

LINKING RELIGIONS WITH TRADE NETWORKS AND THEIR MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURE IN ASIA¹

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Abstract

Number of researches outlines the relations between religions and trade but few focused on the two-way relationship shared between religions and trade networks and the role of marketing infrastructure in facilitating this relationship. This article aims to fill this gap by examining the role of trade networks in the dissemination of Buddhism and Hinduism in China and Southeast Asia and how these religions facilitated trade networks in expanding their businesses. Historical data reveals a strong link between the two and marketing made an important contribution in developing these links further. Contemporary data on the basis of supply-side theory shows new marketing strategies introduced in religious marketplace leading to commodification of religions with an emphasis religiosity in Thailand as a case study.

Keywords: Buddhism, China, Hinduism, India, Markets, Religious dissemination, Southeast Asia, Trade

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to study the role of trade networks in the dissemination of religions and vice versa by focusing on two religions, Buddhism and Hinduism both originating in India. In this paper, I argue that religious dissemination and trade networks share strong links and marketing infrastructure plays an important role in facilitating this link. To support my argument two examples of a historical linkage between religions and trade will be provided before focusing on more of the contemporary developments. One focuses on how the dissemination of Buddhism in China linked two very diverse regions together and the second focuses on Hinduism travelling to Southeast Asia, largely a function of South Asian migration. Historical data on early Buddhism and Hinduism has shown that traders were playing one of the key roles in the spread of the two religions in Southeast Asia. The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of data collected from both primary and secondary sources including a study of the past literature and also includes interviews and observations of new religious developments in contemporary Thailand. The paper will start with defining what trade networks are and the role they play in the spreading of religions. Furthermore the focus will be on Buddhism and Hinduism and how they fits in this relation with the help of historical data that illustrates the developments that led to connections between the origins of South Asian communities in certain centers and the location of those centers in the Southeast Asian trade network. The last part of this paper will focus on the further enhancement in this relationship between religions, trade, and marketing in more of a contemporary setting by using Thailand and its religious marketplace as prime examples.

To start with, it is important to define the term *trade network* to understand the relations' religions may share with a trade network. Humphries defines trade network as referring not just to a simple exchange of goods at market centers but also to the entire matrix of social relations associated with that trade. This includes the growth of new social relations to a city because of its commercial importance. Such relations may exist at two different levels; one at the official level where state personnel is dispersed to govern a collection of the customs duties. On the other level, relations could be apparent in the changed social dynamics of a trading center where the composition of its population comes from different social, racial, and cultural backgrounds (1998: 199-200). Such trade networks existed and developed overtime with both Hinduism and Buddhism with their birthplace in India. The following section focuses on these historical links between Buddhism and trade.

The engagement in the marketplace and the links between long-distance trade and patterns of religious diffusion may seem to be in conflict with the ideals of renunciation linked with the earlier phases of Indian Buddhist in the

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first century B.C.E. However a basic motivation to seek donations of material goods in exchange for religious merit and the gift of dharma knotted the Buddhist monastic community with donors offering social, political, and economic aid (Neelis 2003: 45-46). Buddha, as noted by Neelis, as a 'Caravan leader' guided his followers, who were mainly merchants, across the worldly sea of constant rebirth to the coast of nirvana in texts and inscriptions and the role of Avalokiteshvara (a Bodhisattva) as a savior of traveling merchants in distress had special importance for possible patrons involved in long-distance overland and maritime trade. With legendry and visual stories circulating around of wealthy donors who became lay followers, it encouraged the audiences to follow the exemplary figures like the two merchants, Trapsua and Bhallika, who received Buddha relics of hair and nail after making offerings to Buddha². Several stories related to past births of Buddha as a trader reflects the Buddhist efforts to encourage donors belonging to commercial class. Merchants and traders were portrayed as ideal patrons whose donations resulted in rewards. Inscriptions recording gifts by members belonging to merchant families and the distribution of Buddhist stupas and monasteries along the trade routes provide evidence of the important role traders played in establishing and supporting Buddhist monastic communities. With the support of traders, the sangha also facilitated commercial transactions and accumulated enough land and wealth. In addition, the Buddhist monks and nuns also made their own donations of personal property to gain merits from themselves and their family. Rules in the Vinaya intended to restrict financial transactions between monks and nuns with the lay people and this reflects that monasteries were involved in several economic activities including landholding, lending and borrowing, investments, commodities exchange and ownership of servants and slaves. Pali vinaya rules granted monks exceptions for travel with merchant caravans during the rainy season retreat but specified punishments for commercial travel and also limited the donations from caravans. This indicates the linkage between religious and commercial mobility³. As Neelis (2003) has shown, the commercial Buddhist Sangha depended and facilitated the commercial ties in the process of its expansion and unification.

