Chapter 24

Religious Landscapes

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Inserting Religion in Geographical Analyses

Race, class, and gender generally are accepted as the primary axes of analyses across those disciplines concerned with understanding society.[1] So, too, within geography, they have constituted subjects, as both a priori and problematized categories of analysis. Religion has not received this same attention. This is not to say that it has been reduced to a residual category, or even that there is a paucity of research on geographies of religion. In fact, over the last two decades there has been a noticeable increase. Conceptual and theoretical attention to geographies of religion, however, has lagged behind, and only resurfaced in recent years (see Levine 1986; Kong 1990, 2001a).

Early Intersections of Geography and Religion

Several earlier reviews of geographical research on religion (Isaac 1959–60, 1961–2; Fickeler 1962; Sopher 1967, 1981; Levine 1986) illustrate a primary focus on religious landscapes, although research was not restricted to this focus only. For example, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ecclesiastical geography and biblical geography dominated. The former involved primarily mapping the spatial advance of Christianity and other religions in the world, often with an underlying aim of documenting which religions Christian missionaries found in what part of the world and how missions progressed among them (Isaac 1965: 10). The latter involved attempts to identify places and names in the Bible and to determine their locations, which illustrated the powerful influence of the Christian church during this period of geographic scholarship.

The focus on religious landscapes was to follow in the late seventeenth century and became particularly strong in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the physico-theological stance, scholars saw landscapes, and in particular, nature, to be divinely-created order for the well-being of all life (Glacken 1959, 1967; Buttner 1980: 94–5). Whether it was in the distribution of climates, the production of plants and animals in different zones, or the distribution of landforms, lakes and streams,

it was argued that the earth and its geography was too advantageous to life and too well-reasoned to be accepted as fortuitous circumstances (Glacken 1959). Alongside this physicotheological school, environmental determinism was also developing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the influence of Montesquieu and Voltaire. Geographers sought to explain the essential nature of various religions in terms of their geographical environments (see, for example, Semple 1911; Huntington 1945; Hultkrantz 1966).

Weberian and Sauerian Influences

In the 1920s, Max Weber's ideas began to gain influence over environmental determinism. Research began to focus on how religion influenced and changed the environment, including physical landscapes. This approach spawned a body of empirical writings, so that by 1960 Isaac could define the 'geography of religion' as: "the study of the part played by the religious motive in man's [*sic*] transformation of the landscape." In his early conception of the subfield, the task of a geography of religion was "to separate the specifically religious from the social, economic and ethnic matrix in which it is embedded, and to determine its relative weight in relation to other forces in transforming the landscape" (Isaac 1961–2: 12).

The focus on religion's role in transforming landscapes reflects closely the work of Carl Sauer and the Berkeley school of cultural geography. These researchers have tended to treat religion as a superorganic construct influencing the cultural landscape. The processes through which these influences are effected were not very much studied while the focus remained chiefly on the form of the impacted landscape, such as their spatial extent. For example, studies have focused on spatial patterns arising from religious influences, including the spatial diffusion and expansion and the territorial demise of religious groups (for example, Crowley 1978; Heatwole 1986; and Landing 1982); the distribution of religious groups over space at particular points in time (for example, Shortridge 1978; Stump 1981; and Heatwole 1985); the delineation of culture regions based on religious characteristics (for example, Shortridge 1976 and 1977); and the impact of religion on the physical form of the landscape, with descriptions of sacred structures of particular groups, illustrating the unique imprint that each group leaves on the landscape. These have focused on the sacred structures of world religions, such as Buddhism (Tanaka 1984) and Hinduism (Biswas 1984), as well as folk religions (Curtis 1980; and Laatsch & Calkins 1986).

