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Research Programme of the HCAS
"Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities"

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1 Subject area and classification

1.1 Research question

The project seeks to explore the boundaries that distinguish between the religious and non-religious, in modern as well as pre-modern societies. In doing so, we are aligning ourselves with current debates but we are approaching the debated issues from a basic theoretical perspective. At present, a general distinction can be drawn between three narratives: The first claims the dwindling presence and relevance of religion ("secularisation"); the second regards religion to be returning globally, consequently irritating the self-perception of modern societies ("return of religions", "post-secular society"). According to the third, religion has always been present and has simply changed shape, meaning secularisation assumptions are misleading ("invisible religion"). There is also a theoretical-methodological conflict to be taken into consideration. Where the secularisation hypothesis considers its theories and methods to be universally applicable, the critics of this theory not only increasingly challenge the transferability of Western development paths, but also the transferability of the concepts used. This applies right down to the challenge of the religious/secular dual, which is understood to be an expression of Western experience and power of interpretation that forces other cultures into Western schematisations.

In contrast, we are formulating an alternative position, in which we are trying to explore the boundaries between the religious and non-religious beyond normative concepts. We are particularly seeking such boundaries in regions that differ greatly from the so-called "West" in the "Modern World" in terms of culture and history: In various Asian regions and – partly overlapping with these – in the so-called "Islamic World", but also in different epochs. This is linked to a plea for comparability across multifaceted regions and cultural contexts, and for investigating their entangled history.

In light of current discussions, the significance of this question is evident: Wherever religion is discussed across different Asian regions and the heterogeneous "Islamic World", the issue of their borders is always raised. For example, when talking about folk religions and cults, are they treated as "religion" or as "cultural legacy" (in China)? How do pluralised ways of life interact with religious norms (e.g. in Egypt)? Is the act of commemorating the war dead at a Shintō shrine a religious one (in Japan)? Does art have its own set of rules, or is it constrained for fear of violating religious feel-

ings? And vice versa, can religious groups and religious actors apply their own rules, even if they clash with those of their surroundings (e.g. in India)? When this happens, negotiations and conflicts, attacks and provocations arise: people start defining borders, making claims and sanctioning the legitimate and the illegitimate. Our assumption proposes that differences in the vehemence and structure of boundary debates can only be explained satisfactorily if the diverging historical experiences of the regions explored are taken into consideration.

This requires a systematic investigation of the phenomenon in pre-modern epochs, in which boundaries between religious and non-religious fields of practice are less explicitly manifest in semantics and institutional oppositions. This will initially require some ground work. However, we do not see these pre-modern societies across the board as steeped in religion and undifferentiated, and religion as "embedded" beyond recognition (Beard, North, Price 1998 Ed. 1: 43; Rüpke 2001; criticised by: Nongbri 2008). Consequently, we are searching for distinctions, which should be studied in relation to their structure, significance and consequences. In doing so, we cannot avoid – as a first step – making use of a modern vocabulary, without losing sight of its origin. In this regard, the same applies to the term "secularity" and the term "religion" (Nongbri 2008: 452).

The research to be done under the auspices of the Humanities Centre of Advanced Studies (HCAS) – "Multiple Secularities: Beyond the West, beyond Modernities" – is only possible as a collective undertaking, as part of which experts from various disciplines and in specific regions, languages and religions put their research projects up for discussion and cooperatively develop them further in relation to a guiding theme.

1.2 Definition of terms

As part of this project, we will inevitably touch on the problematic conceptual history of secularity, secularisation and secularism, and their associated connotations (e.g. Conze, Strätz, Zabel 1984; Lübbe 1975; Casanova 2011). This is all closely related to interpretations of the "modern era" and – from a global perspective – to the harmonisation and diffusion expectations that were formulated as part of modernisation theories and have time and again been criticised. Even the "classic" secularisation theory got caught up in the wake of this criticism. Within the framework of modernisation theory, work on *Multiple Modernities* (Eisenstadt 2000; Knöbl 2007, Schwinn 2009) has given rise to a new approach, in which different paths into the modern world were assumed. According to this approach, other world regions deal with Western modernity against the backdrop of their specific cultural imprints – with diverging results.

The *Multiple Secularities* project (Wohlrab-Sahr, Burchardt 2011, 2012), upon whose preliminary work we are building, applied this perspective in the field of religion/non-religion. In doing so, the analytical concept of *secularity* was strengthened against the ideological term of secularism, and the plurality of *secularities* in Western regions and beyond was emphasised and conceptually defined (see Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr, Middell 2015).

In international debates, the term secularism is predominantly used (in contrast: Taylor 2007; also see Eggert, Hölscher 2013), which refers equally to institutional arrangements for separating politics and religion, and to their ideological legitimisation. As this ideological purport has been linked to the

term secularism since its conception, we are reserving it here solely for the ideological objective of separation, its associated movements and resultant measures. In contrast, we use the term secularity in a more general sense for *institutionally as well as symbolically embedded forms and arrangements for distinguishing between religion and other societal areas, practices and interpretations*. We therefore do not understand secularity to be the opposite of religion (Bochinger, Frank 2013: 202), but rather associate the term with the modality of making distinctions, and are investigating this *modality, as well as its prerequisites and effects*.

