



BRILL

Religion and Society

A Summary of French Studies on Chinese Religion

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Abstract

As is well known, France has always been the center of European sinology. The study of Chinese religion has always been an important part of French sinology. Scholars outside of sinology are beginning to study Chinese religion, from various disciplinary perspectives. The importance of religion for Chinese society has also been recognized in recent years. In this context, focusing on the relations between religion and society, this article attempts to offer a brief summary of French studies on Chinese religion.

Keywords

French sinology – Chinese studies – religion – society

宗教與社會：法國的中國宗教研究回顧

巫能昌

摘要

眾所周知，法國歷來是歐洲漢學重鎮，而宗教研究則是法國漢學研究的重要组成部分。此外，越來越多漢學體系之外的法國學者也開始從各自學科出發，

The author would like to sincerely thank Zhe Ji and David A. Palmer, who have kindly read this article and made valuable suggestions. I must also thank the editors of *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* for their help in polishing my English. The present essay is based on my earlier review article “Faguo de zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu zongshu” 法國的中國宗教研究綜述, which was mainly organized by religious traditions and not by research themes, in Cao

對中國宗教進行考察。近年來，宗教之於中國社會的重要性也在不斷地被重新認識。在此背景之下，文章擬從宗教與社會的角度，對法國的中國宗教研究作一簡要回顧。

關鍵詞

法國漢學 中國研究 宗教 社會

The Religious Structures of Traditional Chinese Society and History

French research on Chinese religion and society can be traced back to Edouard Chavannes (1865–1918), a sinologist and historian whose work on the religious cult on Taishan and on the Earth God in Chinese religion (Chavannes 1910) pioneered the combination of textual analysis and fieldwork that has been the hallmark of French studies on Chinese religion. His student Marcel Granet (1884–1940), one of the godfathers of Western sinology in the first half of the twentieth century, was a follower of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and a close collaborator of Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), one of the founders of French anthropology. Granet applied sociological methods to his analysis of pre-Han Chinese cosmology, religion, and civilization, producing several classics in the field (Granet [1919] 1982, [1922] 2010, 1926, [1929] 1998, [1934] 1999, 1953). Max Kaltenmark (1910–2002), who studied under Granet and Mauss and wrote several works on Daoism, taught Kristofer Schipper (b. 1934), who trained most of today's leading French scholars of Chinese religion.

In his famous *The Taoist Body*, based on textual studies and ten years of fieldwork in Taiwan, Schipper (1982) described and analyzed the manner in which the social body (the participants in communal rituals), the physical body (the body of the adepts who practice the inner alchemy) and the cosmic body (the body as macrocosm) are imbricated. This remarkable book was the first comprehensive study of the social practice of Daoism in Western academia. Focusing on Daoism and its relationship with Chinese society, it has played a pioneering role in many fields of Daoist/Chinese religious studies. For example, Schipper's discussions in *The Taoist Body* and his follow-up studies (e.g., Schipper 1985, 1989) about the hierarchical system of the gods' masters, especially on the relations and distinctions between Daoists (*daoshi* 道士) and

Zhongjian and Zheng Xiaoyun, eds., *Zhongguo zongjiao yanjiu nianjian* 中國宗教研究年鑒 (2011–2012), Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan shijie zongjiao yanjiusuo (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2013), 356–397.

ritual masters (*fashi* 法師), became important starting points in the research of his students John Lagerwey and Kenneth Dean, and of many other scholars. Moreover, Schipper offered an important methodology for Chinese religious studies, combining textual, sociohistorical, and ethnographic approaches, that is reflected in the studies of his students, including Lagerwey, Dean, Brigitte Bapandier, Patrice Fava, Vincent Goossaert, Marianne Bujard, and David A. Palmer.

Schipper was also the first scholar to analyze the ‘division of incense’ (*fexiang* 分香) networks between ancestral temples and their subsidiaries, in his article discussing the neighborhood cult associations in traditional South Taiwan (Schipper 1977). He discussed this system in more detail when he studied the cult of the Great Emperor Who Protects Life 保生大帝, arguing that the transregional *fexiang* organizations are not only religious, but also economic, cultural, political, unofficial, and nonhierarchical (Schipper 1990). Schipper also studied the temples and cult associations of the late Qing Dynasty, showing that Daoist ritual provided a framework for social associations, merchant guilds and confederate associations. And it is these associations that constituted ‘civil society’ in the late Qing Dynasty (Schipper 1992, 1997).

Schipper (1986) proposed the concept of a ‘liturgical framework,’ suggesting that Daoism provides a liturgical framework for the development of local cults. The Canadian scholar Kenneth Dean, a student of Schipper, furthers this concept in his *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (1995), suggesting that Daoism provides a liturgical framework that allows various social groups to determine their places in communal rites. Dean (1995:50–53) considers Daoist liturgy “the alchemy of Chinese society.” Lagerwey (1995b) argues that Buddhism and Confucianism have also performed a function similar to that of Daoism, and also argues that there are conflicts between the three religions and the popular cults. However, the concept of a ‘liturgical framework’ undoubtedly helps us to understand the role of religion in local society.