II. ROLE OF BUDDHISM IN CONNECTING INDIA AND CHINA

The cross-cultural relations between ancient India and China have been very unique since the two regions were separated due to physical barriers. The two developed different cultural traditions, belief systems, political organizations, and also differing views related to their place in the world. Their culture greatly influenced the neighboring countries. The religious and political influences of India infused in Southeast Asia while China influences were evident Central Asia, Korea and Japan. However in the first millennium C.E. the Buddhist links were established between India and China. The transmission of Buddhist doctrines from India to China was a very difficult process because of the differences in language, metaphors, distinct social values and views shaped by Confucian ideas. By the seventh century, most of Asia was fully integrated in the network of religious and commercial interaction between India and China (Sen 2004: 1-2). The history of this process of transmission⁴ is however beyond the scope of this paper. The paper will briefly explore how Buddhism was able to establish trade networks between two very diverse regions.

The establishment of Buddhism in China and the religious exchanges between the two regions prospered, further stimulated trade relations. The period between third and the fifth centuries was an important period for the success of Buddhism in China. It marks the period when more monks from South and Central Asia arrived in China and translations of Buddhist teachings into Chinese took place. At the same time Chinese pilgrims started visiting India in search for Buddhist doctrines and relics. The Buddhist teachings related to sufferings and the ways of escaping sufferings had a deep impact on Chinese society. The mixing of Buddhist ideas with native Chinese views of devotion and permanence made life after death a complex issue in China. This also captured the imagination of the people in China regarding the pains of punishments and the joys of paradise after death. These are evident in the paintings of purgatory and paradise on the walls of Buddhist caves and the use of obituary tablets engraved with Buddhist mantras. These provide an evidence of the transformation of the Chinese view of afterlife with the adoption of Buddhist doctrines. Other attractions included the miraculous acts associated with Indian monks, images, and other sacred objects that entered China in increasing amounts in the third century (Sen 2004: 7-8).

The translated Buddhists texts and the diaries of Chinese monks making pilgrimages to India acted as a marketing tool, providing the Chinese with information about Indian culture, geography and languages. India was portrayed to Chinese as a mystic land through Buddhist sermons and roadside stories. India had become 'a holy country- a center of spiritual authority outside China' (Sen 2004: 8 cites Zurcher 1972).

² See Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, pp 26-27, Brill: 2011.

³ See Neelis *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks*, pp 34-37, Brill: 2011.

⁴ See Sen 2004 ch. 1, pp1-15.

By the fifth and sixth centuries, India occupied a unique place for China. As Sen describes: 'a foreign kingdom that was culturally and spiritually revered as equal to Chinese civilization' (ibid: 8).