In contrast, *secularisation* on the one hand indicates a process, as part of which distinctions are institutionalised and the influence of religion on other societal sub-domains is lessened (and vice versa) (Chaves 1994). On the other hand, this term encompasses the decline of religious belonging, belief and participation, as well as the privatisation of the religious (Casanova 1994). As shown by Casanova, all three processes are not necessarily linked.

When we use the term *secularity* as an analytical term, we certainly cannot completely wipe away the normative connotations of *secularism* and *secularisation*. This problem can only be overcome through open discussions and conceptual reflection. For this reason, we are using the term as a heuristic concept.

2   Current state of research

In the stricter sense, there is hardly a current state of research for a basic theoretical project that seeks out the boundaries between religious and other spheres. A type of criticism rooted in post-colonial approaches makes some reference to the topic, but remains wholly negative insofar as it challenges the application of modern, Western concepts in principle. Nevertheless, discussions surrounding secularism/secularisation/secularity are relevant to our project, and it will certainly exert influence on them, even if we are not about seeking to adopt a position "within" the debate.

Since coming into existence, these terms have been intertwined with political and societal discussions. They have been associated with interpretations of illegal expropriation as well as with progress, with the dissolution of the "wonderful amalgamation of the spiritual and the worldly" (Eichendorff), as well as with the creation of a secular "world culture" (see Conze, Strätz, Zabel 1984). An empirically oriented sociology, which isolates indicators, formulates hypotheses and objectifies secularisation processes as measurable, was not able to overcome this value-oriented charge. An impressive array of comparable research results has undoubtedly been compiled in this field. However, attempts to develop this position into a general secularisation theory beyond certain regions (Martin 1978, 2006, 2014) faced significant difficulties.

2.1   Universalism or Particularism?

Criticisms of secularisation theory can polemically be summarised as challenging the claim of describing universal developments, developing generalisable instruments and concepts, and establishing neutral institutional contexts.

The "American case" has always provided irritating exceptions to the alleged relationship between modernisation and secularisation. What used to be described as American exceptionalism (Bruce

1999) in comparison with Europe can no longer be characterised as such on a global scale. In the light of enduring differences, central hypotheses of secularisation theory – the relationship between pluralisation and secularisation for instance – were finally called into question (Stark, Bainbridge 1987, Warner 1993; Stark, Iannaccone 1994, among others). This ultimately led to the reversal of exceptionalism: Secular Europe then appeared as the exception in an otherwise persistently, or even increasingly, religious world (Berger 1999).

Building on Martin's differentiation between different secularisation paths (see above), historians and sociologists called for historical constellations to be taken into consideration (Gorski 2000, McLeod 1995). Even by modernisation theorists themselves the cultural background of certain regions was increasingly brought to account. Given the "persistence of traditional values" (Inglehart, Baker 2000: 29), Inglehart set out his analyses on a cultural map, on which nations "characterised by Confucianism" are positioned near to post-communist and Protestant-influenced countries. Further objections pertain to disregarding the role of actors (Smith 2003; Wohlrab-Sahr, Schmidt-Lux, Karstein 2008) and the accompanying suggestion of self-perpetuating secularisation and differentiation processes. Luckmann (1980) challenged the empirical foundation of secularisation theory in general, and called it a "modern myth" (also see Hunter 2015; Cox 2000; Huss 2014; criticised by: Pollack 2003), and van der Veer saw in it "one of the most deadly master narratives in the social sciences" (1995: 5).

When dealing with the public role of religion, Casanova (1994) made a critical revision to secularisation theory. He distinguished between the constituent parts – religious decline, privatisation, differentiation – as independent sub-processes, but saw only functional differentiation as an inevitable requirement for secularisation. However, privatisation does not necessarily relate to withdrawing from the public domain. When Luhmann (1977: 232) spoke of the "privatisation of religious decision-making" and Taylor introduced the concept of the "secular condition" (Taylor 2007: 3), the increasing contingency of religious or non-religious positions and their cultural disembedding (also see Giddens 1991) were addressed. This process is not limited to the West (e.g. Roy 2006, 2011) and has a long-standing tradition in the Buddhist sphere of influence.

Eventually the assumption of functional differentiation as a "key hypothesis" of secularisation theory suffered criticism. According to Asad (1993, 1997, 2003, 2008), even the differentiation between religion and secularity is influenced by a specifically Christian background. Furthermore, he sees the term, function and legitimate place of religion as defined from a secular perspective in the modern era (Asad 2003: 191; 2006: 209). He therefore claims that the accompanying boundary demarcation processes between the religious and the secular need to be examined (ibid.). In dealing with this criticism, Casanova (2006, 2008, 2009, 2011) has moved on to also interpret functional differentiation against its Christian background. Taking this criticism seriously, it seems it is no longer possible to devise comprehensive systematisation analogous to secularisation theory. As a result of Asad's intervention, the type of questions that are being asked has shifted significantly towards examining the emergence and effects of the religious/secular dual, as well as comparable duals (e.g. Asad 2003; Fitzgerald 2003; Arnal, McCutcheon 2013; Huss 2014). While early religious studies and sociology treated religion by implication largely as a clearly identifiable sub-domain of all societies, experts influenced by Postcolonial Studies see in the differentiation between religion and non-religion a