Lagerwey’s *China: A Religious State* (2010) can be taken as an overarching study of the course of Chinese sociocultural history from the perspective of religion. This book first examines the basic structure of the Chinese state and society over a long period of time and then discusses the pantheon, Daoist rituals in social and historical perspective, festivals in Southeastern China, and the rational character of local religion. To understand Chinese state and society in their religious dimensions has been the author’s driving research question since the 1980s (Lagerwey 1987). This is in sharp contrast to the many sociocultural historians who understand Chinese society mainly from the angle of lineage organizations (Faure 2007, discussed in Lagerwey 2007). The author presents to us a China defined by religion, different from the China

defined by lineage. And the religious China plays an essential role in the organization of Chinese society.

In an investigation of Tufang, a Hakka village in West Fujian, Lagerwey (1994) presents a case of 'Chinese culture' guarded by Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and 'popular religion.' Each of these institutions plays a part in this setting, but all four act according to a script written locally, in which 'Confucian' ancestors are, in turn, 'Buddhist' devotees, 'Daoist' exorcists, and 'popular' gods of the soil. Finally, Lagerwey suggests that lineage and the gods are the symbolic parameters of life in traditional China. In Tufang, history is a combination of its myth-history and its lineage history. The two chief annual community sacrifices (*jiao* 醮) renew the alliances of myth-history, while the lantern festival displays the importance of lineage history without losing sight of the fact that lineage relies on myth-history.

In one of his field studies, Lagerwey (2002) examined a rotating system of worship in Changting County in West Fujian, which is very different in nature from the *fenxiang* networks. Ten villages take turns inviting a local deity, Fuhu 伏虎 the Chan master, into their village throughout the year. After examining the history and legends of the Fuhu cult, the author describes the central role that this Buddhist saint of the tenth century played in the overall religious life of the ten villages, and then sketches the history and lineage of each village. Finally, Lagerwey argues that the link between the villages was in the first place geomantic, determined by a county-wide logistic designed to keep the water which stands for wealth from flowing out of Changting.

Lagerwey (2011) also examines the cult of ancestors and gods in West Fujian, South Fujian (Zhao'an County), and the Huizhou region, finding that the three regions featured different Daoist masters, regional military heroes, and high officers. This difference stems from historical development: West Fujian is a region that was never cleansed of the last remnants of 'ethnic' populations, and Zhao'an, throughout its history, was a place of violence and resistance, *xiedou* 械鬥 (fighting with weapons), and piracy. On the other hand, Huizhou, which had been strongly influenced by the values of the literati since the Tang and Song dynasties, contributed significantly to the invention of the modern lineage.

Brigitte Baptandier rewrote *La Dame-du-Bord-de-l'Eau* (1988), and published it in English in 2008 (reviewed in Liu 2009). The most important question that the book explores is what it means to be a woman in Chinese society. The author uses mainly the vernacular novel *Linshui pingyao* 臨水平妖 (The pacification of the demons by [Lady] Linshui), which is dated no later than the late seventeenth century. The novel narrates the life and apotheosis of Chen Jinggu 陳靖姑, revealing a woman who refused to follow the traditional Confucian roles assigned to women and the price that she had to pay during

her life; after her death, however, she was appropriated as a goddess who enshrines Confucian social ethics in the symbolic world. In the novel, one also finds a group of women who retreat to “mountain-wombs” to “nourish their vital principle and live like immortals” (2008:49) rather than following socially determined roles. Moreover, the novel represents male heroes from the point of view of women. The author offers a structural symbolic analysis of the novel. In the last four chapters, Baptandier’s textual analysis is supplemented and enriched by ethnographic accounts based on her fieldwork. This not only introduces the rituals related to the cult, but also provides a social and ritual setting for the *Linshui pingyao*, fleshing out our understanding of the communities of women mentioned in the earlier chapters. The author continues to discuss the relationship between Lady Linshui as a protector of children and spirit mediums (*jitong* 乩童). This book reflects Baptandier’s special attention to gender in religion, especially to female representations, which is her particular field of interest. For example, in her article “Shaping the Deity in Oneself: Searching for a Place of Enunciation” (2003) she investigates two female spirit mediums.

