Dr. Duara discusses the relationship, problems and pathways, between state and popular religions in late imperial, Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) China, drawing on principal ideas from in his forthcoming book concerning the historical field of Chinese religions in a comparative context. How did the state and popular religions manage the question of transcendence? How did popular religious groups accommodate diversity? What were the techniques of self-formation linking the self/body to the local and to universal ideals in late imperial China? Dr. Duara is interested in the vertical division between elite, state religion and popular religious groups in China, and the implications this has on transcendence and faith in modern transition. He argues that because our notions of religion in Asia derives from the radical categories of the Abrahamic faiths, the idea of secularization does little to help us understand modern China, even though the question of religion is an explosive one.

Prasenjit Duara is a distinguished writer and lecturer on historical thought and historiography. His work has been widely translated into Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Prior to 2008 and his current position at the National University of Singapore, Dr. Duara was professor and chairman of the History department at the University of Chicago.