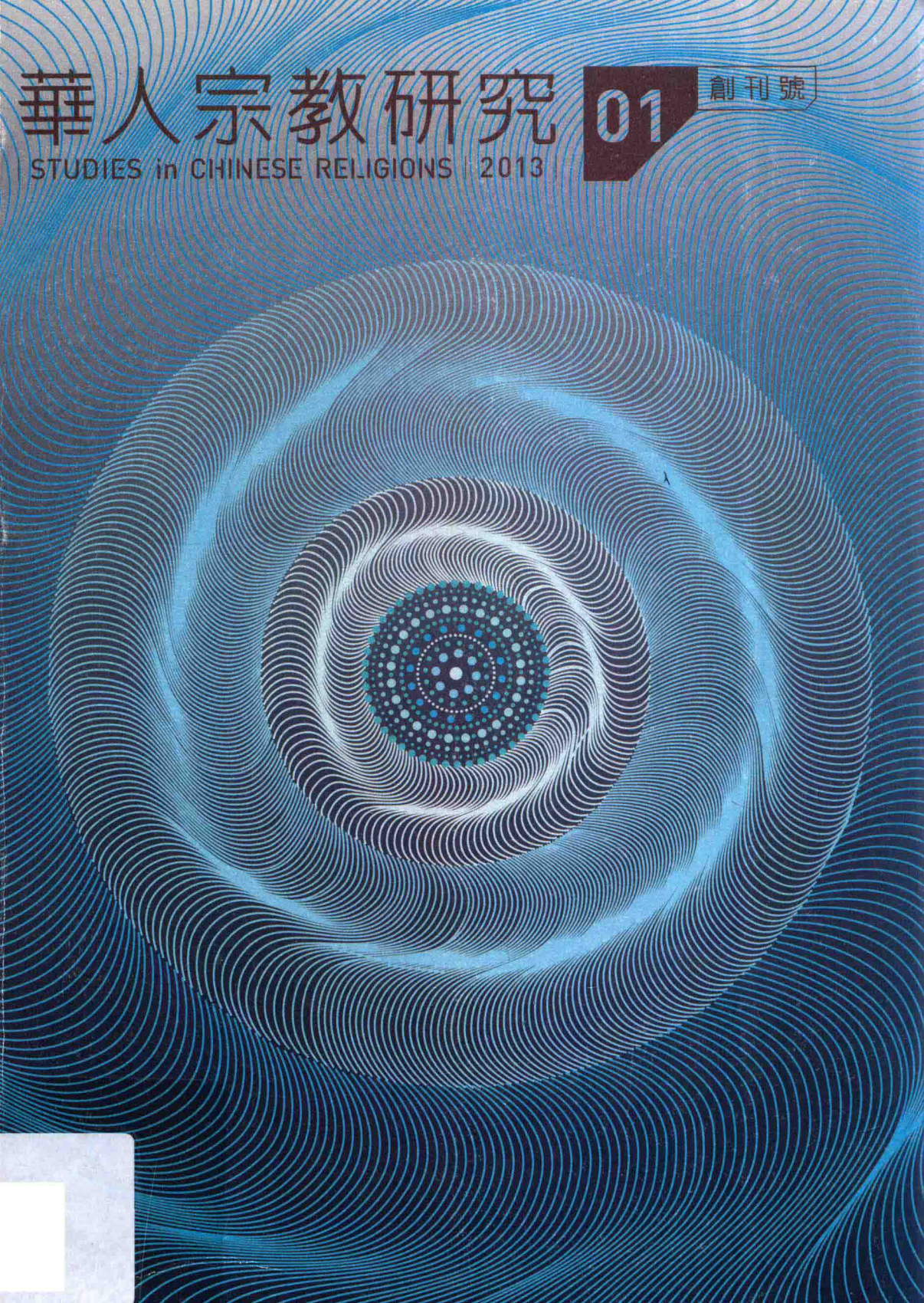


# 華人宗教研究

STUDIES in CHINESE RELIGIONS 2013

01

創刊號





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國立政治大學 華人宗教研究中心

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## 發刊詞

宗教學在臺灣的學術定位，相較於其他的人文、社會科學學門，在當前的學術領域中顯然是「異數」！其成立的時間既晚，在國科會是被放在哲學門類下，但與宗教相關的研究卻又分散於各人文、社會科學學門中！針對類似的紛紜現象，在最近有關建國百年的學術回顧中，宗教學術雖是與教育學同置一冊，總算有機會被列於「學術」的檢討之列。這次的回顧即直指其發展遲緩的癥結所在，既因傳統學術精英的理性主義取向，也肇起於五四運動提倡科學、民主所產生的負面影響，導致臺灣學界對於宗教學術的看法曾有誤解。而宗教學科在正式成立之後，歷經十餘年來教、研的實際經驗，大多面臨轉型以求生存的尷尬處境！但值得注意的是卻又有許多單一宗教亟欲籌設研修學院，應非只是爲了學位的文憑問題，而呼應了臺灣社會在宗教上的急切需求。這樣的吊詭現象，相較於東亞諸國、乃至世界各國，在宗教信仰與宗教學術之間到底如何取得一致，確實是一個值得嚴肅以對的問題！

有鑑於此，政治大學既較早在文學院成立「宗教研究中心」，以此凝聚不同領域學者的共同興趣；又持續設置「宗教研究所」的碩士班與博士班，以期培育研究世界宗教與華人宗教的學術人才，乃是公立大學中唯一的一所。十餘年來累積了許多寶貴的經驗，研究中心與研究所彼此相輔相成，既順應國際化學術潮流的發展趨勢，關注世界宗教與社會文明的互動關係；也審時度勢而與時俱變，發現宗教學術在臺灣的發展應有自己的特色與方向。就在學術同好萌生的自覺意識下，乃決定將院級的「宗教研究中心」提昇爲校級，並確定其名稱爲「華人宗教研究中心」。這樣的抉擇既配合宗教所的課程安排，也回應校內、臺灣宗教學界的學術取向，就是想爲「華人宗教」的學術研究在國際的學術競爭中取得一定的發言權。

使用「華人宗教」主要基於三個學術考慮，一是指跨區域存在的華人宗教：其範圍涵蓋了臺灣、中國大陸以及世界各地所有華裔的信仰，不管

是新、馬等東南亞地區，或是散佈世界的華人宗教，此即關顧當代學術的國際視野；二是泛指華人所信仰的所有宗教：華人的分布集中於亞太地區，其宗教信仰本既多樣，何況數百年來諸多新舊宗教傳入後，民眾各因所需而選擇信仰，這種現象既表現當代社會的多元開放，也具體表現華人在宗教信仰上的寬納、容受性；三則是華人在各種社會文化下如何面對宗教的經驗：這種華人面對宗教的處境性，意指華人走向世界後，不再只是面對傳統的三教，而是面對五教、甚或各地的民族宗教。華人常自詡沒有「宗教戰爭」或「宗教暴力」？不管其真實情況如何，縱使生活在自己的土地上，當前均需面對世界所發生的宗教衝突與文明衝突，然則華人到底抱持何種宗教心態？是否與自己信仰的宗教間有矛盾？凡此錯綜複雜的宗教問題均攸關華人社會的精神生活，這種生存處境既無法逃避，將其作為一種學術課題，自是亟需探究其因果關係。

