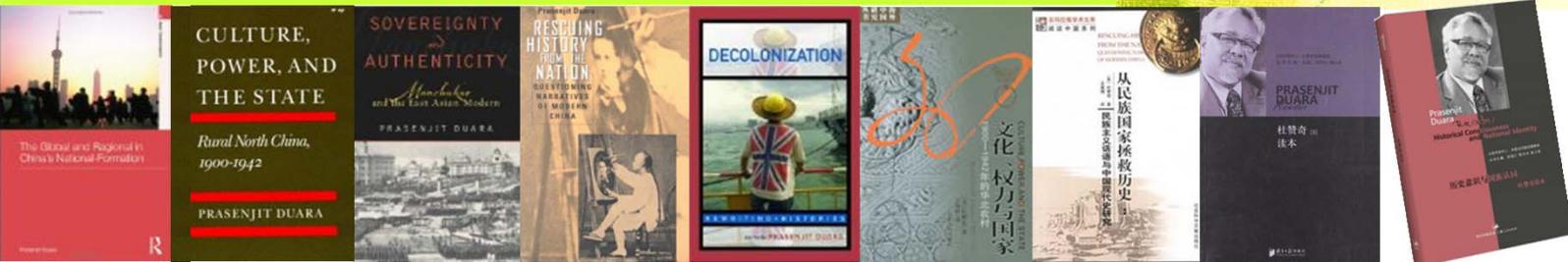




Jointly organized by China Studies Programme, the Advanced Institute for Contemporary China Studies, the Department of History and the Modern History Research Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University

Is the concept of Secularism relevant to China?

Prasenjit Duara, NUS

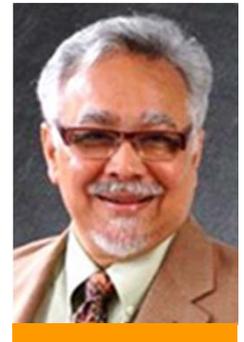


About the Speaker: Prasenjit Duara is now Raffles Professor of Humanities, Director of Asia Research, and Director of Humanities and Social Sciences Research at the National University of Singapore. He is also Professor Emeritus of History and East Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

He is the author of many ground-breaking studies. His single-authored books include: *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford University Press, 1988), *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), and *The Global and Regional in China's Nation-formation* (Routledge, 2009). There are also two anthologies of his works, namely, 《歷史意識與國族認同：杜贊奇讀本》(上海人民出版社，2013年) 和 《從西天到中土印度新思潮讀本：杜贊奇讀本》(南方日報，2010年)。

Besides, he is an editor of the following books: *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then* (Routledge, 2004), and *Companion to Global Historical Thought*(Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

His latest book is *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).



Date:

May 2, 2014
(Friday)

Time:

10:30am–12:00pm

Language:

English

The lecture draws up the principal ideas from a chapter in my forthcoming book concerning the historical field of Chinese religions in comparative context in order to identify its distinctive problems and possible pathways. In order to distinguish religions in the Sinosphere from other state-religion relationships in the *longue durée*, we need to identify how the state and religions have managed the question of transcendence. I explore the relationship between state and religions in late imperial China, focusing especially on the Qing period (1644-1911). What were the methods whereby segments and groups in popular religion accommodated diversity? What were the techniques of self-formation linking the self/body to the local and to universal ideals in late imperial China?

I argue that the Chinese case has largely escaped the conflicts among confessional communities through much of its history. It also largely escaped the late 19th and early 20th century penetration of faith-based models of nationalism that appeared in Japan and India. But if the Chinese case escaped both these developments, it suppressed and continues to deal with another type of problem: a vertical division-- between state and elites versus popular religiosities-- rather than a lateral competition in the realm of transcendence and faith in the modern transition. In significant part because our notions of religion in Asia derive from the radical categories of the Abrahamic faiths, we see why the idea of secularization seems to do so little for our understanding of modern China even though the question of religion is an explosive one.

Venue: AAB 1312, Academic & Administration Building, BU Road Campus, HKBU

Enquiries: 3411-7107; chinast@hkbu.edu.hk

◆ ◆ ◆ **All are welcome** ◆ ◆ ◆