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Transformations of Religion and the Public Sphere

Postsecular Publics

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Religious Aspirations, Public Religion, and the Secularity of Pluralism

Patrick Eisenlohr

The salience of religious activism and mobilizations throughout the contemporary world is perhaps the main reason for the popularity of the notion of the postsecular. The latter is inspired by hopes for greater inclusiveness towards religious groups and their aspirations, realizing that they are not necessarily incompatible with emancipatory political agendas, as well as the insight that religion remains a key component of social and political life that no amount of modernizing 'progress' and expansion of scientific knowledge can make disappear. At the same time, the term also owes much of its currency to the assumption that religion had actually been pushed back by modernization processes but has now 'returned.' However, an array of scholarship has demonstrated that religion actually never went away but was powerfully transformed by European imperial expansion and the rise of the nation state (Asad, 2003; Masuzawa, 2005; van der Veer, 2001). To make matters more complex, it is now increasingly clear that the modern comparative category of 'religion' that provides the basis for any discussion of secularization is actually the product of the same modernization processes that until relatively recently were widely believed to be responsible for an assumed decline of religion. Modern practices of governmentality delineated religion as a sphere of life separate from politics, law, economy, science, and society, and, as such, the universal category of religion is co-constituted through what is frequently regarded as its binary opposite, the secular. The concept of the postsecular, thus, evokes a rather contradictory scenario. On one hand, it is indebted to the classical secularization thesis according to which privatization of religion, the separation of religion from other aspects of social and political life, and

the decline of the social significance of religion necessarily go hand in hand (see Casanova, 1994). Since, from a global perspective, no decline of the social significance of religion or increased privatization of religion appears to have taken place – indeed many argue the opposite – this invites the assumption that our contemporary world has somehow moved beyond the secular in a comprehensive sense. On the other hand, our comparative concept of religion which seems so fundamental to the current discussion about a religious ‘revival’ and a decline of the secular is actually unthinkable without the conceptual and governmental operations separating the religious from the nonreligious that constitute such a key part of the secularization thesis. One also has to add that European imperial expansion as a further key dimension of modernity and the resulting colonial encounter with religious others also helped bring about the universal and comparative category of religion that is often taken for granted in discussions about the putative retreat of the secular (van der Veer, 2001).

Perhaps the two most prominent theorists of the secular, Charles Taylor and Talal Asad, have both argued in different ways that certain aspects of the secular remain fundamental to our social and cultural life and are fully compatible with the instances of heightened religious activism and the visibility of religious practices and identifications so widely observed today. Locating the origin of the secular in the dynamics of Christian thought and politics, Taylor argues that people in Western societies and also large numbers elsewhere now live in an irretrievably ‘secular age’. This is because, for them, even though not having declined in significance, religion has become an option only, requiring justification (Taylor, 2007: 3). Taylor argues that from such a perspective an immanent world has become the ‘natural’ baseline of our existence, which does not necessarily deny the existence of the transcendent or preclude engagement with it, but constitutes such a self-sufficient ‘immanent frame’ that it does not require the transcendent any more to appear as self-evident and real (Taylor, 2007: 549, 2010: 306–307). Taylor, thus, maintains that secularization in a very specific sense has become irreversible for a large and growing part of humanity. At the same time, the contemporary world is subject to dramatically visible ‘religious mobilizations’ (Taylor, 2006), which rely on the same modern techniques of moving and mobilizing people that are also used in nation-building, as well as on the same media-based interventions in the public sphere that democratic politics, advertising, and entertainment also make use of. According to Taylor, people need to be mobilized precisely because religion is not taken for granted any more and because

they live in a world that from a phenomenological point of view does not require religion to be experienced as real and meaningful. Therefore, this ‘disenchanted’ condition and highly salient religious activism as well as a growing social significance of religion in much of the world seem perfectly compatible.