在這次「華人宗教研究中心」的昇級過程中，內外俱頗為順利，政大的行政單位與研究發展處都能接受其理念，認同臺灣的宗教學術本來就需關注所有的華人信仰，也期待世界各地學者的華人宗教研究經驗，有一個學術平臺亟需相互交流。而各宗教團體也都支持這樣的提昇與深化，宗教研究所、華人宗教研究中心乃有機會與之合作，像漢傳佛教的聖嚴佛教基金會即大力贊助，而一貫道總會在即將開辦兩所研修學院之際，更是第二度支持本所、本中心的學術發展。為了展現華人宗教的研究成果，乃決定出版「華人宗教研究」，廣納各種議題，在此對於各方的贊助表達由衷的謝意，盼望今後仍能鼎力支持這一學術志業。正是基於這樣的助緣，本學報即秉持多元而開放的態度，歡迎所有的學術同行都能共同參與。本學報以中文、英文為主，主要是考慮學術界比較通用，但也可容納其他的外文。這種國際化的取向，即表示研究華人宗教乃國際學界所共同，也相信宗教學理論需容納華人宗教的信仰經驗，如是方為理想的宗教學術藍圖。這樣的學術志業既為學術界與宗教界所共同期許，也預期在未來能夠早日實現。

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# A New Approach to Understanding Chinese Religion

Jordan Paper

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## Abstract

In China and Taiwan, “religion” is recognized from the perspective of the West, which defines religion from the pattern of Christianity. An analysis of the parameters of Christianity demonstrates that it is unique in the context of religions worldwide. The Christian model either skews the understanding of other religions or implies that they are not religions. Thus, Chinese Religion is either not recognized as a religion or is understood to be a “folk religion,” meaning the religion of the uneducated, or as “popular religion,” meaning a religion other than the established religion of a culture. Neither term fits Chinese Religion, as it initially was the religion of the elite and became the state religion as well as the foundation of Chinese culture and society.