The interest in analyzing how religion influences landscapes is paralleled by a specific interest in how religion influences ecology, in direct opposition to an earlier environmental derterminism. This strand of research, variously termed 'religious ecology' and 'environmental theology' has progressed in two main areas. The first has focused on the role of religion in environmental degradation. Examples include Lynn White's (1967) "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," which sparked a debate that involved the question of what caused the increasing environmental degradation that was evident on planet earth (see also Glacken 1967; Dubos 1969, 1972; Cobb 1972; Toynbee 1972; Passmore 1974; Hargrove 1986). The second has focused on the impact of religious thought on plant and animal ecology, and in turn developed along two main fronts. First, many have considered the influence of religion on attitudes towards animal life, for example, Hinduism and its approach to

the sacred cow (see Harris 1966; Simoons 1979). Second, researchers have examined the question of religious influence on the domestication of plants and animals and their diffusion (Isaac 1962; Sopher 1964; Heiser 1973). The central tenet of such works is that domestication resulted not purely for economic reasons in many instances, but was closely associated with religious ceremonies and divinities instead.

Mapping 'New' Geographies of Religion: The Politics and Poetics of the Sacred

While the Sauerian approach emphasizing religious impacts on landscapes is still evident in some recent writings, the retheorization of cultural geography over the last decade and a half has also reframed the work of geographers interested in religion. In 1990, Kong highlighted various ways in which this was becoming evident. First, there has been increasing focus on societies with plural religious orientations, including secular ones, moving away from earlier tendencies to examine specific religions (and cultures) (as if they existed) in isolation. Second, and relatedly, there is growing acknowledgement of the intersections of the sacred and secular, of the political and cultural. This attention is often focused on religious landscapes and their relationship with other-religious and secular landscapes. Third, studies have begun to reflect increasingly a social geographical orientation in the focus on community studies, that is, in the study of religious groups as communities in a social and political context. Issues of identity constructions have therefore gained research attention. Fourth, there has been growing interest in the symbolic meanings of religious places, beyond more functional and descriptive efforts. Fifth, there have been greater attempts to understand the *processes* through which specific environmental objects, landscapes, and buildings become invested with meaning of a religious kind. Sixth, sacred experience at religious places has also been given attention.

While others have described the efforts as diffuse, incoherent and in disarray (Livingstone 1994: 373; Raivo 1997: 137), Kong (2001a) has argued that with some *a posteriori* conceptual thinking, there is in fact a certain theoretical coherence that may be cast around these emerging strands. She identifies these to be a politics and poetics of the sacred, in particular, a politics and poetics of religious landscapes and space, and a politics and poetics of religious identity and community. Such politics and poetics recognizes, as Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss did, that "nothing is inherently sacred," for the sacred is "a value of indeterminate signification, in itself empty of meaning and therefore susceptible to the reception of any meaning whatsoever" (Chidester & Linenthal 1995: 6). The sacred is tied up with, and draws meaning from, social and political relationships. This is the situational sacred, or the politics of the sacred. In contrast, the poetics of the sacred, or the "substantial" sacred is thought to have an "essential character" (Chidester & Linenthal 1995: 5), an essence and meaning in and of itself, inspiring and overwhelming, protecting but also frightening (Otto 1917; Kong 1992).

Politics of landscapes and space

Sacred space is contested space, just as the sacred is a "contested category" (Needham cited in Chidester & Linenthal 1995: 15). Sacred space reflects and reinforces "hierarchical power relations of domination and subordination, inclusion and

exclusion, appropriation and dispossession" (ibid.: 17). Geographers (but also anthropologists, sociologists, and others) have therefore increasingly interrogated the "entrepreneurial, social, political and other 'profane' forces" that constitute the construction of sacred space (ibid.). Various politics and power relations have been explored in recent empirical work. These politics are focused on the production, management and maintenance of sacred place, the consumption of meaning, and insertion into everyday lived cultures.

In the production of sacred place, researchers have examined the politics of secular–religious relations and majority–minority relations, particularly in relation to the 'officially sacred' (Leiris 1938), such as churches, temples, synagogues, and mosques. In exploring secular-religious relations in the production of the 'officially sacred,' research has centered on illustrating the power of the secular in defining the location of the sacred, in the form of religious buildings. Such secular forces may be represented by "rational" urban planning principles, capitalistic principles of land values, and principles of multiculturalism (see Kong 1993a and Rath et al. 1991). On the other hand, as Kong (1993b) also illustrates, religious adherents may have other ideas about where to locate their religious buildings, following religious principles/guidance. When the power of the state transcends, religious adherents find ways of coming to terms with the primacy of the secular order, negotiating their conceptions of the sacred (Kong 1993b).