Taking a very different perspective on the genealogy of the secular, Talal Asad nevertheless reaches similar conclusions about the co-presence of the deeply secular and highly salient religious activism and mobilization today. As with Taylor, Asad suggests that our contemporary world is profoundly secular in a very specific way. Instead of emphasizing the role of a cosmological ‘disenchantment’ of the world that makes the transcendent an option only, for Asad the role of the modern nation-state is crucial in the secularization of certain aspects of our lives. Not only does the nation-state stand for the doctrine of popular sovereignty and is thus in contrast to the divinely legitimized rule of dynastic states firmly rooted in the history of humans – for ‘the men and women of each national society make and *own* their history’ (Asad, 1999: 186) – but it also seeks to regulate and remake individual life in the fulfilment of its own practical goals of governance and not those related to any sort of divine or transcendent agency. The modern nation-state, thus, aims to shape all social identities and spheres of action. ‘It is not only that the state intervenes directly in the social body for purposes of reform; it is that all social activity requires the consent of the law, and therefore of the nation-state’ (Asad, 1999: 191). This fundamental condition of modernity can certainly coexist with what Taylor has called ‘religious mobilizations’, in which the social significance and visibility of religion increases and religious activists forcefully participate in public spheres. It is only that religious activists such as Islamists have to contend with the regulatory powers of the modern nation-state that constitutes the secular ground for the management of the social: ‘No movement that aspires to more than mere belief or inconsequential talk in public can remain indifferent to state power in a secular world’ (Asad, 1999: 191).

However, what does such ‘not remaining indifferent’ to state power entail for religious activists and movements? How do the regulatory powers of the modern state grounded in a secular vision of social life intersect with what Taylor has called ‘religious mobilizations’? In this chapter, I address these questions in order to contribute to a better understanding of how dimensions of ‘deep secularity’ that have become a taken-for-granted baseline for the political regulation of social and cultural life throughout the world relate to what is widely understood to be a greater visibility and importance of religion in the world today.

I examine two cases of religious mobilization among Muslims in contemporary Mauritius and in the global megacity Mumbai. Certainly, my examples could be added to many others confirming the salience of religious identifications and practices in the contemporary world. But my point is not to reiterate that such examples demonstrate the failure of the secularization thesis. Rather, I want to draw attention to the complex interplay between such religious mobilizations and the secular dimensions of modern nation-states.

Religion and globalization

One explanation for the greater salience of religious mobilizations in the contemporary world that is increasingly being put forward is the link between processes of globalization and religion. There is, for example, an established point of view that interprets religious activism, such as the growth of so-called fundamentalism, as a stress symptom among people suffering from the disruptions and insecurities brought about by globalization. Unable to make sense of the new complexities and dislocations that globalization brings along, they resort to purified and maximized forms of religion in a reactive way (Roy, 2004). Also, the workings of global markets often appear opaque to people in their local contexts and therefore, one argument goes, their effects are interpreted through a religious lens, resulting in 'occult economies' involving, for example, the agency of witches and sorcerers (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999). More recent work in anthropology, however, has sought to avoid analysing the links between religion and globalization by reducing religion to the manifestation of something else (see Rudnycky, 2009). On the contrary, returning to a more Weberian approach to religion and political economy, scholars are now investigating the role religious cosmologies play in shaping the global political economy and examine the religious undertones in discourses about globalization.

For example, Joel Robbins (2009) and Thomas Csordas (2009) have recently argued that there are deep resonances between the centre-periphery structures of the globalized world and the cosmologies of major religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam that rest on a sharp distinction between this world and a realm of the transcendent. Many, perhaps most, people in the contemporary world view themselves as inhabiting peripheries of the globalized world, wanting to reach the desired centres. Religious cosmologies that reject this world in favour of travelling to a realm of a radically different and superior sphere of the transcendent structurally echo this contrast between real places that are