Chinese Religion, the oldest documented religious modality in human history, can be delineated by twelve behavioral, social and ideological characteristics, which are or were central to most religions. These characteristics delineate the second oldest religion arising with horticulture and early agriculture, which could be labeled “Familism,” in relation to the earliest religious construct found in gathering-hunting traditions. This approach offers a new means of understanding Chinese Religion from a global perspective, resolves the many contradictions causing Chinese Religion to be either neglected or misunderstood, and is pertinent to evolving government policies regarding religion in Taiwan and China.

**Keywords:** *huaren jiao*, Chinese Religion, Familism

## Prolegomena<sup>1</sup>

The following is not a typical scholarly article but an essay based on over a half century of studying religion in China from the standpoint of comparative religion. Accordingly, the many relevant studies of Chinese and Western scholars are neither discussed nor, when appropriate, critiqued, and references are not given for understandings based on direct observation. For to do so would turn this paper into a full-length book, given the number of topics dealt with.

I have been studying Chinese traditional culture since 1959, and spent two full years living in Taiwan both as a graduate student (1965–66) and as a visiting professor (1973–74), visiting Taiwan for shorter periods of time every few years since then. I have been visiting the Mainland since 1983. I have been at the forefront of arguing for the acceptance of Chinese Religion as the religious basis of Chinese culture and society and am gratified that the following generations of Western scholars of religion in China in general have adopted this viewpoint.<sup>2</sup> But it is to be noted it remains the case that in Taiwan few scholars of religion study Chinese Religion, and on the Mainland, Chinese Religion is studied at Folklore institutes and Minority Culture departments but not within Religious Studies. Of course, there are Chinese scholars who do understand the Chinese religious situation. In 1995, I met Zhong Jingwen 鐘敬文 at his folklore institute and found that we were in complete accord on the understanding of religion in China.

Prior to focusing on Chinese religion, I studied Christianity at a major U.S. divinity school, and the list of Christian parameters in Part I have been approved

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a series of lectures given at Beijing Normal University in May, 2012, after being encouraged to suggest alternative ways for the government to deal with indigenous mainstream religion. The positive responses to these lectures accompanied by useful suggestions, which I greatly appreciate, have been integrated into this version. An early version was presented at the Republic of China Centenary International Conference on Retrospects and Prospects: Religion in Taiwan, Taipei, May, 2011, entitled “The Impact of the West on the Understanding of Chinese Religion.” Again I am grateful for the critical responses to the paper.

<sup>2</sup> “In this role of founding father [of the serious scholarly study of religion in China] his [Daniel Overmeyer’s] contribution, along with Jordan Paper and the late Laurence G. Thompson, has plainly been crucial.” T. H. Barrett, “Review of *The People and the Dao: New Studies in Chinese Religions in Honour of Daniel L. Overmyer*,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* (Third Series) 20.3 (2010): 392–93.



by devout Christian comparative religion scholars. My awareness of Western government understandings in part is based on serving as an expert witness on Chinese religion and on religion in general in Canadian court cases both for and against the government, depending on the particular case.

This essay is divided into two parts. The first part discusses how Chinese religion has been misunderstood due to the widespread use of Christianity as a model for religion in general, aspects on which I and others have written a number of times. The second part suggests an alternative model for understanding Chinese and many other similar religions; this part presents a new model for the study of religion not only in China but in general.

## **(1) The Christian Imposition on the Understanding of Chinese Religion**

### *Introduction*

Because of Christian missionizing, Chinese Religion has remained virtually invisible both to scholars and governments inside and outside of China for dual reasons. The first reason is due to the needs and attitudes of Christian missionaries for the last half millennium who either deliberately falsified Chinese Religion or deemed it ignorant superstition, as well as the work of the Devil. The second reason is that religious studies began as essential knowledge for Christian missionaries, and even when secularized less than a half century ago, continues to delineate religion according to the model of Christianity. Both approaches either deliberately served the colonial enterprise or are an instance of the continuation of a colonial attitude, even if unconscious, towards other cultures. For the Chinese people, scholars and governments to impose this understanding is to inflict on themselves the mentality of a colonized people.