In exploring majority–minority relations and the connection with sacred space, there is sometimes a confluence of the religious majority with the state. For example, Philp and Mercer (1999) describe how the majority Buddhist government in Burma manipulates religion in its desire to represent Burma as a "harmonious Buddhist nation." For example, land is seized from a minority Kachin Baptist organization for the construction of a new pagoda. The majority position (a preferred construction of the "nation") is interpreted in religious terms, and sacred space is integral to the success of the majority's ideologically constructed assertions.

Also, a large multidisciplinary literature has emerged which examines the politics surrounding management and maintenance of religious places. The tensions and negotiations surrounding such management and maintenance are often between native people who revere sacred sites, and modern forces which want these sites for pragmatic, commercial, or even alternative religious purposes (Carmichael et al. 1994). Here, geographers have much to learn from other disciplines, such as archaeology and anthropology, and especially where specific work is done on cultural resource management. On the other hand, geographers have been much more active in exploring the nature of different meanings invested in the same sites. The politics surrounding meaning investment in religious places take various forms: tensions between secular and sacred meanings, interreligious contestations in multireligious communities, gender, class and race politics and politics between nations. I will elaborate below.

In conditions of modernity, sacred–secular tensions have formed a key focus of analysis. Various types of sacred sites have been studied in this regard, and Kong's (1999) review of work on cemeteries and crematoria illustrates the central arguments. For example, recent necrogeographical work has examined state discourse and practice surrounding burial and crematorial space, often hinged on secular utilitarian views of planning, adopting principles of efficient land use and taking on

board concerns about sanitation, while local communities emphasized symbolic and religious meanings of graves as focal points of identity, expressions of relationships with the land and crucial to the practice of religious beliefs and rituals.

Yet, sacred spaces should not be conceptualized and understood only in terms of sites and locations, but in terms of religious routes as well. Graham and Murray (1997) illustrate this, focusing on the dichotomy between official and non-official appropriations of the pilgrimage route (not merely the site) to Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Besides sacred–secular tensions, the acknowledgement of pluralities in societies has prompted analysis of interreligious contestations over meanings in multireligious societies. In Sydney, Australia, the refusal to allow mosques to be built represented religious prejudices designed to exclude the marginal 'other.' Councils and resident activist groups have frustrated the public practice of Islam and other non-Christian faiths so much so that they have been forced to worship secretly, in residential properties, or to use commercial premises. Where mosques are proposed, it is not uncommon for resident objectors to argue that members of Islamic groups proposing the developments are 'outsiders,' 'nonlocals,' 'they,' or 'them' (Dunn 2001), while opponents of mosques made very direct claims to local citizenship by describing and identifying themselves as 'concerned citizens,' 'concerned Christian,' 'legitimate resident,' 'locals,' and 'rate payer' in letters they write. Similarly, in London, UK, Naylor and Ryan (1998) have shown how local residents in a predominantly white Christian neighborhood perceive the mandir (Hindu temple) to be a threat to their homes, public areas and community, a "visual sign of intrusion and invasion of a predominantly white British space" (Naylor & Ryan 1998: 9).

The politics of religious spaces are also tied up with gender, race and class politics, and politics between nations. Patriarchy, classism and racism are often reflected in and reinforced by cemeteries, memorials and tombstones (see Kong 1999). For example, Morris's (1997) discussion of how the British War Graves Commission instituted a policy of uniformity for memorials so that wealthier families could not overshadow "what was seen to be the equal sacrifice of men from poorer social groups" (Morris 1997: 419; see also Heffernan 1995) opens up questions about how far death is a 'leveler' of class and social status. This may be extended to the issue of race, as Christopher (1995) illustrates in his study of racial segregation in cemeteries in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He showed how, prior to 1948, this segregation was apparent within cemeteries, while after 1948, it became apparent through the establishment of completely separate cemeteries. Speck (1996), on the other hand, argues that women are not commemorated in war memorials, and when they are, are represented as the stoic woman to symbolize the community's sacrifice, or as mother figures (transformed from nurses), who are essentially passive, private and respectable citizens. This, she terms as representation of their maternal citizenship – they expressed their commitment as citizens in ways that were open to them primarily as wives and mothers. The marginalization of women is similarly evident in the principal rituals and ceremonies of commemoration, and in the memorial-making process (women sculptors, for example, have been awarded few major memorial commissions).