lacking and the desired centres of the global political economy. Religious traditions built on such a contrast, such as Evangelical Christianity and reformist forms of Islam, provide people on the peripheries with workable plans to reach a desired realm so different from their present circumstances, and this is also the reason why they thrive and spread in the contemporary world. Among Sunni Barelvi Muslims in Mauritius and Twelver Shiite Muslims in Mumbai, where I have conducted ethnographic field research since 1996 and 2005, respectively, I have found evidence for such a link between religious activism and the dynamics of globalization. It is tempting to apply such an analysis to these two places, as Mumbai is one of the world's global megacities, and Mauritius an Indian Ocean island without a precolonial population that was settled in the course of European imperial expansion and has never known anything but globalization. Many Shiite Muslims in Mumbai as well as Sunni Barelvi Muslims in Mauritius consider involvement in religious activism and orthodoxy as a hallmark of a modern, cosmopolitan lifestyle, connecting them not only to the transcendent but also to centres of global importance in this world. In Mauritius, Muslims constitute 17 per cent of the population of approximately 1.2 million, the percentage of Hindus is now 52 per cent, while people of Indian origin taken as a whole constitute almost 70 per cent of the population. Among Mauritian Muslims, I have documented a steady trend towards standardized orthodoxy in the course of the last 100 years mainly driven by transnational Gujarati trader communities (Eisenlohr, 2012). This trend has greatly increased following the heightened integration of Mauritius into neoliberal processes of globalization since the 1980s having brought about what many consider an 'economic miracle'. Muslims constitute roughly 20 per cent of Mumbai's population, while Twelver Shiite Muslims comprise by far the largest number among the Shiite minority within the Muslim population.¹ Ithna Ashari Khojas, a Gujarati trader community, and the 'Mughals', a business community of Iranian origin, dominate the elites among Twelver Shiites and also most religious organizations. However, the great majority of Twelver Shiites in Mumbai is of North Indian migrant origin, and poverty among them is very widespread. In Mumbai, the growth of religious activism among Shiite Muslims has gone hand in hand with large flows of migration from the rural and small-town peripheries of Northern India to the global megacity. Here, migration that has been directly motivated by the role of Mumbai as a global centre has also led to increased engagement with the transnational networks of Twelver Shiite orthodoxy, especially the networks of widely respected senior scholars known as *marja-e taqlid* (sources of

emulation) such as Ayatollah Sistani in Najaf. At the same time, such growth of religious orthodoxy also increasingly shapes the relationships Shiite Muslims entertain to their places of origin or ancestry in Northern India. Monetary remittances do of course play a key role in this relationship, as family members and other extended kin often depend on such remittances from migrants in the megacity. However, some of these resources are now also spent on religious activities and the building and support of Shiite institutions and places of religious remembrance such as miniature replicas of the tombs of Hussain and other members of the *ahl al-bayt* (the family of the Prophet) who lost their lives in the battle of Karbala in 680 AD. Moreover, migrants and their Mumbai-born descendants frequently time their periodic return visits from the city to coincide with religiously significant events in the ritual calendar, such as the months of Muharram and Ramadan. Also, religious mobilization among Muslims in both Mauritius and Mumbai to a considerable extent unfolds through the media technological and transport infrastructures of globalization. In both places, religious traditions are now firmly integrated with contemporary media practices. Sermons and devotional poetry recitals circulate transnationally and provide more opportunities for honing one's piety also outside the established ritual and performative contexts associated with these religious genres. Moreover, media strategies adopted from modern marketing and advertising now feature prominently in promoting particular traditions of Islam, such as the South Asian Sunni Barelvi tradition in Mauritius or Twelver Shiism in Mumbai.