Sino-Indian exchanges over a period of time had however gone through restructuring from being Buddhist centered to a market dominated exchange. The purpose of this section is to understand how the religious interactions paved way for market activities between the two countries. The Sino-Indian exchanges grew between the early 7th century and the fall of the Tang control of Central Asian regions in the middle of the 8th century. The commercial exchanges during this period took different forms and influenced the two regions and the intermediate kingdoms. During the 7th and the 8th centuries, tributary missions from Indian kingdoms to the Tang court were important element of the commercial exchanges. Indian representatives brought regular gifts of Buddhist texts and other things (like sapling of the Bodhi tree and other Buddhist artifacts among others) to the Chinese courts. The gifts symbolized the power and status of the Indian kingdom that was trying to establish relations with the Chinese. As Sen notes, even though the Tang court prohibited foreign envoys from engaging in commercial activities, many of the tribute carriers were able to develop ties with the merchant communities. Similar restrictions on trading goods were imposed on Chinese envoys traveling to other countries. However the Tang embassies to India were authorized to purchase specific goods for the court. There are accounts of that these embassies had bought a relic of Buddha in northern India with silk fabric, arranged the transfer of sugar making techniques, and also obtained other Buddhist artifacts. The sugar making technology from India was brought in at the request of the Chinese Buddhist community. Furthermore Chinese diplomats and Buddhist pilgrims visiting India during this period played an important role in supplying silk fabrics and garments to India. The Chinese missions to the chief Buddhist institutions donated large quantities of silk along with other Chinese objects. Chinese pilgrims as well presented silk to Buddhist monasteries and abbots when visiting sacred sites in India. Pilgrimage activities of Buddhist monks had a significant impact on the circulation of sacred commodities between India and China. In addition Buddha relics were either carried or copied by the pilgrims for Buddhists back home in China (Sen 2004: 203-205). Late seventh and mid-eight centuries marked a major boost in Sino-Indian trade in religious items with an increased use of Buddhist items at Mount Wutai where several Buddhist monuments and images were constructed. The halls and temples were decorated with seven jewels including gold, silver and pearls among some others. This created a demand for high-priced gold, silver and bronze ritual objects and images. Performing mysterious rites (for protecting nation and veneration of relics) required the use of ritual goods like incense burners and pots. These were earlier obtained from northern and eastern India before being locally produced in China. This trade was however not limited to religious goods but also included non-religious goods like Indian spices and incense. This included black pepper that became an important part of the Chinese cuisine by the late eighth century. India was the leading exporter of black pepper to China until the twelfth century when Southeast Asia emerged as its competitor. Sen has drawn three conclusions from the pattern of Sino-Indian trade in the seventh and eighth centuries. Firstly tribute carriers and merchants along with traders who established their trading guilds in India and China undertook trade. Secondly the long treks along the Silk Road were common itineraries for merchants travelling between India and China. The states of Central Asia, and the kingdoms in Southeast Asia and Myanmar also involved in trading goods between the two regions. Myanmar for example facilitated trade between India and China by providing a same passage in addition to injecting its own local products. The final conclusion drawn by Sen is that, there lied a reciprocal relationship between Buddhist and merchant communities since the first six centuries and this relationship prospered in the seventh and eight centuries as well. Merchants helped the Buddhist monks travelling through overland and maritime routes, met the growing demand for ritual items and also financed the monastic institutions and preaching activities (2004: 207-9).

III. HINDUISM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia owes its ultimate debt to Indian culture in addition to China for the cultural and political influences. The area covering from Japan to Burma to Indonesia has been connected for centuries through commerce, politics and demographics in addition to religious networks and artistic, linguistic and ritual contact (DuBois 2009: 2). One aspect of Indian culture is Hinduism that spread to Southeast Asia over many centuries along with South Asian practitioners. India has long had relations with the region, links dating back over 2000 years. Indian settlement in Southeast Asia is documented from as early as the 6th century B.C.E⁵. Cœdès notes a variety of factors that contributed to the development of Indian settlements in Southeast Asia. One was the invasion of the Kushans into India around the first century A.D. that put pressure on local population. Another related to the opportunities open for the high caste Indians to pursue their fortunes in places outside of India. A number of other scholars also suggest that Indian contact with Southeast Asia was largely commercial in origin.

⁵ Agarwal, R 2014. *Hinduism in Southeast Asia*. Forthcoming in Encyclopedia of Religions of Southeast Asia, ABC Clío

The interaction between Mediterranean and the East started with the campaign of Alexander, the establishment of the Asoka Empire, the Seleucid Empire and the Roman Empire. These led to an increase in the trade of luxury goods by the first century. Van Leur (1955: 55) points out that the Indian trade was based more on the handicraft industry and was carried out by small traders who carried the goods, exchanged them and established foreign enclaves on the Southeast Asian ports. Indian settlements in the region eventually resulted in the formation of Indic kingdoms on the Indochinese Peninsula and pre-modern Indonesia.

Migrants brought with them traditional arts, religious beliefs and customs as well as Sanskrit, which was used as a sacral language. They also left behind a significant cultural legacy. From the end of the 19th century, European scholars studying SEA's antiquities realized the extent of the influence of Sanskrit culture on Southeast Asian religion, art and architecture. As noted by Coedès, other influences include conceptions of royalty characterized by Hindu or Buddhist cults, local literary expression through Sanskrit, local use of mythological elements from *the Ramayana and Mahabharata*, *the Puranas* and other Sanskrit texts, and the local observance of laws such as the *Dharmasastras* (sacred law of Hinduism) and the *Manava Dharmasastra* (Laws of Manu). In many instances cultural transmission involved the retention of Brahmin priests as court functionaries, a practice that had earlier emerged in South Asia.