normative concept of Western modernity, which was first imposed on other cultures as part of colonialism and imperialism, often with a hegemonic purpose (Asad 1997, 2003; Arnal, McCutcheon 2013; McCutcheon 1997, 2007; Masuzawa 2000, 2005; Fitzgerald 1997, 2000, 2010), and which may now already be starting to dissipate (Huss 2014). A central argument here is the lack of semantic equivalents for "our" modern term religion in pre-modern cultures outside Europe, or even in "other historical epochs" (Hook 2008:12) of European history. The post-colonial criticism of the transcultural use of religious/secular categories has accentuated sensitivities regarding the differences of indigenous taxonomies and norm systems, but in doing so has provided grounds for a culturally essentialist alterity discourse, thereby suggesting "Western development" cannot be compared with processes of social organisation in other parts of the world. Therefore, building on a "discursive construction of cultural otherness" (Osterhammel 2011: 50) , there is the risk of perceiving modernisation and secularisation processes outside Europe and America merely as the result of diffusion, and thereby victimising corresponding societies as passive recipients of a world history dominated by the West. The contribution made by cultures outside Europe, as well as their creative potential to develop their own variations of modernity and secularity (or even go down completely different paths), are hereby called into question.

This is precisely where we wish to focus: By comparatively investigating the processes of boundary demarcation between the "religious" and "other spheres", we are developing an instrument that can guide comparisons across regions and epochs.[1]

2.2 Secularism: Diversity or dominance of Western secular modernity?

The unmistakable presence of religious expressions in many parts of the world, the occurrence of religious movements and the necessity to integrate migrants' religion in existing structures have fuelled lively debates about "secularism". As part of these debates, the equation of Europe with a coherent secular political sphere has been questioned; furthermore, references were made to the dissemination of western concepts of secularism in the context of imperial and colonial encounters, and their consequences (van der Veer 2001). Several authors have also highlighted the specifically Christian genealogy of secular approaches (Asad 2003; Scott/Hirschkind 2006) and the unbreakable links between secularisation and nation building in Christian-influenced contexts (Beyer 2013).

In recent years, empirical analyses have increasingly focussed on comparing different kinds of secularism (Cady, Hurd 2010; Kuru 2009) in terms of the institutionalised relationships between politics and religion (Koenig 2007). However, when using the term "secularism", some studies tend to equate social practices and institutions with the political ideologies (Modood 2010; Mahmood 2006; Bader 2007) that legitimise them.

This is consolidated by positions that – in conjunction with theories on governmentality – home in on secularism as discourse and consider secularism – in reference to Asad – to be a larger political project "that aims to establish modernity as a hegemonic 'political goal'" (Jakobsen, Pellegrini 2008:

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[1] In doing so, we are applying a more fundamental concept than a mere "discursive study of religion" (Stuckrad 2010, 2013), in which religion only figures as the "societal organisation of knowledge about religion" (where indicated: 17). Instead, we are seeking out the differentiation processes that have – first of all – made it possible to address religion as a "discursive constellation" (ibid.).

7). However, Jakobsen and Pellegrini see the danger that a genealogical approach simply conceptualises all secularisms as an extension of European colonialism (ibid: 15), and in contrast highlight the genuine plurality of secularisms.

Political-theoretical objections also dispute the neutrality of the "secular" public sphere and criticise their legitimisation as ideological (Bader 2007: 27; on India: Madan 1998; Béteille 1994; Nandy 1990, 1995, 2007; criticised by: Bhargava 1998, 2010).

2.3   Multiple Secularities

The concept of Multiple Secularities (Wohlrab-Sahr, Burchardt 2012; Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr 2013a) consciously goes beyond the relationship between politics and religion, in that it applies the term "secularity" to differentiations and symbolic boundaries between the religious and non-religious in general. Boundary demarcation is seen as culturally and historically bound, and thereby related to values, yet at the same time it is seen as socially contested and historically reversible. Boundary demarcation takes different forms in different societies and functions based on different cultural logics, in which the histories of social conflicts and competing norm systems manifest themselves. Such ambivalent configurations may be the result of imperial or colonial encounters, immigration or other exchange processes. As with the Multiple Modernities programme, we are also taking a threefold approach: a) cultural imprints, b) encounters with Western modernity/the Western concept of secularity and c) the handling of these encounters against the backdrop of cultural imprints. In accepting the existence of the cultural imprints of modern forms of secularity, it is necessary to pursue their historical roots. This is where our project comes into play and where we want to fill a gap in the existing research.

Secularities – based on our assumption – resort to specific societal reference problems and present "solutions" to these problems that are perpetuated in the cultural memory (Assmann 1992) and are invoked defensively in the case of irritations. A distinction is drawn between four problem areas: (1) The problem of individual freedom in contrast to dominating social entities, be it groups or the state; (2) the problem of religious heterogeneity and the potential for conflict or actual conflict; (3) the related problem of societal or national integration and development; and (4) the problem of autonomous development of societal sub-domains.[2] Taking reference problems into account for these kinds of boundary demarcation is also central when researching pre-modern societies. One might also speak of the "dominant societal experience" (Eßbach 2014: 21), which is related to variations of secularity. The HCAS' work will show whether further reference problems need to be added to those listed above.