State regulation of religious diversity

All these developments illustrate the broad links between processes of globalization and religious activism in the contemporary world. But it is also important to realize that such activism has to reckon with the regulatory powers of the modern nation-state. Such engagement with state power remains also central to other kinds of social activism. However, the boundary between religious and nonreligious movements of protest and affirmation is especially fleeting today, as the example of contemporary feminism attests (Braidotti, 2008). Both in Mauritius and India, the managing of religious diversity is subject to state controls and visions of pluralism, and religious mobilizations are also, in part, a response to such national regimes of diversity. One important dimension of the secularity of these modern nation-states is that their institutions regard certain relationships between religious institutions and traditions and the state

as desirable, because they consider these relationships as essential for the maintenance of public order and the formation of loyal and productive citizens. Among both Barelvi Muslims in Mauritius and Twelver Shiite Muslims in Mumbai there is a pronounced tendency to combine religious activism with pledges to good citizenship and, above all, to stress the role Islamic piety can play in promoting peaceful coexistence among citizens. There is a great concern to display the conformity of religious mobilization with the ideal arrangements of religious pluralism promulgated by the respective nation-states. In Mauritius, where there was no precolonial population, the postcolonial state has embarked on a policy to promote so-called 'ancestral cultures' of the various 'communities' of Indian and Chinese origin, that in turn largely consist of religious traditions. The dominant ideology of Mauritian pluralism suggests that full citizenship involves the cultivation of such 'ancestral cultures' with religious biases and turns Mauritians into morally grounded and productive citizens capable to peacefully coexist with others. For Mauritian Muslims, Islamic traditions represent their 'ancestral culture' which the state supports by subsidizing religious bodies and institutions and by teaching so-called 'ancestral languages' such as Urdu and Arabic in state schools – languages that Muslims almost exclusively use in religious contexts and settings. By cultivating Islam as their 'ancestral culture', Mauritian Muslims not only reinforce transnational links and solidarities and establish connections to centres of religious authority located elsewhere but also demonstrate their adherence to the Mauritian state vision of governing the marked diversity of the Mauritian population. Ministers and other senior state representatives attend major events in the Islamic ritual calendar such as *yaum-un nabi* (the birthday of the Prophet), where Muslims combine public displays of piety with a claim to be model citizens whose grounding in a major, recognized, religious tradition enables them to peacefully and respectfully coexist with non-Muslim citizens as a matter of ethical conduct.

This is also the case in Mumbai, where public expressions of Islamic practice and belonging are constrained by the status of Muslims as a beleaguered minority in India that is constantly asked to prove their good citizenship and routinely suspected of involvement in subversive activities such as terrorism and collaboration with archenemy Pakistan. At the same time, postcolonial India has followed politics of pluralism and secularism that recognize the great importance of religion in the lives of Indian citizens, including its collective dimensions. Discourses that connect moral values grounded in religious tradition, good citizenship, and peaceful coexistence are very widespread in India. Responding

to this special and problematic position within the regime of religious pluralism promoted by the Indian state, a Shi'ite Muslim media centre in Mumbai affiliated with Ayatollah Sistani in Najaf, annually launches a 'Muharram Awareness Campaign' in the Islamic month of Muharram. This month is a time of ritual mourning for Shi'ite Muslims who commemorate the death of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain and other members of the family of the Prophet in the Battle of Karbala. Through its website, as well as advertising banners on buses and trains and in other public places, the 'World Islamic Network' headquartered in the centrally located Mumbai Muslim neighbourhood of Dongri, seeks to connect Islamic piety with the claim that Muslims are exemplary Indian citizens. For example, many Shi'ite Muslims consider Gandhi's anti-colonial struggle as being inspired by Hussain's struggle against tyranny at Karbala. The billboards set up by the network feature reported sayings by Gandhi according to which, 'If India ever desires to become a great nation it should follow the example of Imam Hussain.' Also, the Muharram 2010/2011 campaign made reference to the 26 November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai by portraying Shi'ite Muslims as model citizens who, through the tragedy of Karbala, represent the world's original victims of terrorism. For example, on World Islamic Network advertising banner images of the iconic Taj Mahal hotel, as it burned during the attacks, were juxtaposed with images of the golden minarets of the splendid tomb of Imam Hussain at Karbala, together with the statement: 'The Grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) Imam Hussain (a.s.) sacrificed his life to unite all who oppose terrorism and injustice.' Such a combination of promoting Muslim piety during the month of Ramadan with raising awareness of Indian Muslims' good citizenship and moral grounding among non-Muslims was not only evident from the placement of the billboards and digital banners outside Muslim enclaves but also through the choice of English and Hindi – the latter especially indicates the addressing of a national but clearly non-Muslim public.