Alain Arrault (2008) analyzes the domestic religious statuary in Central Hunan, focusing on the making of statues of relatives and masters—a practice particular to Hunan. Evaluating the liturgical instruments and certificates of consecration associated with these statuettes, Arrault proposes an interesting question regarding Central Hunan: Could these traditions reflect the prior existence of a local religious order that initially submitted to Daoism (which entered the region belatedly) by adapting its rituals, instruments, gods, and marshals, but also preserved its own local cohort saints, soldiers, and religious practices? In an article published in 2012, Arrault attributes a considerable number of ancestors who were ordained as ritual masters to the non-Han ethnic groups in the Hunan region, and treats the religious practices and statuary in Hunan as a substitute for and incarnation of Daoism.

Patrice Fava adeptly represents various Chinese religious phenomena through documentary films. For example, one of his masterpieces, *Han Xin’s Revenge, a Daoist Mystery* (2005), unfolds an ancient esoteric ritual tradition in Hunan. Based on his fieldwork of more than ten years, Fava recently (2014) published his research on religious statuary in Central Hunan. By confronting the source of the scriptures conserved in the *Daoist Canon*, compiled in the fifteenth century, and the liturgy of the masters in Hunan, Fava reveals the extraordinary continuity of Daoism and local religious traditions. Pondering the question raised by Arrault, we consider how the sociocultural processes of Hunan history have shaped the mystery of Hanxin, as well as the statuary tradition and the particularities of local ritual traditions.

Vincent Durand-Dastès is adept at finding various religious themes in ancient novels. His *The Conversion of the Orient: The Didactic Long Journey of Bodhidharma in a Chinese Vernacular Novel of the Seventeenth Century* (2008) analyzes the *Dongdu ji* 東度記 (The conversion of the Orient) printed in 1635 in Suzhou. In *Dongdu ji*, Bodhidharma appears as the ancestral master of the Chan, and as a saint who worships Confucian ethics, and so on. By analyzing the sources, influences, and formation of this novel, the author offers a very unique perspective on the social, cultural, and religious roles played by narrative writing on the eve of the emergence of modern China. Durand-Dastès (2002, 2004) also discusses the practice of social ethics by analyzing vernacular novels.

Religion, State, and Politics in Imperial China

Among contemporary scholars, Lagerwey (1987:253–263) discusses the relations between Daoism and political legitimacy, and points out that revelations are the exclusive source of Daoism and a key to understanding Daoism's impact on the state; the ability of Daoists to embody and be in communion with the Way (*Dao* 道), to carry out transformations on Heaven's behalf, is why Daoism has played an important role in Chinese society for such a long time and why it has been valued by rulers from multiple dynasties—the Sons of Heaven. Taking ritual space as the entry point, Lagerwey (1995a) points out the affinity between Daoist rituals and dynastic legitimacy in three aspects: the Daoist sacred space (*tan* 壇), the Yu step (*Yubu* 禹步) and the registers (*lu* 籙). In this way, Lagerwey reveals why Chinese dynasties from the Topa Wei to Ming turned regularly to Daoism to establish their dynastic legitimacy in religion. Another article by Lagerwey (2006) analyzes the dynastic crises in Chinese history to discuss the religious basis of political legitimacy.

Marianne Bujard (2000, 2008) examines how Confucianists such as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 established the foundation of state religion in the early Han Dynasty. She traces how this was accomplished by adding sacrifices to Heaven in the 'outskirts sacrifices' (*jiaosi* 郊祀). For Bujard, the status of the classics was thenceforth intimately linked to political legitimacy, since these various reforms were seen as based on the classics. On the other hand, the Confucianists turned to eliminate local cults and the 'masters of techniques' (*fangshi* 方士). Bujard's research shows that the rivalry between the Confucianists and the *fangshi* was in fact a rivalry between the centralized state and local political forces.

Regarding the empire as a human being, the scholar-gentry (*shidafu* 士大夫) in the Six Dynasties envisioned that the empire's body was unified around the emperor, just as the human body was unified around the spirits

while possessed. Lagerwey's student Junliang Pan explores this logic in his PhD thesis (2013). Based on discussions of the respective responses of the three 'institutional' religions—Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism—to the possessions, Pan points out that mediumistic possessions can produce a divine legitimacy that could challenge the emperor's legitimacy. Finally, Pan argues that Daoism had proposed Daoist revelations, which were easier to control politically, as a substitute for mediumistic possessions. This is why Daoist revelations were important in times of dynastic crises.

