



# DO YOU WANT BLESSINGS? RELIGION & MARKETS

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Shopping centres are the central place in a city, where you not only can overcome daily needs. In a wider perspective, they are a public manifesto of a consumer society and emphasise the neoliberal basic concept that permeates through cities. In this respect they are urban temples of consumerism.

But what happens, if shopping centres de facto provide religious practices and goods, i.e. when a secular concept of space gets rearranged and redefined by spiritual practices and belief systems?

With this interrelation and dialectic process comes a need to look at religiosity and its connection to a pious economy.

I assume that religious goods make the ephemeral character of religion tangible. In doing so, the mere material character drags religion down from a pious space into a secular place, contesting the strict dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. In this place, religion searches for new believers, which leads to articulations of religious piety in the voice of urban modernity.

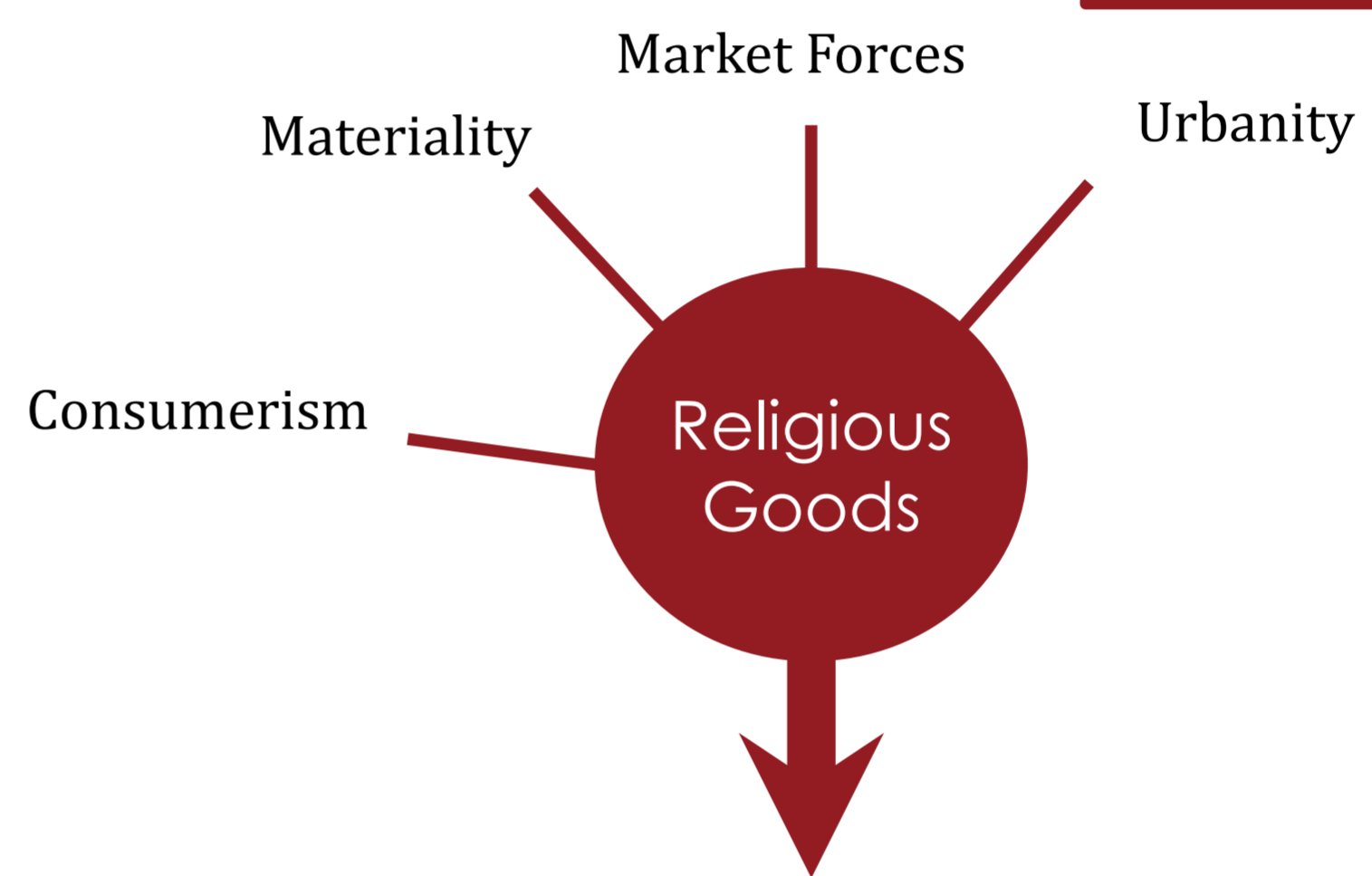
## A Material Turn

In the last few years, the material turn lead to new perspectives in the anthropological approach. Even more recently, the focus on religion and its interconnection with religion became popular. In this combination of material and spiritual realities lies a profound chance to re-conceptualize and understand this hellish kraken 'religion'.

*"Religious subjectivities are formed in [...] the various ways in which materials, objects and spaces are produced, transported, decorated, preserved or interacted with."*

- Julius Bautista (2010:5)

## Dimensions



I did a small fieldwork project at Golden Mile Complex and Fu Lu Shou shopping centre, Singapore, where (mainly Buddhist) religious goods are traded.

With the shopping centre I found a location which is confronted by habits, expectations, and aspirations of a consumer society.

Golden Mile Complex and Fu Lu Shou were filled not only with these humane characteristics, but also stuffed with goods that directed and orchestrated a religious economy.

My question is: What insight can be found in the connection of consumerism, urbanity, and materiality in respect to Buddhism?

## OUTLOOK

In concentrating on a pious / religious economy, what does this focus reveal about agency in things?

What can be said about the character of interaction between shopping centre, religious goods, and consumers?