Based on our assumptions, in order to become dominant, the stated motives of secularity must be combined with guiding ideas, which set the basic terms for differentiation in a given context, and therefore push other motives to the background. However, guiding ideas may also openly conflict with one another. Secular guiding ideas can certainly not be presupposed for pre-modern societies, but certain elements may exist, upon which guiding ideas of secularity in the context of a globalised

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2   If Eßbach (2014) considers both the war of religion and revolution as a cradle for new religions, this can also apply to a typology of secularities.

modern era fall back (see Bhargava 2010). These kinds of genealogies of societal guiding ideas will be part of the shared research.

3   Question and central research aims

The planned HCAS' cooperative, interdisciplinary research will look for emic taxonomies, forms of social differentiation and intracultural boundary demarcation. We assume that these are included in, and form prerequisites for dealing with, modern "Western" concepts of differentiation between religious and secular practices, discourses and institutions. Finally, we are interested in the resulting path dependencies that shape current forms of secularity in different regions.

The HCAS tries to fulfil three main aims: (1) To identify and describe boundary demarcation and differentiation processes in different regions and epochs from a comparative perspective, and to analyse them considering the protagonists, action contexts, purposes and media; (2) to research the effects of boundary demarcation on (and their relevance for) the handling of modern "Western" concepts of secularity; (3) to record references to emic norm systems and taxonomies in arguments and strategies found in current or recent boundary demarcation debates.

Whether the differentiations and classifications in the researched cultures are to be considered as structural analogies and/or functional equivalents for modern boundary demarcation between religion and non-religion can only be clarified in the research process and the intense exchange among researchers.

The adequateness of theories, terminologies and methods must also be proven in the course of the research process. The research field must initially be defined, for which the fellows' expertise in this area is vital. However, a terminological and theoretical framework for the discussions in the HCAS, which provides a preliminary structure for more specific research questions, is required (see 4.2, p. 9). Since differentiation and boundary demarcation processes are the HCAS' central research problem, we are using established theories on social differentiation to describe our framework. Without limiting ourselves to one particular theory, it seems almost inevitable that system-oriented approaches become relatively prominent. Subject to this caveat, we want to formulate a few general premises and hypotheses. Within these premises and hypotheses, the pre-modern non-European world is necessarily over-represented since its exploration represents a large part of the originality of the research project, but at the same time this needs to be justified. The prominence of the pre-modern does not reflect the focus of the specific research projects, but we will always apply any resulting fundamental questions to projects that relate to the modern era.

When selecting the regions to research, we have opted for the greatest possible contrast, even if the implied polarity would hardly stand up to an empirical test. We will focus on East Asia (particularly China and Japan), South Asia (India and Sri Lanka) and South-East Asia (Indonesia), as well as (going beyond geographical spatial concepts) an ensemble of states, cultures and regions referred to, with many reservations, as the "Islamic World". Indonesia, largely influenced by Islam, and India with its large Islamic minority are important overlapping areas. As perceived by the public, East Asia and the "Islamic World" are forming two poles in relation to secularisation and secularity – and are often cited as examples for the problems of transcultural transference of the religious/secular dual

(on Japan: Hori 1975; Eger 1980; Fitzgerald 2003, 2010 passim; Horii 2016; criticised by: Reader 2004; Kleine 2013a). For instance, to some extent, Islamic theologians of the researched regions, the media, and also scholars of Islam, presuppose an unbreakable link between religion, politics and law. They consider Islam as a "way of life" (Esposito 2000:11) in a variety of cultures, and deem concepts of secularity to be inadequate, a Western incursion, or even suspect it of atheism (see: Kinitz 2015). In contrast, other specialists explicitly apply concepts of differentiation to the history of Islam (Lapidus 1975, 1992, 1996; Schulze 1994). In comparison, China and Japan appear to be extremely secularised (for Japan, see: Inglehart, Baker 2000; Berger 2003; Reader 2012; Nelson 2012), but there are also weighty dissenting voices here, particularly in relation to Japan (McFarland 1967; Casanova 1994; Stark 1999; Cox 2000). Since the reforms in the 1980s, an intensification of religious life has also been observed in China in parallel with accelerated modernisation (Goossaert, Palmer 2011). Even in Taiwan, authoritarian secularism coming to an end in the late 1980s has led to dynamic progress and a reclassification of the relationship between religious and secular actors (Laliberté 2004; Madsen 2007; Kuo 2008). Both in China and Japan, the boundary demarcation between religion and tradition is the subject of intense negotiation processes. On the other hand, Indian scholars create a link between secularity and the practice of tolerance, which dates back to the third century B.C., and thereby make secularity indigenous (Thapar 2007; Bhargava 2010). However, it remains highly controversial in its political and legal institutionalisation as secularism (Tejani 2008; Nandy 1998; Madan 1998; de Souza 2012 et al). Only a general reference can be made here to the nuanced debate about the different regions.

All regions should be researched as outlined above in relation to the current forms of secularity and in a diachronic perspective, in view of historical conditions and path dependencies, as well as intercultural entanglements. In doing so, we are entering new academic territory and going beyond the horizon of a secularisation debate that uses the Western modern era as blueprint.