Goossaert (2010a, 2010c) focuses more on the role of the Daoist bureaucracy in local society. He discusses three important aspects of City God temples—the Daoist bureaucracy, symbolical taxes and judicial rituals—in the Jiangnan area from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and demonstrates how Daoists in the City God temples interacted with the administration of the Heavenly Master. In a comparison with the imperial system, Goossaert argues that the three aspects of City God temples are similar to the bureaucracy, taxes, and justice of the imperial state. Finally, Goossaert suggests that through the City God temples and their bureaucratic organization, the elite Daoists in Jiangnan participated in the construction of the imperial state. However, Goossaert emphasizes that this does not mean that Daoism imitates the state, but that Daoism and the state have shared the same Chinese cultural paradigm. Another of Goossaert's articles (2011) explores the canonization of local gods by the Heavenly Master from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. It demonstrates that the liturgical foundation of canonization is the transmission of 'registers' (*lu* 籙) to gods, in the same way as the ordination of a living person. Knowing the registers and the corresponding ranks, local communities in Jiangnan demanded that the Heavenly Master confer 'feudal' titles on their gods, which were the same titles as those given by the imperial state. The author suggests that by filling these requests, the Heavenly Master was integrated into the imperial governance of local society in Jiangnan, and Daoism became the bureaucratic framework for Jiangnan society.

Quanzhen Daoist Institutions

Goossaert (1997, 2001) analyzes how the Quanzhen movement became a cohesive clerical order during the thirteenth century through several methods: by building a strong collective identity, with unified systems for training and naming adepts; by engaging in ritual practices such as *huandu* 環堵 (confining oneself in a meditation enclosure) and *zuobo* 坐鉢 (collective meditation by sitting around the bowl); and by considering the size of the Quanzhen clergy. Finally,

this collective identity transformed the Quanzhen movement from wandering Daoists to a cohesive clerical order, and its influence has lasted until the present. On the whole, Goossaert's research reveals the importance of collective identity in the development of Quanzhen Daoism.

Adeline Herrou, a student of Brigitte Baptandier, has discussed the identity of the Quanzhen Daoists, too. Her book *A World of Their Own: Daoist Monks and Their Community in Contemporary China* (2005; reviewed in Palmer 2006) is firstly an anthropological study, and thus differs from Goossaert's work. Her fieldwork focused on a small Daoist temple in Shaanxi province. The book investigates the process of becoming a Daoist monk, whereby one leaves a normal life and enters the religious order. It identifies the unique characteristic of this parallel world: its break from the kin-based organization of lay society, associated with an alternative set of pseudo-kinship relationships designed to transcend sexual differences. Overall, the monastic community of the Quanzhen order lends itself ideally to a classical anthropological approach. It operates as a 'tribe' with its own place, members, rituals, culture, and internal organization, but distinguishes itself clearly and consciously from the society in which it exists. This ethnological study of Daoist temple organizations, using the analytical framework of kinship theory, is illuminating for our understanding of the identity between religious practitioners.

Studies and Theoretical Discussions on Chinese Religion and Modernity

French studies on Chinese religion since the end of the nineteenth century have inherited the problematic consciousness of 'modernity' from the European sociology of religion and made unique achievements. In recent years, Goossaert has published articles including "The Destiny of Chinese Religion in the Twentieth Century" (2003), "1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?" (2006a), "The Invention of 'Religions' in Modern China" (2007b), and, with Ling Fang, "Funeral Reforms and the Religious Polity of the Chinese State" (2008), analyzing the construction of the Chinese religious landscape by national state politics and the contemporary Western discourse concerning religion. These research achievements are reflected in his *The Religious Question in Modern China*, coauthored with David A. Palmer (Goossaert and Palmer 2011; reviewed in Ji 2012). This book expands its discussions by including the perspectives of history and sociology. The first part explores different historical periods of the religious question in China, while the second part investigates the multiple religious modernities of the whole Chinese-speaking

world, including Chinese diaspora communities. The authors analyze Chinese religion in the context of relations between politics and other social factors, revealing the role of religious changes in shaping contemporary Chinese politics, culture, and social life. *The Religious Question in Modern China* has gained high praise from international academia since its publication. Though studies on Chinese religion have made great strides in the last ten years, wide-ranging and profound works such as this book are still very rare.

In his book *Qigong Fever* (2005; English translation, 2007), Palmer explores the relations between healing, religion, and politics by examining the *qigong* 氣功 fever as a social movement between 1949 and 1999. He reveals the transformation of traditional self-cultivation and healing *qigong* in modern times, arguing that *qigong* became, for Chinese city dwellers, the main route to express religiosity in the post-Mao era. More specifically, the author investigates, from the perspective of history, anthropology, and sociology, how the *qigong* fever spread in the context of the social and political transformations in socialist China. The most interesting discussion focuses on the complex relationships between the *qigong* masters, government officials, scientists, practitioners, and ideologues around *qigong*, revealing the *qigong* movement's expansion, division, and the final collapse with the prohibitions on Falungong.

