

# Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe

**International Symposium**

**November 1–3, 2012**

Scholars agree with common sense that 'religion' (from Latin, *religio*) is a concept of 'Western' (European, Mediterranean, Roman ...) origin; that the concept's semantics (meaning) and pragmatics (function) have a long and complicated history with numerous transformations and adaptations from antiquity to the present; and that the encounters between European colonial powers and non-European civilizations have had a lasting impact on both sides, including their understanding of 'religion,' since at least the early modern period. The aim of this conference is to look behind the screen of superficial consensus, according to which 'religion' (both as a concept and as an object) is exclusively a European invention. This is neither to deny the pertinence of the concept's deconstruction by scholars such as Talal Asad and others nor to question the concept's objective alliance with Western colonialism and imperialism over centuries, but rather to refine historical awareness and enhance social-scientific analysis regarding the concept's career in European and Asian social and intellectual history to this day. Moreover, it is time to restore the balance, so to speak, in our understanding of the concept's history and career and to investigate in more detail how Asian societies and their elites dealt and continue to deal with the intellectual, cultural and institutional challenges posed to them by the 'Western' concept of 'religion'.

## Venues

### November 1–2

Museum Rietberg  
Park-Villa Rieter  
Gablerstrasse 15  
8002 Zurich

### November 3

University of Zurich, City Campus  
Room SOC 1-106  
Rämistrasse 69  
8001 Zurich

## Organizers

URPP Asia and Europe and Department for the Study  
of Religions, University of Zurich

## Registration

**A registration is required for organizational reasons (no fee).**  
Please download the registration form at:  
**[www.asienundeuropa.uzh.ch/events/conferences/  
religionasia.html](http://www.asienundeuropa.uzh.ch/events/conferences/religionasia.html)**



## Contact

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## Supported by

Swiss National Science Foundation, Swiss Academy of  
Humanities and Social Sciences, Hermann und Marianne Straniak  
Stiftung, Hochschulstiftung of the Canton of Zurich



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**University of  
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**University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe  
Department for the Study of Religions  
Swiss Society for the Study of Religions**



# Concepts of Religion between Asia and Europe

International Symposium, URPP Asia and Europe, University of Zurich  
Annual Conference of the Swiss Society for the Study of Religions

November 1–3, 2012

## Thursday, November 1: Museum Rietberg, Park-Villa Rieter

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**14:00**      **Opening: Andrea Riemenschmitter (Institute of East Asian Studies, Director URPP Asia and Europe, UZH)**

### **Part 1: Before Religion**

**Chair: Wolfgang Behr (Classical Chinese Studies, UZH)**

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**14:15**      **Christoph Uehlinger (History of Religions, UZH)**  
No religion before or without 'religion'? Introducing the conference, with an attempt to investigate ways of locating religion in ancient Western Asia (or the 'Ancient Near East')

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**15:00**      **Raji C. Steineck (Japanese Studies, UZH)**  
Delineating the Buddha-Way: On the semantical field of the 'religious' in Dôgen

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**15:45**      **Max Deeg (Buddhist Studies, University of Cardiff)**  
Chinese religion before and after encounter – reflections on a Chinese semantic and conceptional field *ante et post* Buddhism

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**16:30**      **Break**

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**17:00**      **Angelika Malinar (Indian Studies, UZH)**  
Before 'religion' in India? Delineating and defining religious pathways in classical Sanskrit texts

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**17:45**      **Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz (History of Religions and Central Asian Studies, University of Bern)**  
Concepts of 'religion' in Asia? The case of the Mongols

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**19:00**      **Dinner (by invitation)**

## Friday, November 2: Museum Rietberg, Park-Villa Rieter

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### Part 2: Negotiating Religion

Chair: Ulrich Rudolph (Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, UZH)

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9:00 James D. Frankel (Department of Religion, University of Hawai'i at Manoa)  
*Dīn* in between: East-West connections of Islam

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9:45 Stefan Reichmuth (Oriental and Islamic Studies, University of Bochum)  
The concept of *Dīn* and the Islamic religious sciences in the 18th Century:  
The case of Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1791)

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10:30 Break

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11:00 Vincent Goossaert (EPHE, Paris)  
The vagaries of religious authority: The Heavenly Master (*aka*, the  
'Taoist Pope'), 1850–1950

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11:45 Jason A. Josephson (Department of Religion, Williams College)  
Unreasonable demands: Inventing religion in Japanese diplomacy

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12:30 Lunch

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13:30 Annual business meeting of the Swiss Society for the Study of Religions

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### Part 3: Religion Defined and Delimited

Chair: Benedikt Korf (Political Geography, UZH)

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14:30 Geoffrey A. Oddie (South Asian History, University of Sydney)  
India: Construction of Hinduism as 'religion'

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15:15 Sudipta Kaviraj (Indian Politics and Intellectual History, Columbia  
University, NY)  
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16:00 Break

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16:30 Christian Lee Novetzke (Jackson School of International Studies,  
University of Washington)  
Religion and the end of history in modern India

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17:15 Lily Kong (Department of Geography, National University of Singapore)  
Constructing 'religion' in context: The geographical and historical  
contingencies of religion

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18:00 Plenary discussion

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19:00 Evening: Individual arrangements

## Saturday, November 3: University of Zurich, City Campus (SOC 1-106)

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### Part 4: Religion Contested and Reclaimed

Chair: Bettina Dennerlein (Islamic and Gender Studies, UZH)

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**9:00**      **Yang Fenggang (Center for Religion and Chinese Society, Purdue University)**  
The definition of religion for the social scientific study of religion in China and beyond

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**9:45**      **Katsuhiro Kohara (Comparative Study of Monotheistic Religions, Doshisha University, Kyoto)**  
Requirements of 'good religion': An inquiry into the effects of the 3/11 disaster on the concept of religion in Japan

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**10:30**      **Break**

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**11:00**      **Volkhard Krech (Center for Religious Studies, University of Bochum)**  
Where are the boundaries of religion? Considerations on the emergence of a global religious field and on processes of sacralization

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**11:45**      **Plenary discussion, conclusion**

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**12:30**      **Lunch**

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### Zusatzprogramm der SGR / Programmes spécial de la SSSR

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**13:30**      Projektpräsentationen von Doktorierenden und Postdoktorierenden /  
Présentations de projets de recherches

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**15:30**      **Doktorat – Doktoratsprogramme – Graduiertenschulen:**  
Paneldiskussion über neue Entwicklungen und Herausforderungen im Bereich der akademischen Nachwuchsförderung im Fach Religionswissenschaft  
**Doctorat – programmes de formation doctorale – École(s) doctorale(s):**  
nouvelles orientations de la formation doctorale en Histoire et Sciences des religions?