Deathscapes also illustrate the constructions of nations and the politics of internation relations. Whether it is about keeping a tangible colonial presence through

the insistence on British war cemeteries in foreign soils (Morris 1997), or about the language used on headstones as an illustration of nationalistic allegiances (Mythum 1994), meanings are invested in deathscapes which speak about the power relations between nations. Such analyses of the politics between "nations" can be extended to other sites of religious significance, including technological "sites," from websites to audiovisual religious productions. As Kong (2001b) highlighted, various research questions deserve attention, for example, as technology and globalizing tendencies open up cultural borders, how are states dealing with the influence of international religious broadcasts in their countries? What kind of transnational religious developments might be facilitated via technology? If American involvement is strong in international Christian broadcasting, as Stump (1991) argues it is, what are the implications for a new cultural imperialism via religion, a kind of religious imperialism?

Politics and power relations are thus evident in the production and meaning of sacred landscapes. To take this a step further, other icons of religion may also be examined as "texts" produced in circuits of culture and transformed and taken up in everyday lives (Johnson 1986). For example, religious objects in temples, churches and synagogues may be laden with sacred meaning. Yet, they may be (re)produced and appear in museums, where different meanings become invested. As Grimes (1992) points out, religious objects do not exist in a void. The spaces that they inhabit can alter, even determine their meaning as well as viewers' comprehension of that meaning. In this regard, museums commoditize and singularize[2] religious objects; in the process, altering their meanings.

Poetics of place

A poetics of sacred place is often sought after, in people's search for the immanent and transcendent, though it is not always experienced. Geographers may still find inspiration in the work of Mircea Eliade (1959), who conceives of the sacred as erupting in certain places as revelations (hierophanies), causing them to become "powerful centers of meaningful worlds," set apart from ordinary, homogeneous space. Few geographers have examined empirically the poetics of place, though Lane (1988) has conceptually crystallized certain "axioms" of such sacred place: it chooses, it is not chosen; it is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary; it is intimately linked to states of consciousness, such that it is possible to go by a place numerous times without recognizing it as sacred. When one does, however, one may experience it as the "numinous" (Otto 1917) or through a variety of emotions not unlike ordinary happiness, anger, fear and so forth, except as directed to the religious (James 1902; Kong 1992). Finally, sacred place is both local and universal and can drive one to a quest for a particular center of divine encounter but also drive one out from that center with an awareness that God is never confined to a single locale (Lane 1988: 15). This parallels two general spatial orientations in the study of religion, the locative and utopian: the former is fixed, bounded, and requires the maintenance of one's place and that of others in a larger scheme of things; the latter is unbounded and unfixed to any particular location, breaking out of a prevailing social order (Smith 1978).

In examining the poetics of religious place, scholars have been drawn to understanding the process of sacralization, that is, the manner in which place develops

its sacred meaning. Anthropologists and geographers share a common interest in this. Hume's anthropological (1998) study notes how Wiccans[3] believe that sacred place can be set up anywhere. The processes of sacralization involve moments of quiet meditation prior to casting a circle, setting up the altar, laying out the witch's tools, ringing a bell to signal the commencement of the rite, and so forth. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1993), focusing on the sacralization of the house in mainstream Hinduism, similarly emphasize the role of ritual in sacralization, purifying the outside (e.g. through consecration of the land and planting of ritually significant plants), and sacralizing the inside (e.g. through lighting the sacred fire, anointing participants with ashes from the fire, and walking a cow through the rooms).