By Chinese Religion (*huaren jiao* 華人教), I am referring to the religion based on *jing zu* 敬祖 (reverencing ancestors) in the Chinese mode. This foundational core is summed up by an aphorism that already was archaic when it was inserted into the beginning of the *Lun yu* 論語 (I.9) twenty-five hundred or so years ago: *shen zhong zhui yuan* 慎終追遠 (“Carefully attend to the last [rites of parents] and follow up when [they are] long gone [with offerings]”). Chinese Religion is based on the understanding of the family and clan as numinous, as well as the model for society and government. The primary ritual

is the offering of a meal to the departed to be shared by the living. Individuals are subordinated to family, and life after death is based on the understanding of family as including the past and future members of the family. The religious imperative is to have sons (now moving towards daughters as well) to carry on the family line.

This central aspect has been synthesized with the worship of deities, and Buddhism and Daoism have become major adjuncts. In other words, religions in China aside from the central core focusing on family should not be understood as separate religions, but serve to enhance this core, even though they are carried on outside of the family and clan structures, in temples, monasteries, etc. As will be discussed later, some initially functioned separately, but only those that synthesized with family rituals survived over the many centuries. To use the Chinese metaphor of trunk and branches, Chinese Religion is the trunk and the various regional variations, as well as the adjunct religions, are the branches. To continue the metaphor, the root of the tree is the global religion of Familism (*zuxianjiao* 祖先教) that will be introduced in the second part of this paper.<sup>3</sup>

It is important to point out that the problem in coming to terms with religion in China is not a problem for current specialists in Chinese Religion or religion in China. Rather it is a problem for those in religious studies in China and Taiwan who are unfamiliar with the realities of Chinese religion and history or who have not realized that their own personal and family experiences are relevant, and for those in government who are trying to manage religion in China, and to a lesser extent in Taiwan, while not according authenticity to the fundamental Chinese mode of religious expression. Moreover, it is a problem in North America as the religion of ethnic Chinese are not accorded recognition, and therefore legitimacy, by the Canadian and United States governments.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Christian Missionary Understanding of Chinese Religion*

A detailed history of the Christian depiction of religion in China can be

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of Chinese religious rituals, as well as their defining Chinese Religion, see my *The Spirits Are Drunk: Comparative Approaches to Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 1–22.

<sup>4</sup> David Chuenyan Lai, Jordan Paper, and Li Chuang Paper, “The Chinese in Canada: Their Unrecognized Religion,” in *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada*, eds. Paul Bramadat and David Seljak (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2005), 89–110.

found in my early publications.<sup>5</sup> In summary, Mateo Ricci, the first Jesuit to be allowed to enter China at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, followed the Jesuit scheme of focusing on the elite, with the understanding that if the leaders were converted to Christianity, then the rest of the population would be required to follow.<sup>6</sup> He quickly realized that conversion would be impossible if becoming Christian meant being unable to take part in family, clan and state rituals, since these rituals determined socio-political status. Ricci presented Christianity as an overlay on Chinese Religion similar to Buddhism. In order to do so, he created an understanding of religion in China that deliberately ignored most of Chinese religiosity. Ricci used the term *san jiao* 三教 (“Three Teachings”) to mean Three Religions, one of which, Confucianism as a religion, was a Jesuit invention. This was further advantageous to the Jesuit missionaries as some took on government positions, which meant that they would, as a matter of course, take part in state rituals. If these religious rituals were understood as religious, then these missionaries would have been burned at the stake for heresy upon returning to Europe, this being the time of the Inquisition. Over the course of a half millennium, the Jesuit invention of “Three Religions in China” became scholarly dogma; to deny its validity until quite recently amounted to academic heresy.

In the Jesuit writings sent to Europe (*Relations*), “Confucianism” was treated in two different ways. On the one hand, the Jesuits declared it to be a religion compatible with Christianity but missing the element of the Trinity. So the Chinese elite were ready and waiting for the Christian truth, thus arguing for the continuation of support for their mission. On the other hand, they treated Confucianism as a socio-political philosophy, but one that was superior to the divine right of kings then prevalent in Europe. Their idealized rendering of Chinese political philosophy promoted an enlightened quasi-democracy, with a monarch that reigned but did not rule, and was highly influential on a number of

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<sup>5</sup> Especially in my *The Spirits Are Drunk*, 23–50.