Palmer has continued to address the modernity of Chinese religion and has edited two related books. The first is *Chinese Religious Life*, coedited with Glenn Shive and Philip Wickeri (Palmer, Shive, and Wickeri 2011). In this book for the general reader, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, popular religion, Christianity, and Islam are treated not as distinct systems, but as cultural and religious expressions interwoven within the Chinese context. The book shows how religion has reemerged in the People's Republic of China, and how religions relate to the Chinese Communist system. The second is *Daoism in the Twentieth Century: Between Eternity and Modernity*, coedited with Xun Liu (Palmer and Liu 2012). In this book, every contributor demonstrates her special knowledge on modern Daoism. Among the French scholars, Adeline Herrou discusses Daoist monasticism, Vincent Goossaert analyzes Daoists in the modern Chinese self-cultivation market, and Palmer traces the relationship between Daoism and modern nationalism by examining the case of the redemptive society patriarch Li Yujie.

Daniela Campo, in her book *The Construction of Sainthood in Modern China* (2013), focuses on the biography of Xuyun 虛雲 (ca. 1864–1959), one of the most revered Buddhist masters in modern China. The book builds on the tension between hagiography and historiography. The story of Xuyun's life encompasses the story of the formation of its biographical narrative: the

author deconstructs the religious biography of this Buddhist master before reconstructing his historical biography. Campo's book is thus ultimately a story about how history is written, and continuously rewritten.

Focusing on the contemporary Buddhist revival in Mainland China, Zhe Ji, a student of the eminent sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger, explores the power structure and moral order in Chinese society since the 1980s (e.g., Ji 2004, 2007, 2011e, 2013a). The special issue of *Social Compass* on "Social Implications of Buddhist Revival in China," edited by Ji and Vincent Goossaert, was the first publication to focus completely on contemporary Chinese Buddhism in Western academic circles (Ji and Goossaert 2011). Ji has also noticed the particular links between religion and education in the Chinese context, and their significance for the modernization of Chinese religion. In 2011, he edited a volume for the French academic annual *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* on "Religion, Education, and Politics in Modern China" (Ji 2011d), including seven articles by scholars from different countries and a comprehensive review by the Dutch anthropologist Peter van der Veer, who directs the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. In the introduction to this issue, from the perspective of both institutional and value differentiations, Ji (2011b) takes the modern reform of education, marked by the 'build schools with temple property' campaign and the abolition of the imperial examination, as the first engine of Chinese religious modernity. According to him, in ancient China, politics and religion were combined in what could be referred to as *jiao* 教 or 'education,' since both were considered as a practice of 'instruction.' He examines how this integral order of politics-power, morals-knowledge, and the sacred-mystic broke down and divided itself into 'politics,' 'education,' and 'religion' in their modern sense from the mid-nineteenth to the twentieth century during the building of the Chinese nation-state.

Katiana Le Mentec (2006, 2010, 2011) explores the social and religious consequences brought about by the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. Focusing on moves aimed at recomposing tradition and constructing identity, her discussion unfolds through a specific approach: the analysis of cultural artifacts such as the cults of gods (in particular Zhang Fei, a national hero locally deified), the use of toponyms, concepts, adages, myths, legends, geomancy, and narratives of the past.

Georges Favraud (2013) studies how a village community in Hunan province, which is structured by patrilineal and Daoist transmissions, has participated in the modernization of Chinese religion, economy, and culture from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Favraud's analysis of the mutations and the hybridizations between kinship and ritual, centered around a Daoist

liturgy (Chunyang 純陽), suggests that the cult community is one of the most fluid and sustainable structures of Chinese society.

Julie Remoiville (2013) studies religious practices in contemporary Hangzhou. Based on her fieldwork in Buddhist and Daoist temples, Remoiville presents a vivid description of the living religious traditions and analyzes the social role of religion in the everyday life in Hangzhou.

Bernard Formoso is currently researching the Chinese of Southeast Asia by studying religious lineages that mix charitable works and spirit-writing (*fujī* 扶乩) oracular activity. His recent book (Formoso 2010) focuses on *De Jiao* 德教 (Teaching of Virtue), a China-born religious movement based on spirit-writing and rooted in the tradition of the 'halls for good deeds' (*shantang* 善堂). Through a richly documented multisite ethnography of *De Jiao* congregations in the PRC, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, the author offers valuable insights into the adaptation of overseas Chinese to sharply contrasted national polities, and the projective identity they build in relation to China.

In studies on contemporary Chinese religion, French scholars have gone beyond descriptive research based on philology and archaeology to engage in more intensive dialogues with other fields of French thought. In 2010, the Jesuit priest and anthropologist Benoît Vermander published his *The Empire without Center: Essay on the Exit from Religion in China*. This book borrows the concept of 'the religion of the exit from religion' (*la religion de la sortie de la religion*) of Marcel Gauchet, the well-known contemporary French political philosopher, to focus particularly on the question of in what sense Confucianism, which stresses social relations, is a 'religion of the exit from religion.' At a conference on "Secularization Theory and China" held in Paris in December 2012, Marcel Gauchet himself, Benoît Vermander, Vincent Goossaert, and Zhe Ji all participated in discussions.