This research project is original in that the fundamental problem of differentiating between religious and secular cultural segments, institutions, discourses, practices, spheres of activity, etc., is to be studied by a large number of internationally renowned experts in a systematically comparative manner, and with the greatest possible depth of historical focus. In contrast with the majority of seemingly related projects, we go beyond the narrowing of scope, which results from focussing on the process of secularisation as a consequence or by-product of (Western) modernisation.[3] For us, the "Western experience" of secularisation and modernisation does not set the global benchmark for societal developments. We would rather start from the historical experiences of the researched regions, and analyse their own courses of development.

3.1   Premises and hypotheses

The HCAS' basic concept initially depends on a collection of premises and hypotheses, which will

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[3]   The project set out here is not in competition with the "Religion and Secularism" programme led by Charles Taylor at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (the Institute for Human Sciences) in Vienna, since that programme does not focus on comparative research in the narrower sense and is also limited to modern globalisation processes. Even the basic theoretical nature of our project differs significantly from the project in Vienna.

operate in a theoretical field of diverging positions, and are partially represented by designated fellows. At the same time, the HCAS cannot limit itself to paradigms and perspectives set up in advance, if it is to enable an open-ended research process. In this research process, it must first be specified whether certain boundary demarcations are to be interpreted as references to a differentiation of "the religious" in a given society, and what consequences these boundary demarcations had on implementing culturally specific types of "secularity" in contention with Western concepts of norm systems.

The assumptions and hypotheses set out below therefore serve as points of reference, from which the HCAS' work can begin, and create a framework for discussing research questions relating to specific examples.

(1) Internal social differentiation. One of the HCAS' central hypotheses is that boundary demarcation between the religious and non-religious is not an exclusive sign of "modernity" or "the western world". We assume that every society in history knows variations of internal differentiation. It is hardly plausible to imagine so-called "high cultures" outside Europe to be a "great enchanted garden" (Weber 1988a: 278), in which all practice and communication was "religious" (Luhmann 2000: 187; c.f. Tyrell 2008). On the other hand, as Stausberg has pointed out, "not all religious communication or affairs are necessarily part of religions" (2010: 359). This means that we distinguish between the adjective "religious" and the noun "religion(s)", whereby the latter presupposes a certain degree of organisation, through which religious communication is perpetuated and channelled. In this context, Stausberg suggests distinguishing between three stages of differentiation processes: (1) *attributive differentiation* – differentiation of certain facts as *religious*; (2) *structural differentiation* – differentiation of *religions* in an institutional sense; (3) *functional differentiation* – differentiation of *religion* as a social sub-system. It needs to be discussed whether the term secularity should be reserved for the last two differentiations or even only for the functional differentiation. The aim is not to presuppose "religion" as a "life order" with specific autonomy (Weber) or as a distinct "autopoietic functional system" with specific codes and functions (Luhmann) in pre-modern contexts. It is important, however, to ask questions: Which issues, situations, roles and institutions are differentiated under certain conditions in specific historic contexts? In what sense do they provide the basis for the differentiation of religion as a distinct and institutionalised culture segment, which is perceived by people in the modern era as being relatively distinct from secular "cultural subject areas" (Landmesser 1926), spheres of action (Münch 2011) or social sub-systems? Therefore, the crucial question for us is whether and under which conditions a type of social differentiation is conceptualised, in which the economy, politics, law, science, art, etc., as an entity opposes another entity (religion), and attributes to itself a shared quality (secular) relative to religion as its other. It seems reasonable to speak of *secularity* in the full sense only if the multiplicity of cultural segments is conceptualised as a duality: religious segments of culture on one side and non-religious, i.e. secular, segments of culture on the other.

(2) Taxonomies, classifications and knowledge systems. Furthermore, we also assume that every society develops taxonomies to organise a hyper-complex world by classifying natural and cultural facts in an abstract manner in order to provide orientation within this world. The cognitive-, normative-, and also aesthetic- and affection-oriented (Schwinn 1998: 294) taxonomies that are consolidated in specific knowledge systems differ significantly from culture to culture and epoch to epoch, and vary in their societal relevance. However, as their range of variation is limited by biological and cognitive prerequisites, structurally similar ordering principles should be anticipated. Historically speaking, it is mostly religious actors and institutions that set the classification rules and turn taxonomies into a "symbolic universe" (Berger & Luckmann 1966) with a high degree of obligation. In this context, Sheehan (2006: 58) for example, points towards the "social function" of religion "as a tool for making distinctions". From the point of view of systems theory, the differentiation of a religious sub-system introduces a new type of fundamental classification – the *religious-secular divide* (Beyer 2013) that is constitutive of modern societies: the "modern 'secular-religious' system of classification" (Casanova 2012: 212). It is finally established in Europe as a result of (1) the appraisal of pre-Christian antiquity during the Renaissance, (2) the experience with

confessional plurality and strife following the Reformation and (3) the encounter with cultures outside Europe as part of European "discoveries" since the 17th century, together with the need to raise an inventory as a result of these discoveries (Stroumsa 2010: viii; also see Sheehan 2006). It is undeniable that Western types of norm system, knowledge systems, taxonomies (e.g. differentiations between religious and secular) and institutions – partly developed as a result of encounters with other cultures! – have largely been established globally and have therefore become "an unavoidable reference in local processes of identity development" (Bergunder 2011: 54). However, it is crucial to question a perspective on historical influence that assumes a unilateral transfer without taking the involvement of societies outside Europe in this process into account. More appropriately, the perspective of "entangled histories" is developing, which takes selective, reflective, strategic and interest-driven acquisition into account, which has often led to cultural "hybridities" and multiple identities, and resulted in important (often conflict-torn) dynamics. One practical option to compare emic taxonomies would be to research old encyclopaedias, such as pre-modern Chinese or Arabian examples.