These specific cases, of a new religious movement and mainstream religion respectively, illustrate the larger principle that Chidester and Linenthal (1995) identify as an integral part of sacralization: ritualization. Indeed, they argue that sacred place is ritual place, a location for "formalized, repeatable symbolic performances" (Chidester & Linenthal 1995: 9). Chidester and Linenthal (1995: 10) hold that the human body plays a crucial role in the ritual production of sacred place because ritual action "manipulates basic spatial distinctions between up and down, right and left, inside and outside, and so on, that necessarily revolve around the axis of the living body." With modernity and technology, however, questions must be asked about how conceptions of sacred place change, and the role of the living body-axis in that place. For example, as cyberspace invades myriad spheres of our lives, what happens to the maintenance of boundaries between inside and outside? What happens to the bodily axis? Are different rituals developed that perhaps emphasize the visual and kinetic less (such as ritual movement) and spotlight the aural/audio more (such as ritual songs and chants)? Might vicarious ritual action become important (performed elsewhere and watched on screen)? Will simultaneous living room rituals develop, or ritual in the form of songs/chants involving simultaneous others elsewhere become important (see Kong 2001b)?

In examining the poetics of sacred places, attention has refocused on some of the earlier contributions in humanistic geographies. Discussions about how religious places offer a sense of rootedness and identity find resonances with earlier ideas propounded by humanist geographers such as Tuan and Buttimer to nonreligious contexts. Kong (1992) has explored, for example, the personal and familial histories of religious adherents in Singapore and how they are tied up with churches and Hindu temples, contributing to the development of personal attachments and senses of place. Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1993) have focused on Hindu sacred place, arguing that the domestic *pooja* (prayer) area is viewed as a family heirloom and evokes a sense of rootedness. While representing continuities with the work of humanistic geographers, and illustrating the applicability of existing concepts, geographical research on religion has not contributed substantially to a reconceptualization of our understanding of place attachments. Attachment to religious place may be little different from attachment to secular place (see James 1902).

Poetics of community

Two major issues characterize writings about the poetics of religious communities. First, religious places are also social centers which facilitate community-building. Within the multidisciplinary literature on religion, attention has focused on religious

places such as mosques and temples as social centers where adherents gather, not only to pray, but to engage in social activities as well. As long as people pray in the same place and "do things together," the assumption is often that they feel they "belong" together as a "community." Little attention has been paid to the fact that "belonging" to a parish or praying in the same place does not necessarily entail a feeling of integration and community with other worshippers. This somewhat uncritical treatment of religious places as social centers means that internal tensions have not been explored and attention has not been paid to the ways in which such tensions are mediated and resolved, and how these very mediations and negotiations are often part of the process of community-building. While it is important to understand the poetics of community, it is also crucial to interrogate the dialectics between the politics and poetics of community.

A second issue regards the role of place in the construction of a religious community. "Community" usually suggests some or all of the following: common needs and goals, a sense of the common good, shared lives, culture and views of the world, and collective action (Silk 1999: 8). These rely on interaction and communication between community members, which are much more likely when there is unmediated face-to-face contact between people, which, in turn, means locatedness in a place (see also Hillery 1955). However, communities may also be spatially dispersed ("place-free," "stretched-out") (Davies & Herbert 1993; Johnston et al. 1994: 80; Knox 1995: 214), and communicative media such as the telephone and the internet allow for the construction of communities without territorial base (Silk 1999: 9). Examples of such stretched-out communities might be nations (imagined communities) and ethnocultural diasporas.

Religious activities have also been influenced by technology through religious broadcasting and computer-mediated communication (email, discussion lists, websites). Such developments may have revitalized religion in some ways, rather than led to its demise, as some of the literature is wont to argue (see Kong 2001b). Few geographers have explored these media and their impacts on religious life, including the poetics of religious communities, and herein lies an additional area that deserves more research attention.

Politics of identity and community

"Traditional communities" as commonly conceived (as harmonious entities with shared needs, goals, values, activities, etc.) are a form of idealization. In fact, traditional communities are often characterized by various forms of oppression, "protecting the prevailing value system including its moral code" (Smith 1999: 25; see also Dwyer 1999), displaying an "intolerance of difference," since the "ideal of community" relies on a desire for "the same social wholeness and identification that underlies racism and ethnic chauvinism on the one hand and political sectarianism on the other" (Young 1990a: 303; Young 1990b).