Buddhism, of course, constituted another contribution. Buddhist monks arrived in the region sometime during the 1st century. Buddha images from 2nd and 3rd Centuries have been discovered in Siam (Thailand), Champa (Cambodia), Sumatra, Java and Celebes (Indonesia). Over time, forms of Hinduism and Buddhism developed which incorporated aspects of local cultures in Southeast Asia. Elites continued to draw upon and make use of South Asian religious practices in their daily lives, however. Numerous inscriptions indicate the central role of Brahmins in the religious lives of Southeast Asian peoples. With the spread of Buddhism and Islam, Hinduism was eclipsed in several parts of Southeast Asia and it now seems to play a secondary role in the religious life of the region. In Thailand, however a Buddhist majority continues to draw upon and make use of earlier Hindu practices long patronized by local elites. Thai understandings of kingship are informed by the concept of Devraja (God-King) and monarchs of the current dynastic line make use of the prefix Rama, an incarnation of Visnu, in their reign names. Hindu priests officiate at royal rites, state ceremonies, and national festivals. Temples and shrines dedicated to Brahma, Siva and Visnu can also be found around the country. Indeed, virtually every market in the capital city of Bangkok has its own Hindu shrine to guarantee the prosperity and well being of local merchants. This provides the evidence that religions and trade continue to share a two-way relationship, one contributing to the other. Marketing infrastructure has been playing an important role in this relationship as it compliments the two.

IV. RELIGIONS IN CONTEMPORARY SETTINGS

This section further explores the relationship between religious dissemination, trade networks and marketing infrastructure by exploring more of the contemporary developments on the basis of the supply-side theory of religion. The supply side theory claims that transformations in religion result from changes in the production side of religions rather than the demand side (Einstein 2008: 18). In his study, Warner (1993) explains that the terminology was introduced by Terry Bilhartz in 1986 and was further expanded by Nathan Hatch who wrote about 'religious marketplace' among spiritual entrepreneurs'. In his study, Hatch emphasized that suppliers serving the needs of the consumers is more important than having a diversity of supply. This sets the stage for marketing the religions. Seeing religion as a product helps in understanding why religions flourish and why religions have been marketed historically as well as today.

Einstein sees most organized religions sharing common characteristics like texts, place of worship, a leader, and other tangible features. The benefits include fellowship, interaction, well-being, and salvation. Therefore each religion is not very different from the others. The differences rather lie in the packaging like music, type of texts, and additional services available. Depending on the options available, consumers make a choice of what best fits their religious desires. Market of religions is unregulated and so benefits to the suppliers are high and the barriers to entry are comparatively low. This leads to an intense competition for religious consumers. Einstein stresses that in the case of US, clergy are much more active in marketing and promoting their product and create better packaging to appeal to the potential religious customers (2008: 19-20). This sounds logical, as more people are aware of their religious options the more choices they have that match their desires and this in turn increases the religious practice. Thus different religions get to create a market for themselves, trade flourishes as different actors get involved in providing for differing religious needs and marketing accomplishes its role. The job has been made easier by the digital television and Internet invented in 1990s that made religious information easier to access and more global. The availability of information allowed people to pick and choose aspects of different faiths, combine them together, or switch from one faith to another that suit their needs.

This ability to choose has increased competition in religious marketplace compared to in the past. Pattana Kitiarsa calls it 'religious commodification', which is created through market mechanism, technological advancement, global flows of people, capitals, and information, religious symbols, and institutions. Religious commodification encourages production and consumption of marketized religious goods and at the same time reveals the general trends of transforming devotions and encouraging prosperity. (Kitiarsa 2010: pp 564)

Nancy Stalker (2009) in her study shows how new forms of mass media were adopted by a religious organization in the early-twentieth century Japan. She used a supply-side description of religious growth to argue that new visual forms of commercial entertainment like exhibitions and films, provided religion with new prospects to market themselves to both urban and rural audiences. She calls it 'charismatic entrepreneurship' and shows that this charismatic entrepreneurship helped Omoto to expand and merged with similar movements developing in Asia.