Both examples demonstrate that modern religious mobilizations are intensely driven by the forces of globalization while making ample use of its media infrastructures. In this, they not only respond to but are also crucially shaped by the regulations and ideologies of governing religion in the respective nation-states. Both Muslims in Mauritius and in Mumbai cannot ignore state visions of religious diversity and the relationships between state institutions and religious groups they stipulate. Indeed, especially in the media-driven parts of religious mobilization, both Barelvi Muslims in Mauritius and Twelver Shi'ite Muslims in Mumbai seek to align themselves with such official ideals of diversity.

In different ways, they combine calls for Islamic piety and orthopraxy with claims to be good citizens that contribute to national cohesion and are engaged in tolerant and fruitful coexistence with citizens of other religious affiliation. This in turn indicates that the religious activism, among Barelvi Muslims in Mauritius and Shi'ite Muslims in Mumbai I have described, intersects in complex ways with techniques of modern governance that constitute a key dimension of secularity in the contemporary world.

Standardized religion

Religious mobilizations among Muslims in Mauritius and Mumbai clearly respond to state regimes of regulating religious diversity among its citizens. But this is not the only way in which highly visible piety and religious activism interacts with what authors such as Talal Asad have described as the core secular dimensions of our contemporary world. Let us return to the issue of the modern, universal concept of religion that is the combined result of modern practices of governance separating a sphere of the religious from other fields of social and political life and the intensified encounter with religious others in the course of European imperial expansion. Perhaps no other issue illustrates the deep entanglement of religious mobilization and dimensions of the secular as forcefully than the important role that standardized, universal notions of religion play in what appears to some as a contemporary 'return of religion.' In my Mauritian example, the centrality of standardized religion is already obvious in the official policy of promoting 'ancestral cultures' largely based on officially recognized religious traditions. Mauritians are thus expected not to adhere to popular religious traditions and heterodoxy but to officially recognize 'world religions', and this adherence, in turn, reinforces their membership in the nation. For Mauritian Muslims, major Islamic traditions represent their 'ancestral culture', and the South Asian Barelvi school is currently still the most significant of these transnational, standardized forms of religion. The Mauritian policy of privileging 'ancestral cultures' based on such religious orthodoxies is the endpoint of a long history of religious debate and purification among Mauritians. For Muslims, who – like Mauritian Muslims in their great majority – came to Mauritius as indentured labourers, this has resulted in the decline of forms of popular and 'hybrid' religiosity that were characteristic of Hindus and Muslims of rural nineteenth-century North India, and especially the shared world of the sugar plantations and emerging Indo-Mauritian villages in the countryside. There, forms of neighbourly