Actually, secularization has always been an unavoidable theme in the study of contemporary Chinese religion, when the political-religious relationship is the core of the question of *laïcité*/secularism. On this topic, Goossaert (2002, 2005, 2010b) has done detailed historical research and published a series of articles. In the article "State and Religion in Modern China: Religious Policy and Scholarly Paradigms" (2006b), Goossaert summarizes five paradigms: secularization in the study of the relation between politics, religion, and society; the continuity between the Qing period and contemporary China; repression and resistance; dichotomy (orthodox/heterodox, religion/superstition, elite/popular, institutional/diffused, and pure/syncretic); the renewal of religious traditions; and several new perspectives, for example, the local history of religious policies. Zhe Ji focuses on the Chinese state-religion relationship and the situation of secularization since 1949, especially after 1980, and has published

a series of articles (2004; 2008b; 2011a; 2013a). In the article “Secularization as Religious Restructuring: Statist Institutionalization of Chinese Buddhism and Its Paradoxes” (2008b), through the discourse theory of Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), Ji proposes to comprehend the contemporary Chinese political-religious relationship through a power theory that emphasizes the ‘power relations’ (233, 260) and ‘unintended consequences’ (250–258). Ji was also the first to apply general analytical categories concerning contemporary China in religious studies, such as *guojia hua* 國家化 (nationalization) and *danwei zhi* 單位制 (work unit system), and thus garnered attention for these concepts and further elucidations from other scholars (e.g., Palmer 2009; Borchert 2010).

Contemporary Confucianism

In 2000, Alain Arrault published the essay “Chinese Family: Confucianist Family? Some Remarks on the Subject of Ancestor Worship, Kinship System, Rites and Education in Chinese Family.” At the international conference on “Locating Confucianism in Relation to the Western Conception of Religion” in 2005, Vincent Goossaert’s conference paper “The Transformations of Confucian Religion, 1898–1937” (Goossaert 2007a) focused on the changes of Confucian practices in the early twentieth century, when the categories of ‘religion’ and ‘Confucianism’ were recreated and redefined. Joël Thoraval’s (2007) paper discussed the use of the word ‘religion’ in contemporary neo-Confucianism. At the moment, the main French scholars in this area are Sébastien Billioud and Joël Thoraval. In the last five years, they have studied the various forms and significances of Confucianism’s revival in contemporary China, from the perspective of intellectual history and anthropology, and have jointly published a series of articles. Among these articles, “Confucianism, ‘Cultural Tradition’ and Official Discourses at the Start of the New Century” (Billioud 2007) and “*Jiaohua*: The Confucian Revival in China as an Educative Project” (Billioud and Thoraval 2007) addressed the revival of Confucianism and its practices; “*Anshen liming* or the Religious Dimension of Confucianism” (Billioud and Thoraval 2008) focused on the religious dimension of contemporary Confucianism, and mainly analyzed the possibilities for Confucianism as a particular religion, as a civil religion and as a state religion; and “*Lijiao*: The Return of Ceremonies Honouring Confucius in Mainland China” (Billioud and Thoraval 2009) investigated the contemporary ceremonies honoring Confucius in Qufu in Shandong province. The discussion focused on the contrast between authorities and the *minjian* Confucian revivalists, as well as

their necessary interactions, ultimately illustrating the complex use and abuse of Confucianism in post-Mao China. In addition, Guillaume Dutournier has published two articles, “Social Experimentation and ‘Popular Confucianism.’ The Case of Lujiang Cultural Education Centre,” coauthored with Zhe Ji (Dutournier and Ji 2009), and “‘Family Schools’ in Mainland China and Taiwan: Three Perspectives on a Traditionalist Education” (Dutournier 2011), which focuses on the popular Confucian movement from the perspective of unofficial education.

Zhe Ji is the first French scholar to notice political Confucianism in contemporary China, and he has published several review articles (e.g., Ji 2005, 2008c). Recently, he published an English paper based on one of his Chinese articles on ‘civil religion’ (Ji 2011c). In this paper, using the moral sociology of Durkheim, Ji (2013b) illuminates the relations between civil religion and religion, politics, and society. Meanwhile, he presents his criticism of the different forms of religion-ideology in China, and proposes the concept of ‘China cosmopolitan’ (*tianxia zhongguo* 天下中國) as the starting point of Chinese civil religion.

Sébastien Billioud’s research on the Yiguandao 一貫道 (Way of Pervading Unity) reveals the role played by *jiaohua* in the new religious movement. Yiguandao, Taiwan’s third largest religion, is often considered a ‘New Religious Movement,’ and is currently expanding quickly all over Asia. Based on fieldwork mainly carried out in Hong Kong in 2010, Billioud’s article “The Role of Education in Yiguandao’s Salvationist Project” (2011) explores the role of education in this expansion process by focusing both on the promotion in society of Confucianism-inspired texts and on the organization of training sessions for adepts. Billioud also suggests that the emphasis Yiguandao puts on *jiaohua* constitutes a useful legitimization strategy.