Recent geographical work on religious 'communities' illustrates a willingness to engage with such reconceptualizations of community. Dwyer's (1999) work on young Muslim women in a small town near London examines the ways in which different constructions of community – both "local" and "globalized" – are used by young British Muslim women, which are simultaneously empowering and con-

straining. She reveals how 'community' is a source of security and strength but also of constraint and oppression. Participants in Dwyer's study spoke about a local 'Asian community,' evoked by the availability of specialized services such as halal meat shops, which signals for them a sense of security and acceptance (hence no racism) in the town. This is a construction of an 'Asian community' that corresponds to the ethnic community discourse of conventional multiculturalism in which the 'Asian community' is imagined in opposition to 'British society.' While this was positive, it came at a cost: living in an 'Asian community' meant all sorts of surveillance by other members of the 'community' about one's actions and behavior. This is the contradiction of community that confronts young British Muslim women.

Because the boundaries of 'community' are fluid, different imaginations of Muslim community can be evoked or denied. Dwyer (1999) explores contradictions within a 'community,' with those who construct and those who deny the existence of a 'Muslim community.' While some insist that divergences within the 'community' must be recognized, such consciousness of diversities are countered by those who seek to define an inclusive collectivity of Muslims, rejecting the salience of sectarian divisions such as Sunni, Shia, and Ishmaili Islam in their own 'community.' For them, banding together is important because Muslims the world over are deemed to be oppressed. Calling upon the global sense of a Muslim community (the *umma*) thus becomes a source of empowerment (see also Samad 1993; Eade 1993, 1994; Lewis 1994; Back 1996).

Religious places may play a role in constructing and maintaining the boundaries that sustain religious identities and communities. Control over religious places, be they schools, mosques, temples or other facilities can play an important role in community and family (see, for example, Saifullah-Khan 1977; Shaw 1988). Recent anthropological work points the way ahead for geographers.

Vertovec's (1992) study of different Hindu temples in London illustrates how members of the Caribbean Hindu Society's use the temple in a completely congregational manner, opening only for collective worship and remaining closed to individual and family-based worship on weekdays; organizing communal activities where food of the Caribbean-Indian variant is served; and reciting prayers congregationally, with the equivalent of church prayer books. The temple therefore becomes a significant means of consolidating and reproducing the Caribbean-Indian-Hindu community. Vertovec argues that this use of the temple has emerged because in Trinidad and Guyana, Hindus were at the bottom of the social structure and congregational worship provided a sense of mutual support and the maintenance of self-esteem, demonstrating and reinforcing their ethnic identity. When they migrated to Britain, they were still in an ethnic quandary, with the white British population thinking of them derogatorily as 'Paki' (subcontinental Indian); their official 'West Indian' status; and their harsh treatment by South Asians who saw them as a pariah group. For them, community has nothing to do with territory, coming from different parts of London, but everything to do with "cultural habits and mutual experiences of exclusion" (Vertovec 1992: 262). By contrast, where the need to consolidate and reinforce identity is not as marked, the temple does not play the important role of a "community center."

The desire to be recognized as a 'community' is also evident among the Hindu population in Edinburgh, as Nye (1993: 201) illustrates:

> Nearly all Hindu temples in Britain make use of some type of congregational worship, but only certain temples are equating these congregations with actual communal groups, and in doing so are using the temple to create a sense of Hindu 'community.'

She argues that the notion that Hindus share a common identity and can therefore be considered a 'community' is a discursive construct, because the presence of Hindus in Edinburgh does not necessarily imply the presence of a Hindu community. Neither does the fact that people worship together (a congregation) make them a 'community.' Yet, there is 'common talk' among many sections of the population that they form a 'Hindu community,' with a common identity and purpose. This is primarily aided by the fact that the community has a physical manifestation, the Hindu temple.

In short, the notion of a 'religious community' is a contested one, at once liberating and constraining, contributing to the construction of place and relying on it at the same time.

'New' Geographies of Religion

Geographical interest in religion has a long history. As Glacken (1967: 35) pointed out:

> In ancient and modern times alike, theology and geography have often been closely related studies because they meet at crucial points of human curiosity. If we seek after the nature of God, we must consider the nature of man [*sic*] and the earth, and if we look at the earth, questions of divine purpose in its creation and of the role of mankind [*sic*] on it inevitably arise.