solidarity between indentured immigrants of Hindu and Muslim background were the norm, and the shared memory of migration and its circumstances was long kept alive through forms of ritual kinship across religious lines among those of whose ancestors had arrived on the same ship (*jahaji bhai*). Such shared Indo-Mauritian life-worlds, under indenture and in its immediate aftermath, also included forms of reciprocal participation in religious practices. It was common for Hindus to participate in the 'Ghoon' or 'Tazzia', processions in memory of the martyrdom of Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad at the Battle of Karbala (Edun, 1984). My older informants in Mauritius remembered that Muslims, in turn, joined in the chanting of the popular version of the Ramayana epos on ritual occasions and also left offerings such as flowers and candles at village trees for local guardian deities. Muslim and Hindu wedding rituals were more influenced by the shared rural background of indentured labourers in Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar than by separate religious orthodoxies. In the course of the twentieth century, and greatly accelerating in the decades before independence in 1968, this shared world of popular and alternative religiosity came gradually to an end and was increasingly replaced by religious purification and the accentuation of boundaries with religious others. Among Mauritian Muslims, Gujarati merchant elites, who had settled in Mauritius as free immigrants with their own capital and dense networks of business, kinship, and religion with India and other locations in the Indian Ocean world, played a key role in spreading more standardized and orthodox forms of Islam among Mauritian Muslims. The Kutchi Memons, for a long time the wealthiest and most influential among these merchant elites, introduced the Barelvi tradition to Mauritius, to which they cultivate a longstanding relationship. The Memons' chief competitors, the Sunni Surtees, also engaged in mosque building and invited missionaries of the rival Deobandi tradition to Mauritius. Barelvis, for a long time the large majority, probably still constitute little more than half among the Mauritian Muslims. Their influence is steadily pushed back by the Deobandis, above all the transnational missionary movement Tablighi Jamaat, while there is also a growing number of Salafis. The competition between rival Islamic traditions in Mauritius introduced through the cosmopolitan networks of Gujarati merchant communities led to a growing trend towards standardized, orthodox versions of Islam which were in turn recognized as Mauritian Muslims' 'ancestral culture' after independence in 1968 (Eisenlohr, 2006a).

The deployment of standardized religious orthodoxies in seeking to achieve peaceful coexistence among citizens is another salient example

of how highly visible religious mobilization and secular forms of governance intermingle. Both in Mauritius and in India there are strong traditions assigning religious orthodoxies key roles in the formation of peaceful, tolerant, and productive citizens. According to these visions, citizens are in need of moral grounding to be able to acquire these qualities, and the moral values citizens should adhere to are, in turn, inseparable from religious traditions. Even though religious values and practices play key roles in this vision of productive and tolerant citizenship, they are also part of a secular regime of modern governance. This is because the state promotes such religiously undergirded notions of citizenship not in the name of a realm of the divine. The state does so in order to create more compliant and productive citizens who will, in turn, support and strengthen its own power. Crucially, both in Mauritius and India the modern nation-state legitimizes its role in claiming to be the concrete realization of the right of self-determination of the nation, which in turn does not belong to the world of the divine.

In Mauritius, the state draws on a discourse of the possible destabilization of social bonds brought about by economic development in the context of globalization. Mobilizing a familiar narrative of globalization as potentially disruptive and destabilizing on the local level, the state legitimizes its broad support for 'ancestral cultures' based on religious traditions in terms of the latter's presumed integrative effects. Here, Mauritian state representatives partake in a particular Gandhian tradition of regulating religious diversity in India according to which religious commitments are essential building blocks for shaping disciplined and peaceful citizens (Parsuraman, 1988; see also Eisenlohr, 2006b: 398–399). Far from banishing religion to a sphere of the private, the task of the state is actually to encourage and mobilize benign religious values across the boundaries of religious traditions to make successful nation building possible (compare Nandy, 1990; Madan, 1998). This take on Indian secularism, so eagerly adopted by the Mauritian government, contrasts with the vision of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was convinced of the necessity for the state to control dangerous religious passions. However, Nehru's understanding of secularism, certainly the most influential among the range of Indian secularisms since independence, did not insist on a strict separation of state from religious institutions. Recognizing religious rights also in their collective dimension, Nehru allowed for the state to intervene in the affairs of religious communities to reform or ban 'backward' practices, amounting to an arrangement of the relations between the state and religious communities described