The unregulated market of religion is certainly evident in Thailand with a variety of religious choices increasingly made available to the audience of faith. This has been made possible by the forces of capitalist economy and modern life style changing Thai Buddhism into a commodity, which has further been marketized and consumed as a prosperity religion. Kitiarsa states that the marketized forms of religiosity have turned religion into an ordinary commodity in the marketplace of culture. (2010: 572). Thai Buddhism today is a combination of several interlinked beliefs, a mix of Animism, Hinduism, and Chinese religions. This was made possible with the historic dissemination of different religions (as discussed in earlier section) and provided the Thai audience a mix of different belief systems and rituals thereby a wide variety of choices that may best fit the religious needs. In the more recent times new developments explaining the supply side religious growth have become more evident with new shrines emerging, temples organizing annual fairs and special rituals, recent monks annual city walk (which is now done once every few months), and new gods promoted by Buddhist temples to attract faith seekers to their premises. As Jackson (1999) in his study quotes Jean Comaroff, who sees Thailand as a society where the dynamism of capitalist production is competed purely by the drive of various forms of ritual creativity within and outside Buddhism. The rise of various prosperity religions is one of the most obvious aspects of such cultural creativity. In Thailand, the boom time prosperity religions connected spiritually significant symbols to improving luck in making money. These prosperity religions included devotional movements of King Chulalongkorn, Kuan Im, and magic monks⁶. Images of these individuals became the objects of devotional cult concentrated geographically in different shrines, public statues, monasteries and other places of pilgrimage (Jackson 1999: pp 245-246). These cults became popular especially among the urban middle class people. Vorng (2010) studies the popularity of the prosperity cults among the urban middle class in Thailand. He argues that the middle class life in urban areas is intensified by anxieties related to either maintaining their status or negotiating an upward social mobility. For the urban middle class, religiosity is directed towards prosperity cults instead of traditional forms of merit making to accumulate good karma. This is because prosperity cults are consistent with wealth that forms a basis of power and success in contemporary Thai society (Vorng 2010: 15-16). Thai Buddhism is increasingly being commercialized and merit and charismatic power are cosmic and social indicators of ones status in the Thai culture. In prosperity cults, merit and charismatic power are rather the capital to urge people to achieve wealth and power through religious commodities (ibid: 17).

A. *Temple activities*

Religious places of worship serve several different purposes. They promote religious beliefs, create more business, and in doing so gain benefits for themselves as well like advertising themselves through promotion of the different activities. Tiramano (2010) in his study examines the temple activities and how these help in the economic, social, and cultural development of a community by focusing on the Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun in Bangkok). He shows that temple activities serve several purposes. On the economic side, temple activities creates jobs, enhances income with the promotion of trade in community by renting out inner space in the temple, promotes tourism in the temple area, and disseminates Buddhism. In terms of social development, temples carrying out activities contribute to the solidarity and group formation through promotion of educational welfare, morality building, and availability of temple area for merit making. Temple activities also contribute to the cultural development as they help to preserve culture and cultural heritage through traditional and ritual activities organized in the temple area (2010: 160). The more activities a temple organizes the more attractive it becomes for the faith seekers.

⁶ see Jackson 1999.

Evidence is found in most Thai temples where annual temple festival organized for over a week with carnivals to draw more people including stages set for Lukthung singers, activities for kids, and small shops selling food, cloths, and gift items among several other items. Aek⁷, a native of Nakorn Si Thammarat says that in his hometown, temple fairs will be organized around September and that is when usually people working in other provinces visit their hometown to be part of the ghost festival and unite with their families. Traditions say that ghosts visit earth during this time and families join rituals to please the ghosts of their ancestors so that they have a positive effect over everyday lives. People visit temples in the morning to perform rituals dedicated to pleasing ghosts and in the evening temple fairs set the stage for entertainment and shopping. Temple fairs organized at this time gives people an opportunity to reunite with friends and family member. The fair will be advertised in advance through hoardings and loud speakers promoting when, where and what can be found in these temple fairs. Well known country singers (luk thung) will be invited to perform at the fair and their names will be used as a marketing tool for the temple and its activities. The more a famous singer is invited the bigger is the crowd. Aek also sees the temple fair as an opportunity for people to enjoy a variety of goods at cheaper prices. His grandmother visits the temple fair every year because she can get a good variety of products ranging from locally produced to the ones from other provinces. These sometimes include brand named products direct from manufacturers who want to get rid of their surplus production over the year by selling at discounted prices. Moreover food from all around the country is made available giving people several choices. The temple festival thus serves both economic and religious purposes by providing people several economic choices between different foods, goods, entertainment, etc. in addition to fulfilling their religious desires within one place itself.