Charisma in Chinese Religion

Tracing the lives of religious figures, especially religious leaders or religious elites, has led to an important breakthrough in studies on Chinese religion. This is related to the concept of charisma. Charisma was first used as an analytic concept with respect to modes of authority by German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920). In 2001, British anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang and Chinese anthropologist Mingming Wang applied the concept in their cooperative work *Grassroots Charisma: Four Local Leaders in China* (Feuchtwang and Wang 2001). Beginning with a definition of charisma as “an expectation of the extraordinary” (2001:16), this book examines the grassroots of charisma in a local religion-politics continuum in Southeastern China, from the perspective

of the overlap between political authority and ethical authority, and of the fusion between reality and symbol. Goossaert (2004) published a discussion of the bureaucratic charisma of the Daoist Heavenly Masters, expanding the scope of charisma in Chinese religion studies. At the end of this article, Goossaert suggests that the missing element that should be added to the classical Weberian model to adapt it to religious bureaucracies such as the Zhang Heavenly Master institution is the lineage as it was practiced in China in both clerical and nonclerical contexts. In 2007, an international conference on "Religion and Social Integration in Chinese Societies: Exploring Sociological Approaches to Religion in the Chinese World" was organized by David A. Palmer, Vincent Goossaert, and Peter Tze-Ming Ng in Hong Kong. Charisma was one of the key conference topics. Stephan Feuchtwang was invited to this conference as well. As a continuation of the discussions on charisma at the Hong Kong conference, Goossaert with Canadian scholar David Ownby edited a special issue on "Mapping Charisma in Chinese Religion" for *Nova Religio*, a quarterly published by the University of California Press (Goossaert and Ownby 2008).

Besides Goossaert, the French scholars who contributed to this special issue were Zhe Ji and David A. Palmer. Inspired by Feuchtwang and Wang, this issue focuses on the role of charisma in renewing Chinese religion. All the authors take the definition of charisma in *Grassroots Charisma* as a starting point. The profound implication of this definition is that the object of charisma is something different in nature from other, more mundane expectations people have of their leaders, such as good governance, increased wealth, peace, and so on. The authors have all attempted to refine this concept by looking at how this extraordinariness can be defined, promised, negotiated, and delivered in the specific context of modern and contemporary Chinese culture. Among them, Goossaert (2008) discusses how charisma can be used as a tool to classify and understand the very diverse world of Chinese religious specialists. Ji's article (2008a) is about the Modern Chan Society 現代禪, a Buddhist reformist group in contemporary Taiwan, and the particular experience of its founder Li Yuansong. Taking the perspective of the 'gift' as theorized by Marcel Mauss, Ji explores, with the theory on social interaction, how charismatic building and grouping are made possible, and how charisma, as a specific type of social relational structure, determines collective religious actions. Palmer (2008) examines the *qigong* movement, arguably the largest deployment of charisma in Mainland China since Mao's years. Moreover, Feuchtwang (2008) reflects on these articles. Compared with previous research, the focus of this issue is not political factors or the relation between politics and religion, but the authority of religious figures themselves. These articles integrate the approaches of

history, sociology, and psychology, expanding the theoretical horizon in the study of religious figures.

Religion and Minority Ethnic Society and Identity

As a scholar of religious history, Michel Strickmann (1942–1994) analyzed the religious documents found by Japanese ethnologists among the Yao and pointed out that Daoism played an important role in the sociocultural history of South China. He suggested that the sinification of the ethnic groups of South China is a proximate result of Daoism's penetration in this region (Strickmann 1982). This process can be traced to the Song Dynasty, and its main form of expression is the rite of investiture in which community members obtain ritual names.

In 1991, Joël Thoraval published a lengthy article, "Ethnic Religion, Lineage Religion: The Attempt of 'Islamization' of a Han Lineage in Hannan," in the journal *Études chinoises*. In the 1980s, a branch of the Pu lineage in Dan County in Hainan Province attempted to Islamize after discovering their Muslim origins. At the same time, another branch of the Pu lineage in the same county constructed their lineage in connection with Daoists, mediums, and other ritual specialists who were not Muslim. The conflicts between the two branches inevitably affected their lineage identity. By analyzing the Islamization of the Pus, Thoraval presents a fascinating discussion of identity and lineage consciousness.