(3) Codes and differentiations. A further hypothesis to examine would be whether and how far basic emic taxonomies correlate with binary codes of a mostly evaluative character. It would be important to examine whether and under which circumstances these codes develop into specific guiding ideas for the differentiation of societal sub-systems. It is evident that binary codes such as sacred/profane, pure/impure, extra-worldly/inner-worldly, good/evil, familiar/unfamiliar, etc., are ubiquitous. They are not only relevant as normative and cognitive forms of classification, but also have an impact on the social structures long before a primacy of functional system differentiation is established – if this happens at all. In Buddhism, for example, a basic differentiation between laukika (belonging to the world) and lokottara (supramundane) emerges early on (Ruegg 1995, 2001). Based on the Indian model – and comparable with the "Zweischwerterlehre" (in Early Medieval Christianity) and Luther's "Two Kingdoms Theory" – it was further developed in medieval Japan into a model of dual sovereignty under an "Order of Princes" (ōbō) and an "Order of Buddha" (buppō), thereby becoming relevant to societal structure (Kleine 2013a und c). A comparable dual structural concept may also be found in old India with complementary judicial spheres that are based on two normative codes: *Arthaśāstra* and *Dharmaśāstra (*Lubin 2007; Derrett 1976). We assume that certain taxonomies and codes are constitutive of the emergence of a distinct religious system – firstly, and above all, vis-a-vis the domain of political rule, but implicitly also beyond that. To operationalise our concept of *secularity*, it is necessary to explore specific codes and differentiations that structure communication in pre-modern cultures. Even if these cultures have no semantic equivalents for the terms *religious* and *secular*, such codes may allow and/or advance a boundary demarcation between religion and non-religion. In this regard, a critical evaluation should also be made of Casanova's thesis (2012: 191, 200) on the cultural evolution of binary codes, according to which the central differentiation for pre-axial cultures is the distinction between sacred and profane, whereas for axial cultures the basic distinction is between transcendent and immanent, and for modern cultures between religious and secular. Again, the question arises: What significance does the formulation of a concept of transcendence – and the transcendence/immanence dual – have on the classification of the world into a religious and a secular sphere?

(4) Social functions. In every society, certain functions must be fulfilled to ensure the continued existence of that society. When differentiating religion vis-a-vis secular segments of cultures, two basic functions are particularly significant. They can roughly be categorised as (a) "coping with con-

tingency" and (b) "reality construction" (Berger, Luckmann 1969). "Coping with contingency"[4] includes functions such as protection against war, epidemics, natural disasters, etc., but also on an individual level encompasses ensuring prosperity, health, (male) offspring, and many more. "Reality construction" relates to the provision of a "semantic apparatus" (Luhmann 1993: 19) to interpret the world and to create "plausibility structures" (Berger, Luckmann 1969: 165–170) for implementing a socially binding reality construction. In particular, it also refers to the legitimisation of political power and pre-existing social conditions (Bourdieu 2011) – what Weber referred to as "domestication of the masses". There are significant cultural differences with regard to the institutions, actors and practices that are expected to fulfil these functions. Classic secularisation theories assume that "religion" was principally expected to fulfil these functions in pre-modern societies, but that it is increasingly released from most tasks over the course of social evolution, and could and should now be limited to its primary function. In this regard, the first question is whether certain social functions (or even purposes) are identified as being specifically "religious" since it is evident that religions do not differ from secular segments of society simply due to their specific functions. Only those religions designated as "axial" (with reference to Jaspers) by Bellah, Eisenstadt et al (Eisenstadt 1980, 1986, 1987, 2005; Bellah, Joas 2012; Casanova 2012) with a concept of absolute transcendence (Kleine 2012a, 2013c), in which "the aim of religious behaviour is 'irrationalised'" (Weber 1980: 259), postulate an exceptional position in view of "coping with contingency", inasmuch as they promise to ultimately overcome any contingency (Kleine 2013c). However, even "axial" religions (in the sense of religious institutions) fulfil a range of functions that could also be adopted by other sub-systems. It may be useful to examine whether the difference between religious and worldly fulfilment of functions manifests itself mainly in the means applied – for example, communication with transcendent powers. Of particular interest would be historical situations, where a struggle for responsibility for fulfilling certain social functions was evident, or where expectations for fulfilling functions were explicitly placed on certain segments of society.