B. Monks' city walk

Yet Buddhist monks belonging to the Dhammakaya Buddhist cult can be seen as another example of marketizing religions in their more recent city walks. Over 1000 monks walked barefoot at a stretch of 300 over kilometers and were well received by the Buddhist devotees. The monks represented the forest monk but then were walking in the city. These city walks were limited to once a year. Another example is the Alms Offering, marking the 2600 years anniversary of Buddha's enlightenment, organized by the Abbot of the same sect in March 2012 where monks and novices from different parts of Thailand came to the center of the city in the heart of Bangkok. Three different stages were set in interconnected locations, including Siam Paragon, Central World, and Pratunam. It is important to notice that these three places are famous among tourists as they are the main shopping areas in Bangkok. Streets were close down before businesses opened and a total of 22,600 monks and novices received alms from thousands of devotees that joined the event. Media did a full coverage of the event and both locals and foreigners became aware of this event. It gave popularity of the sect for organizing such massive events and these and the likely have been organized more frequently. The urge is of course to show religious presence and the supremacy in the city. Doing so serves as a means of magnetizing more people to join particular religion, which also means bringing in more donations. Therefore staging religions as a commodity on the street shows easy availability of religions in the market place and religions no longer limited to temples anymore.

C. New Shrines, Old Gods

It is very common to find street side shrines dedicated to different deities in Bangkok. New shrines pop up with the increasing popularity of particular deities. Siva shrine at Pinklao, a private shrine, is an important example of a roadside shrine constructed in 1990s but became popular among general public in 2007. This happened with the increasing popularity of Ganesh in 2007 after a leading entertainment company in Bangkok installed a Ganesh image in their premises and a number of Thai actors became Ganesh's devotees. Ganesh is the son of Siva and since the shrine is primarily dedicated to Siva, this increasing popularity of Ganesh allowed the expansion of the shrine premises. A rare image of Ganesh along with other Hindu deities was enshrined to tap the increasing number of devotees. To promote the shrine as authentic, a Hindu priest is employed to conduct daily rituals as well as special rituals organized on special festive days. Roadside location, music, dance, presence of different deities among other features, makes the shrine very attractive to the passerby's.

A latest example is a Hindu shrine on the Boromratchachonani road that started the renovation of a house but quickly turned into a Hindu shrine by the owner, Thai-Chinese devotee of Hindu deities. Since the area lacks Hindu place worship, it was a sensible for the owner to turn his faith into a market commodity. The shrine is actively promoted as a temple, enshrines almost every popular Hindu deity, employs a priest, and conducts ceremonies on regular basis.

⁷ A native of Nakorn Si Thammarat, completing his undergraduate studies in Bangkok, interviewed on 26 February 2014 in Bangkok.

v. CONCLUSION

In conclusion religious dissemination and trade networks are interrelated to each other, each benefiting the other at the same time. Marketing infrastructure plays a very important role in facilitating this relation between religious dissemination and trade networks. Two ways historical linkage existed between dissemination of Buddhism and Hinduism in China and Southeast Asia and trade networks as they complimented each other. Historical data provides evidence of how very diverse regions are brought closer and linked through trade and religions. The paper explored this historical relationship with an emphasis on the presence of South Asian communities in China and Southeast Asia. In both of these regions, religious dissemination, largely a function of traders, acted as a diplomatic force linking diverse kingdoms together, which in turn gave rise to increasing level of trade. Marketing through religious stories and mystic tales further enhanced this linkage by increasing the demand of religious goods and relics.

The relationship shared between religions, trade and marketing has become increasingly evident in the contemporary societies. The marketplace for religious practice has modified as people have more freedom to choose their religion. One can stick to a particular religious belief system or participate in multiple religious beliefs at the same time. This has been possible because the religious marketplace is full of new and different choices for an individual to choose what suits him best. The changing society in modern times has contributed to the new religious developments. The modern stressful lifestyle has encouraged people to move towards different religious beliefs for mental comfort. Technology has made this even more evident as people can access religious information through electronic and print media. With the freedom to choose, religious market has become increasingly competitive. This allows marketing to play an important role in attracting new religious consumers and keeping the old ones. New tactics including introduction of new shrines, images, rituals, temple activities, monks' city walk and the alike have been incorporated in the religious market. These tactics are a way of attracting devotees to new or refashioned faiths, which in turn contributes to the flow of financial assets between temples, traders, and the devotees. Temples serve as a community center providing community services but all this comes at a cost. Therefore in conclusion, religions have always led to trade relations and in more contemporary world, increasing level of the commodification of religions through marketing tactics has lead to a further enhancement in the relationship that religions and trade have and will share in the future.

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