as 'principled distance' (Bhargava, 2007). Both dominant strains of Indian secularism, Nehruvian and Gandhian, are projects to regulate religious diversity through the state. This is also the case in the Gandhian vision. Even though the latter contains romantic appeals to presumably unsullied and benign popular religiosity rooted in an old Indian tradition of religious conviviality and tolerance, the mobilization of religion for the making of good citizens ultimately turns out to be also a modern technique of governance, a point especially salient in the Mauritian policy of regulating diversity through the promotion of 'ancestral cultures'. But also in Mumbai, Shiite Muslims' portrayal of themselves as the world's original victims of injustice and terrorism, supporting their public claims to be good and peaceful Indian citizens, is taking place against the background of increasing standardization of religion. Since the late 1970s, for Shiite Muslims in Mumbai this has, above all, been evident in the much greater importance of practices and doctrines that are explicitly authorized by leading religious scholars in the world of Twelver Shiism that are recognized as *marja-e taqlid*. For Mumbai, this has meant a greater influence of Ayatollah Sistani in Najaf, Iraq, who is also the most influential *marja* in India as a whole. The spread of contemporary religious media, such as formerly cassettes and now audio and DVDs – as well as cable TV networks that circulate various kinds of religious performances, such as speeches and sermons of leading clerics, poetry recitals, and recordings of Shiite mourning practices for the victims of Karbala – has played a key role in this process of increasing orthodoxization. Here, the connection between state regimes of governing religious diversity and the spread of standardized transnational religious orthodoxies is less explicit than in the Mauritian policy of 'ancestral cultures'. Unlike in Mauritius, state institutions do not directly encourage the increasing standardization of Islamic practice. Nevertheless, representatives of transnational religious orthodoxy are also at the forefront in positioning Shiite Muslims as good citizens, as in the 'Muharram Awareness Campaign'. One important reason for this is the change from quietist stances connected to religious practices to more activist engagement in Shiite religious mobilization, a development that many of my informants attributed to the impact of the Iranian revolution. While the concept of *vilayat-e faqih* (rule of the jurisprudent), institutionalized by Ayatollah Khomeini as the foundational principle of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was never popular in India and was also never approved by Ayatollah Sistani, the idea that remembrance of the injustice of Karbala should not be confined to elaborate rituals of

mourning but should also propel practical public engagement against suffering and oppression has gained greater ground since the Iranian Revolution throughout the transnational Shiite world. Among Shiite Muslims in Mumbai this has, above all, resulted in increased charity work and support of education among Shiite Muslims, as well as public efforts in claiming good citizenship and loyalty to the Indian nation on the basis of Islamic values. The foundations and activists tied to transnational networks of *marjaiyya* have, in turn, dominated all these forms of activism, at the same time greatly increasing their influence among Shiite Muslims in Mumbai.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with the contradictions that underlie the notion of the postsecular. I have suggested that those who consider highly visible religious activism as evidence for a movement beyond a secular world tend to ignore the crucial role that modern techniques of governance play in the making of religion and religious mobilization in the world today. My examples of religious vitality among Muslims in Mumbai and Mauritius show that processes of globalization are important driving forces for religious mobilization. They, however, intersect with varying state regimes of regulating religion and religious plurality, to which religious mobilizations respond. This dynamic results in greater public visibility of religion and, at the same time, also gives secular forms of modern governance ample opportunities to shape religious mobilization. One of the original ironies of the notion of the postsecular is that modern, standardized notions of religion that underlie discussions of a possible transition to a postsecular world are themselves the product of specific processes of secularization. My examples show that notions of standardized 'world religions' have become increasingly important for religious activism and state attempts to regulate religion. The spread of such understandings of religion as major, transnational and standardized orthodoxies can be understood as one of the dimensions of cultural globalization. It is also the point where processes of globalization and state regimes of regulating religion converge, both favouring major, standardized forms of religion. The multilayered relationships between processes of globalization, state regimes of regulating religion, and religious mobilization in the world today suggest a complex intermingling of the religious and the secular that affords no easy answers about processes of secularization and puts in doubt expectations of an unambiguously postsecular future.

Note

1. Ismaili Bohras and Ismaili Agha Khani Khojas are other, smaller Shiite communities in the city of Mumbai.

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