China to intervene in people's
daily practices and remove obstacles to the total transformation
of their communities. These attempts have developed in differ-
ent ways in India and China, but in neither case have they been
entirely successful. After a historical discussion of heterodoxy,
messianic movements, and political protest, this chapter delin-
eates the transformation of popular religion in India and China
under the influence of liberalization of the economy and
globalization.

Chapter 6 takes up the discussion of anti-superstition move-
ments from the preceding chapter in a broader discussion of
secularism as a political project with its own utopian elements.
The great differences in the nature of that project in India and
China are used to illustrate the historical specificity of the secular
in relation to religion within different historical trajectories.

In chapter 7 yoga, a system of bodily exercise and spiritual
awakening, is compared with *taiji* (tai chi) and *qi gong* (bodily
skills to connect to *qi*, or primordial force). The argument here
is that these forms of movement, while connected to notions of

health, have strong political and social implications and can be
important in nationalism. This chapter discusses, among others,
the Falun Gong and the Sri Sri Ravi Shankar movement.

In chapter 8 the construction of minority and majority ethnic-
ities, cultures, and religions is discussed. In the case of India this
is the construction of a Hindu majority versus Muslim, Chris-
tian, and Sikh minorities, while in the case of China it is the
construction of a Han majority versus a variety of recognized
ethnic minorities, among whom the Hui Muslims are the most
significant. The most important comparative case of a minority
religion in India and China is Islam. This chapter looks at the
position of Muslim minorities in India and China in relation to
the nation-state and the ways in which the majority population
feels the existence of these minorities as a threat. This involves
a discussion of the relation between central authority and re-
gional minorities.

In chapter 9 some of the themes woven throughout this book
are recapitulated and placed in the context of current anthropo-
logical understanding of Indian and Chinese society.