Élisabeth Allès (1952–2012) focused her research on Islam. Her PhD thesis investigated the people in a village of Muslim tanners, and in the cities of Zhengzhou and Kaifeng in Henan province. Published in 2000, under the title *Chinese Muslims: An Anthropological Study of the Hui in Henan*, the study earned her an international reputation. The highlight of the book focuses on women's mosques in Henan and its neighboring provinces. These mosques, which have grown in recent centuries, are usually connected with large lineages or city communities constituted by immigrants from the same village. Women's mosques also reflect the tension between traditional Islam and reformist Islam. Allès expounds in detail the operation of the women's mosques, and the careers of the female clergy (*ahong*). Finally, she argues that Hui Muslims construct an ethnic identity that integrates them harmoniously into a society of nonbelievers (infidels); however, their Han and Hui identity are not syncretic, but juxtaposed. That is to say, their cultural practices as Han are obviously distinguished from their cultural practices as Hui. In the last few years of her life, Allès employed a comparative dimension in her research to

discuss the relations between various social activities of Chinese Muslims and the government, by confronting Islam in the periphery and Islam in the heart of China—or rather, two minority situations: ten million Hui Muslims who speak Chinese and nine million Uygur Muslims who speak a Turkic language. Her research interests also extended to the Dungan people in Central Asia and new configurations of identity on the frontiers of China (Allès 1999, 2005, 2008, 2011).

A new generation of ethnologists have studied the role of religion in the operation of local society among the ethnic minorities of Southwest China. Aurélie Névet's *The Literate Shamanism of the Yi of Yunnan* (2008; reviewed in Gros 2010) deals with the 'shamanic religion' of the Nipa in the Stone Forest of Yunnan Province. On the one hand, the book covers the main features of the Nipa religion and the fundamental role ritual writing plays in it, and on the other hand the instrumentalization by government agencies of this religion and writing. She distinguishes the Nipa territorial cult *midje*—or territorial cult—as practiced at the village level and on which the self-reproduction of local society depends, from the official federal *mizhi* 密枝 cult, set up by the authorities, on which—under state control—the cohesive political construction of an overall Yi identity depends. The author analyzes how the transition from one (*midje*) to the other (*mizhi*) leads to an inversion of the base of Nipa society and distorts the relationship of its political-religious institutions. Névet's recent book *Shamanic Versets* (2013) analyzes forty texts collected by a *bimo* 畢摩 (Yi priest). These texts are related to the *midje* cult in the village of Li. By translating, annotating, and analyzing the texts, Névet discusses the ritual universe and world representations of Nipa.

Taking English structuralism (Leach 1954) as a theoretical starting point, Stéphane Gros (2007, 2012) studies a common ritual language shared among ethnic groups such as the Drung and Nu in Yunnan Province before the foundation of the PRC. This ritual language is expressed through sacrifice and sharing the meat of the animals dedicated to spirits. In this area, the relations of society, economy, and politics are dependent on this ritual language. Gros points out that for the Drung, the sharing ritual is a model for inclusion and distinction. It represents debt as a prototypical form of relationship that prevails in both relations between individuals and groups, and between people and supernatural entities. Gros argues that E. R. Leach's notion of ritual language can be reformulated by placing the notion of debt as a central element of what this 'language' tells us of the underlying order. Gros's research deepens the anthropological discussions on exchange relationships.

Anne Chayet and Nicola Schneider have focused on the role of women in Tibetan Buddhism. In the final chapter of *Women in the Time of the Dalai Lamas*

(1993), Chayet discusses the religious life of Tibetan women including pilgrimages, female monasticism, and the role played by women in mediumistic possessions, oracular divinations, and Tantric conceptions. Schneider (2013) investigates why many Tibetan women are drawn to a monastic life today. Why do these women break with the duties of alliance and mothering imposed on them by society? Taking a comparative ethnographic approach to two monasteries (in Tibet and in India), the author describes and analyzes the way the nuns consider, construct, and organize their communal life, thereby revealing important changes in the character of female monasticism, especially the changes since the religious revival in the 1980s. Finally, Schneider points out the reason for the upsurge of female monasticism in Tibet: monastic life allows Tibetan women to pursue a range of opportunities that do not exist for women from the countryside, where custom dictates that girls follow in the footsteps of their mothers and stepmothers. In other words, the monastery provides an attractive offer of new opportunities for women to realize individual and collective projects.

Final Remarks

Compared with earlier times, there have been two main changes in French studies on Chinese religion. The first concerns research paradigms. The perspectives and methodology of research have been extended greatly beyond the traditional disciplines of philology, linguistics, and archaeology to include the social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology. The second change is the focus on religious transformations in modern China. On the one hand, more scholars who specialize in the social sciences are now engaged in studies on Chinese religion, quickly shifting the research focus to modern and contemporary China. On the other hand, more scholars who specialize in ancient Chinese religion have begun to extend their temporal range up to modern times. Deep in tradition, colossal in scope, new in viewpoints and abundant in researchers, French studies on Chinese religion have maintained a remarkable momentum of development.

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