A review of the existing literatures reveals how geographical research on religion reflects the key concepts and approaches in geography: the spatial, the environmental, the landscape, and the place-centered. The spatial is manifest in mapping exercises, in the exploration of diffusion patterns, and more recently, in spatial politics. Human–environmental relationships are mediated by religion, such as in environmental determinism and religious ecology. The landscape approach embraces explorations of religious landscape politics, but also religious landscape imprints in descriptive and symbolic terms. The focus on place recognizes the meaningful personal relationships between people and place, after the style of humanistic geographers, but also interrogates the significance of place in community-building. The role of physical place in a world increasingly mediated by technology also constitutes a subject of inquiry.

The literature on geographies of religion has thus been rich and varied. Yet, there are still other ways of expanding the agenda, and particular ways of framing this agenda conceptually. In what follows, I propose an agenda that is crafted in terms of various "differentiations," anchored in an interest to understand religion in/and modernity. This focus on differentiations draws from the understanding that modernity is characterized precisely by differentiations (Heelas 1998: 2), evident in the division of labor, the separation of home and work, public and private, the construction of 'national' and 'tribal' identities, the separation between God and nature, fractures between Protestant and Catholic, and differentiations between religion and

politics (the secular), for example. It is rooted in a recognition that differentiations have emerged in multiple religious inclinations, from traditional, authoritative religions of the text to liberal teachings with a strong dose of humanism, to alternative spiritualities or New Age teachings emphasizing the expressive. Thus, I urge as a frame of reference for future work, differentiations of various complexions, in terms of (1) different sites of religious practice beyond the "officially sacred"; (2) different sensuous sacred geographies; (3) different religions in different historical and place-specific contexts; (4) different geographical scales of analysis; (5) different constitutions of population; (6) different dialectics; and (7) different moralities. Let me elaborate.

First, some of the emerging literature illustrates possibilities of extending the site of analysis, provoking research beyond the 'officially sacred.' Religious places such as indigenous sacred sites, religious schools, religious organizations and their premises (communal halls), pilgrimage routes (apart from the sites themselves), religious objects, memorials and roadside shrines, domestic shrines, and religious processions and festivals – the 'unofficially sacred' – fully deserve research attention. Further, with technological developments, new religious technological sites also require examination. Such new religiotechnological sites may shift the longstanding focus on visual and kinetic to aural/audio experiences and constructions of the sacred (see Kong 2001b). Arising therefrom, there is a second, and significant, need to foreground different sensuous sacred geographies, to understand how religious space may be carved out aurally, for example (Lee 1999).

Third, analytic categories must not be treated as substantive categories. Religion, like class, race and gender, must be a matter for historical and place-specific analysis rather than taken as *a priori* theory. The ways in which an Irish and a Filipino Catholic, or a rural and metropolitan Manila Catholic, experience and negotiate religious place, must be subject to specific contextual scrutiny (see Williams 1977: 80–1; Ling 1987: 11). Geography matters.

Fourth, the above discussion points to the need for analysis at various scales: global, national, regional, local and indeed, that of the body. The continuance of religious broadcasting and the emergence of the Internet suggest that certain religious groups have a more global reach than others, exercising influence that is nevertheless mediated by local contexts. Similarly, the reach of transnational religious groups set against the mediations of local forces demands attention, as does the question of how pan-religious identities and communities (e.g. the *umma*) conflict with local and national affiliations. Nagata (1999) argues that there is a trend towards religious globalization, characterized, *inter alia*, by a growing convergence and conformity between different religious traditions in which particular religious ideals are sought: regular congregational rituals, adoption of a sacred day a week, a centrality of scriptures and texts, an engagement with secular issues such as human rights, refugees, the environment, and so forth. These trends lend themselves to the development of a 'global' religious civil society. At the same time, with globalization and increasing migration of both highly skilled visible minorities and equally visible 'underbelly' illegal or low skilled ones, different religious diasporic communities have formed whose experiences deserve research attention. At the other end of the scale spectrum, the politics and poetics of the local – the school, the mandir, the communal hall, the pilgrimage site – have been examined more frequently,

sometimes situated within larger national and even global contexts. More recent attempts at examining embodied geographies (Nast & Pile 1998) may also offer a fruitful scale for analysis. As Dwyer's (1998) analysis of Muslim women's dressing indicates, the body, and relatedly, dress, is both the expression of dominant ideologies and representations of 'Muslim women' as well as sites of contested cultural representation.