3.2   Sub-questions

The following sub-questions serve to operationalise the concept of Multiple Secularities. Furthermore, they should also provide a general focus, thereby facilitating communication between the fellows, without excluding other perspectives and questions. On the contrary, developing new questions is the HCAS' stated aim.

3.2.1   Emic norm systems, differentiation practices and paths of development

This sub-question focuses on the synchronous and diachronic comparative study of differentiation processes in various historical contexts. Inter alia, indigenous taxonomic categories will be explored, with the aid of which people in different pre-modern societies have gained an understanding of a

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[4]   Generally, religious studies, sociology and theology speak of "managing contingency" (Luhmann 1977: 231; Luhmann 2013; Ammermann 2000; Gruber 2012; Herbers 2014; Ollig 1988). However, the term suggests that the problem of contingency could actually be overcome, which is certainly doubtful. Coping with contingency may appear to be a symbolic (theoretical) undertaking at first glance, but if you consider the effort made in ritual practice to defeat social threats, its practical nature becomes immediately apparent.

complex natural and social world, by subsuming concrete situations under abstract terms of classification, thereby creating a conceptual system. Such occasions could include topics and types of communication, social practices, roles, authorities, institutions, locations and times, but also material goods and general norm systems. In this regard, it is also relevant to explore the functions and socio-structural consequences of binary codes, such as worldly/extra-worldly, sacred/profane, pure/impure, wholesome/unwholesome. Furthermore, it should be questioned whether certain social functions were classified and subjected to discussion, and whether their fulfilment was assigned to specific actors or institutions. Further (exemplary) questions could include: Was a distinction drawn between different "finite provinces of meaning" and were they integrated into a "symbolic universe" (Berger, Luckmann 1969: 102), and who were their initiators, advocates and facilitators? Did people assume multiple modes of reality (multiple realities: Schütz 1945)? In the examined pre-modern societies, are competing "spheres of values" (Weber 1988b) already developing and on which values are they based? Are these spheres of values solidifying as "life-orders" with a high regulatory claim? Is there a distinction between different social "fields", each with their own logic, habitus, and other signs of distinction and specific types of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1997)? Are "spheres of action" with their own guiding ideas and standards of rationality detached "from the clutches of community bonds [...] and the ethics of brotherhood" – and therefore detached also from "religion" (Münch 2011: 174). Or is it even possible to identify trends of differentiation of social sub-systems, which differ from others with regard to their social function, specific codes, own "contingency formulae", etc. (Luhmann 1991, etc.)? At the same time, it must always be asked what could hinder or oppose these differentiation processes.

The HCAS' empirical work and discussions will show whether there are criteria based on which the differentiated and classified segments of culture, practices, themes, situations, roles, institutions, etc., can be attributed as "religious", in order for the "secular" to become identifiable.

3.2.2   Reference problems of differentiation and boundary demarcation processes

Taking it a step further, the next question would be to ask whether the identified processes of differentiation and boundary demarcation, as well as forms of dissociation by certain actors, respond to certain social or cultural problems, and what interests are pursued with them. As part of the concept of *Multiple Secularities* (Wohlrab-Sahr, Burchardt 2011 and 2012; Burchardt, Wohlrab-Sahr, Middell 2015) that initially focused on the modern era, four typical reference problems were identified as occasions for the institutionalisation of "secularity". It cannot be assumed that all four reference problems occurred in equal measure in pre-modern societies, however, it should not be ruled out that there were comparable problem constellations in earlier cultures (see Kleine 2009; Bhargava 2010, for example). At any rate, it is debatable whether the modern era actually represents such a radical historical watershed as suggested by the self-perception of societies considering themselves to be modern, and it should not be presupposed here (Seiwert 1995). Instead, we rather assume that, in addition to natural factors, social and institutional structures also occasionally have a *longue durée*, and stretch far back into the past. Even in pre-modern societies, such as in India, China or Japan, belonging to a religion – in the context of Buddhism for example – was sometimes a personal decision (cf. Zander 2016; Roesler 2013), which presumed a minimum level of individual (religious)

freedom in addition to religious plurality, which may in turn have required a minimum level of religious neutrality for state institutions (Seiwert 2013; Kleine 2009). On the other hand, in the so-called "high cultures" with a predominantly stratified type of differentiation, there was a considerable need for cultural integration through canonisation, for example (Hahn 1987; for China, also see Seiwert 1987). While canonisation can and is meant to have an integrating, standardising and homogenising effect, the result promotes socio-structural boundaries. This is the case, for example, when religious institutions are used for the *external* legitimisation of political authority and as producers of a semantic apparatus for a binding interpretation of the world. Or – on the contrary – when universalised validity claims from "religious" institutions collide with the sovereignty claims of "worldly" rulers. And finally, it must also be assumed for societies that are not predominantly functionally differentiated that religious interventions may be blocked in terms of efficient, purposefully rational practice within certain fields of action (politics, economy, science, etc.). We assume that a distinction was also drawn in pre-modern societies between "extraordinary" and "ordinary" procedural logics and rationalities, but we expect other reference problems to have caused boundary demarcations in these societies. One of the HCAS' tasks is to identify these kinds of reference problems. From a comparative perspective, the focus would be on solving patterns or dominant reference problems that repeatedly occur in different contexts, by having sharper boundary demarcations between religious and secular in areas of society and fields of practice.

