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"Comment" Islamicate Transculturation and Local Societies:

Comparative Perspectives on 13th–16th Century South Asia and Southeast Asia

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There was a rise of a Islamicate world system, that is, a shared arena of institutions, technologies and values, covering parts of the Subcontinent and Malacca straits by the 13th century. The Islamicate world system provided law, customs, vocabularies, technologies of accounting and writing, and so on, which facilitated trade, communication and legitimation of power across diverse societies. However, there were differences in the ways various societies accepted and in turn influenced the Islamicate world system. In other words, Islamicate world system and local social systems



accommodated and mutually transformed each other. This can be seen as a process of transculturation, rather than unidirectional acculturation of local societies by the Islamic world system. It was this process of 'Islamicate transculturation' that enabled forging of linkages among diverse areas and social groups.

The paper by Professor Sunil Kumar depicts the changing relationships between Delhi Sultans and Sufis in 13th and 14th century North India through the analysis of the textual compilations of Sufi teachings called *mal'uzat*. It is a fascinating and informative research on the conflict, competition and accommodation between Sultans and Sufis. Professor Kumar adeptly shows how Sultans who first attempted to gain legitimacy through *shari'ati* rule increasingly had to seek support from Sufis; and how Sufis, in this case mainly Chishti Tariqa, gradually succeeded in establishing its powerful influence not only in vernacular Muslim society but also in the Islamic state. It would be interesting to further enquire how Sufis succeeded in gaining such influence on the state. If it is related to the increasing importance of Sufis in the vernacular society, how did Sufis attain popularity thereof? What were the attractions of Sufis and *tariqas* for the people in local society?

The paper by Professor Masashi Hirose deals with the very interesting relationship between Muslim coastal rulers and people of the hinterland. He looks at how coastal rulers, in need of guaranteeing the collection and cultivation of products at hinterland, associated their power with agricultural productivity. Here Sufism played a part in legitimating the divine power and thus supporting the rulers' influence over hinterland communities. Professor Hirose clearly goes beyond the previous externalist or autonomist historiography of Southeast Asia and locates the changes from an overall point of view, with the coastal rulers and Muslim saints acting as the pivot connecting the external and the autochthonous. Despite the important roles of the Sufis, however, Professor Hirose points out that whether inland people became Muslim or not was of secondary importance to the rulers in Sumatra. It would be interesting to investigate what kind of social and religious transformations occurred among the inland people with the development of transregional trade in which they were involved.

The paper by Professor Kanji Nishio discusses state formation in pre-17th century Malay Islamic states, using a Malay court history on Melaka sultanate. His interests lie in explicating pre-Islamic elements (either indigenous or Hindu elements) and their relations with Islamic factors. This is a very interesting and important question indeed. His conclusion is that the main axis of state formation of Melaka before the 17th century lay in the Malay political contract between rulers and their people. However, Professor Nishio also points out that the contract and the conception regarding supernatural powers were based on the Islamic framework, and pre-Islamic (native, Indian) elements remained merely as a sub-system. Here, it would be necessary to further clarify whether the main structure of ruler-people relationships rested on the indigenous framework with Islam working just as a plain facade or on the Islamic framework where previous elements were contained in a subsidiary manner. Professor Nishio also points out that the Islamic norm became a more substantial guiding principle defining how a just ruler should be in the Malay Islamic states after the 17th century. The interesting question here is how this transformation occurred and how that change was related to the history of Islami(c)zaiton from the 13th to 16th centuries. We may expect some change in moral economy involving the ruler, merchants and the people during the 13th to 16th centuries as the hinterland became connected with the wider world via port cities. In this connection it would be interesting to think about to what extent the start of the 15th century—the post-Tamerlane watershed for the whole Eurasia and the beginning of the age of commerce for Southeast Asia—may be considered an important historical mark for port city states in Southeast Asia. What was the role of Islam and Islamicate civilization thereof?

The paper by Professor Wagoner discusses the interaction between the Persianate and Sanskritic political cultures in the Deccan between 1350 and 1650. The example of the gold coin Professor Wagoner has looked at is

especially interesting as the coins were minted by the state and represented the state's authority, but they also must have catered to the people's needs and preferences. Professor Wagoner points out that *shroffs* (bankers and money changers) melted down the Bahmani coins and remade them into Vijayanagara coins in response to the needs and preferences of their customers. Rather than understanding the process in terms of 'Sanskritizing the Persian cosmopolis', it is perhaps necessary to conceptualize the complex process of vernacularization and re-universalization of the culture of rulership so that the process of interaction between Sanskrit and Persianate cosmopolis can be grasped in a more comprehensive manner. This is a suggestion as I think Professor Wagoner's wide perspective allows us to look at the complicated inter-cosmopolis process taking into account not only the role of the state but also the diverse agents and social groups in the society and the market.

I would like to attempt to provide two general observations about the historical changes in 13th to 16th century South Asia and Southeast Asia.

First, the 13th and 14th centuries saw the increasing connection of various regions. The deeds of Zhingis Khan and Tamerlane of course had wide ranging impacts. The 13th and 14th centuries can be seen as a formative period of Islamicate world system in Southeast Asia and the further establishment of Islamicate or Persianate cosmopolis in South Asia. The 15th–16th centuries may be seen as the period of the deepening of Islamicate world system and its vernacularization in both areas. It was through the penetration of the Islamicate technologies and institutions of governance and market into the local society in 15th and 16th centuries that made possible the fuller utilization of human and natural resources and the transregional trade of the products.

Secondly, I would like to discuss the different forms of Islamicate system that developed in South Asia and Southeast Asia. In the case of South Asia, the caste system in the sense of division of labor and allotment of shares based on hereditary entitlements played an important role. This kind of system was suitable for managing diverse populations living together in tightly knit complementary relationships in agrarian society. In the case of India, Islamicization had to adapt to the existence of vast and strong vernacular agrarian society through Islam as the provider of power for agrarian fertility, and also as a set of technologies that provided the means to administer localities and commercially connect them. In the case of Southeast Asia, we note that the port cities and the coastal rulers acted as a hub that connected the external forces and indigenous vernacular societies. It seems Islamicization was vital in establishing trade networks, but the politico-ritual mechanism of ruler-people relationship or inland social structure only changed very gradually with Islamicization. We might see the process of Islamicization not simply as conversion but as a gradual process of adopting a civilization and making it compatible with the vernacular society.

Session 2

Early Polity and Society as Revealed from Archaeological and Literary Evidence

Construction of Linyi Citadels: The Rise of Early Polity in Vietnam

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In studying the early history of Southeast Asia, the advancement of archaeological research over the last few