Mention of women directs attention to the fact that there are different geographies for different population constituents. A fifth way of differentiation that geographical analysis must consider is the way in which religious place holds different meanings and exerts different influences on such different constitutions as women, children, teenagers and the elderly. Their different geographies need to be theorized in different ways, for example, what do public and private spheres mean for and how are they experienced by men and women, children, adults and elderly, and how might these varied experiences and meanings alter conceptions of public and private?

At a theoretical level, there is a need to explore various dialectics, of public and private, politics and poetics, social and spatial. Research clearly needs to be advanced to interrogate public–private dialectics in the context of religious place and experience, as well as the sensitive integration of politics and poetics. In turn, the intersection of the social and spatial has quite frequently infused current work, a reflection of the firm hold of the society-and-space paradigm in geography in the last two decades.

Even while the above agenda for research calls for account to be taken of various differentiations, dedifferentiation is also evident from another perspective: in the ways in which multidisciplinary work creates crosscurrents to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between contributions from different disciplines. In particular, a rapprochement with anthropology is growing. Perhaps this is a throwback to a long and early relationship between the two disciplines (see Wagner & Mikesell 1962). In addition, convergences are also sometimes evident with sociology, history, architecture and religious studies (Metcalf 1996). Indeed, Billinge (1986) has recognized the need to take on board the doctrinal content of religious traditions and not just the geographical impact. This emphasis on theology, not just geography, opens up avenues for collaboration with scholars of religion (see also Ley 2000).

Finally, moral geographies (landscapes and locations) have become more recent subjects for research (see Matless 1995: 396–7; Ó Tuathail 1996: 409–10) and the issue of social justice has attracted more research attention (Smith 1994; Harvey 1996). While morality and social justice may exist apart from religion, often, religion is the basis of morality and the impetus for social justice, as well as of intolerance and injustice. Yet, how different religions may inform the constructions of different moral geographies has not been explored, and how these constructed moral geographies contradict or are negotiated or reinforced by other secular agents of morality (for example, the state) requires examination (see Pacione 1999). In other words, how are competing constructions of good/bad, just/unjust played out in space, between different religious conceptions and between religious and secular conceptions? Such differentiations aside, the dedifferentiation between the secular–sacred boundary as the secular becomes "less obviously secular" (Heelas

1998: 3) is also evident in the moral geographies of social movements, some of which have religious undertones. Ecological movements, for example, take certain moral positions about what is good/bad and just/unjust, and while explicitly a secular movement, also approximates an "implicit religion" (Bartkowski & Swearingen 1997).

Geographers of religion have much to offer. On the one hand, through detailed empirical work, grounded in quotidian details from the field, they can contribute to refining theoretical understandings of the nature of the sacred (place, identity, and community). This reflects my belief that there is no "ascent" to theory without "descent" to case study. At the same time, those with more "applied" inclinations – whether proselytic (Cooper 1993), activist (Chouinard 1994: 5; Warf & Grimes 1997), or policy oriented (Dunn 1997) – will also find useful "real life" insights from further research in "new" geographies of religion that can inform praxis. In this way, the manners in which race, class, and gender have become primary axes of analyses in geography and other social science disciplines can begin to be true of religion as well.

NOTES

1. This chapter draws primarily from Kong (1990, 2001a). I am grateful to *Progress in Human Geography* for permission to reproduce certain paragraphs from Kong (2001a).
2. In economic theory, singularization is the opposite of commoditization. Singularizing something "takes it out of the market dynamics by treating it as precious, by attributing to it so much worth that it is beyond exchange" (Grimes 1992: 421). When museums purchase objects, they commoditize them momentarily but terminally, and in the museum, the object becomes "singular, unique, abstracted from its original context, protected from the market" (ibid.).
3. Wicca is a sub-branch of Paganism associated with witchcraft.

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