3.2.3   Guiding ideas of Secularity

While in some world regions (e.g. India, USA, Western Europe, Turkey, Japan), explicit guiding ideas of secularity have been implemented as part of establishing the nation state or constitution, differentiations in other regions remain more implicit due to their controversial authoritarian implementation (e.g. Tunisia, Iraq, Syria), or are suspected of being secular or atheist (e.g. in various countries influenced by Islam) and are seen to be deviant if they are propagated in public (Kinitz 2015).

Explicitly formulated secular guiding ideas in pre-modern contexts should not be readily assumed, nor should they be excluded. As an example, traces of secularist guiding ideas may be deduced from arguments using in anti-Buddhist propaganda (see Ch'en 1952, 1972), as formulated in China in Xun Ji's Lun fojiao biao in the 6th century. It would also be of interest whether traces of guiding ideas helping to separate religious and non-religious scopes can be found in the non-conformist positions of certain actors. In late medieval Japan, for example, the leader of the Honganji temple who was powerful yet under suspicion of subversion – Rennyo (1415-99) – emphasised the sole responsibility of Buddhist institutions for extra-worldly spiritual good and the religious orthodoxy, but inversely emphasised the absolute validity of the state authorities in regard to setting and implementing worldly legal norms. The reference problem here was the ensuring of individual religious freedom whilst also recognising the role of state sovereignty in all worldly affairs with the purpose of establishing peace in the country – in this regard, traces of the guiding ideas of individual freedom, national integration and functional differentiation can be recognised here. Furthermore, it should be examined whether or how current guiding ideas – such as in India – are related to pre-colonial practices and ideas (Bhargava 2010). In doing so, we are not interested in simple continuities, but rather in the

reconstruction of references, cross-references, histories of memory, etc., whereby we assume that differentiation processes that consolidate into guiding ideas, generate a certain cultural dynamic.

It should be examined whether certain Asian societies in the modern era (particularly India, China and Japan) were able to affiliate to indigenous concepts or even guiding ideas that, whilst not congruent with those of Western modernity (Thapar 2007; Bhargava 2010; Wang 2001, 2003; Kleine 2013c), but may have made their creative adaptation easier or even made it possible in the first place. In this regard, it is also necessary to question whether the form of social differentiation (stratified or functional) or the differentiation of religion (structural or functional) influenced the development of guiding ideas of secularity.

And finally, the sequence of differentiation processes and their programmatic formulation should also be examined. For example, Lapidus (1975) argued that it was within the sphere of influence of early Islam, that de-facto differentiations in opposition to the religious guiding ideas developed first, to which a socio-political theory then reacted (Lapidus 1992).[5]

3.2.4 Types of cultural interaction and acquisition, transfer and entanglement

In conjunction with this question, the perspective of shared, connected or entangled history, histoire croisée, transfer or relational history (Conrad, Randeria, Sutterlüty 2002; Conrad, Eckert, Freitag 2007; Conrad 2013; Kaelble 2005; Kaelble, Schriewer 2003; Osterhammel 2001, 2011; Werner, Zimmermann 2002) are of interest. With certain shifts in emphasis, these approaches assume that the development of the modern world – including the difference between "religious" and "secular" – can no longer be merely understood as the result of a unidirectional diffusion of Western concepts throughout the rest of the world. This means that we knowingly consider transcultural interactions and transfers between Europe and Asia, and within Asia itself (also see van der Veer 2001), in order to overcome a "methodological nationalism" (Werner, Zimmermann 2002: 608) – without excluding point-by-point comparisons. With a view to the emergence of the general term "religion" in 16th/17th century Europe – a prerequisite for explicitly conceptualising secularity – encounters between Jesuits and other Christian missionaries and other belief and ritual systems in mission territories were of particular significance (also see Roetz 2013). In relation to establishing "religion" (zongjiao) as a generic term in China (Campany 2003; Chen 1999; Choe 1994; Meyer 2009, 2013) – and similarly in Korea (Lee 2009) – exchange processes with Japan were more significant than direct interaction with Europe. And the formulation of a modern academic understanding of religion is largely due to encounters between Western academics such as F. M. Müller and Asian colleagues such as Nanjō Bunʻyū, as well as intercultural events like the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 (Lüddeckens 2002; Snodgrass 2003). By specifically seeking global exchange processes, which spawned modern concepts of secularity and have transformed it into an influential component of international politics, the HCAS is able to fill a gap in the existing research, and provides an answer to Kaelble's call for a "time of empirical research", which prevents the theoretical debates on entangled history and histoire croisée from becoming sterile (Kaelble 2005; also see Bergunder 2011: 54). The emphasis on entanglement should not trivialise the significance of the "issuing side", i.e.

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[5] For the co-existence of different discourses in the history of Islam also see Bauer's study "The Culture of Ambiguity" (Bauer 2011).

European powers with their expansive knowledge systems (e.g. Dahlberg 1974; Vogel 2004) and taxonomies, but should rather consider the corresponding dispositifs of action and perception, the selection mechanisms as well as the appropriation strategies of the recipients as historic subjects, and their contribution to the global debate on "secularity".

4 Reference list

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