<sup>6</sup> Barrett has recently written, “Particular credit for identifying the relevance of Ricci for twentieth-century scholarship on Chinese religion must go to Jordan Paper (*The Spirits are Drunk*, 4–12); my own observations are intended to go further to fill in the picture by adding references to nineteenth-century sources, and demonstrating wherever possible the filiations between sources, in order to show how Ricci’s paradigm persisted.” T. H. Barrett, “Chinese Religion in English Guise: The History of an Illusion,” *Modern Asian Studies* 39 3 (2005): 511n.9.

European intellectuals, such as Voltaire and Leibnitz, who in turn, influenced Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine in America. These writings depicting a highly idealistic and romanticized Chinese government stimulated both the American and French revolutions. Particularly important, these writings provided the basic idea of modern democracy, that government exists for the benefit of the people governed, first articulated in the *Mengzi* 孟子, some twenty-five hundred years ago.

The Jesuits were followed by Dominican and Franciscan missionaries who ignored the elite and sought to convert the masses. They understood normative Chinese religion not to be a religion. They deemed it to be both gross superstition and the work of the Devil to be replaced by the true religion of Christianity. Those who converted were expected to act as Europeans rather than Chinese. This was accentuated by the treaties contingent on the so-called Opium Wars of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, especially the French language version of the treaty following the second war that accorded Chinese converts extraterritoriality—Chinese who converted to Christianity were no longer legally Chinese and not subject to Chinese laws.

The Americans through their Open Door policy came to understand that all of China belonged to them through the work of American Protestant missionaries and even deployed gunboats to the furthest reaches of the Yangtze River to protect them. To today, American foreign policy towards China, stimulated by conservative Republicans acting hand in hand with evangelical Christians, continues to press for the rights of foreign controlled Chinese Christianity and other subversive modes of religion in China to ultimately bring China under American sway.

This understanding of Chinese Religion, when it is recognized at all, maintains that it is superstition to be replaced by Western thinking. Thus, it is called a “folk religion,” meaning the ignorant religion of an uneducated, barely civilized people. Tellingly, the term folk religion is virtually only applied to Chinese Religion, as a perusal of Internet search engines will verify. Hinduism (literally the religion of the Indus River valley), also a foreign construct, is not called a folk religion because the British colonized South Asia solely for economic not ideological reasons, and Christian missionary activity was discouraged by the English East India Company so as not to further upset the population and threaten the corporation’s profits. Hence, Hinduism, rather than considered

superstition, ended up by being romantically idealized by many British and Americans.

Calling Chinese Religion a folk religion derogates Chinese Religion and is logically absurd, as it is the very opposite of a folk religion. The essential features of Chinese Religion, the oldest religion in the world for which we have documentary evidence, was the prerogative of the aristocratic clans from the Xia through the Zhou eras. Only in the Han period did the non-elite come to have family names and thus directly participate in Chinese Religion. Moreover, the central rituals of the Emperor and Empress up to a century ago were identical with the primary rituals of the peasantry, save being considerably more elaborate. The heads of provinces and districts not only had governmental functions but priestly ones as well. In the provincial and district government quarters there were several temples where the officials led rituals for the benefit of the region and to celebrate literati culture.

A modern replacement for “folk religion” is “popular religion,” which is often applied to Chinese Religion in scholarly writing. According to *A New Dictionary of Religions*:

There is no single definition of what constitutes ‘Popular Religion.’ Some scholars have defined it as rural in contrast to urban forms of religion, the religion of the peasant in contrast to that of the ruling classes; or, in a variation of this definition, the religion of the masses as contrasted with that of the intellectual or sophisticated classes. If, however, popular religion is seen in contrast to ‘official’ religion, the latter defined as religion founded on authoritative documents and propagated and maintained by religious specialists, priests or hierarchy, then the term ‘popular’ can apply to any layperson, whether peasant or ruling-class, who adopts beliefs and practices which may be at odds with the religious specialist’s views . . .<sup>7</sup>

Of course, none of these meanings are relevant to Chinese Religion. Thus, the term, probably unwittingly for most scholars who use it, perpetuates the

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<sup>7</sup> John R. Hinnells, ed., *A New Dictionary of Religions* (print publication date: 1995), Blackwell Reference Online, ([http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/book.html?id=g9780631181392\\_9780631181392](http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/book.html?id=g9780631181392_9780631181392)).



Christian missionary contempt for Chinese Religion and Chinese culture.

Hence, a current Chinese term to designate Chinese Religion, *minjian zongjiao* 民間宗教, when referring to Chinese culture, should not be translated as “folk religion” or “popular religion,” both of which imply the religion of the uneducated or religion other than the mainstream religion of the culture, but should be translated as “Chinese [Han] ethnic religion.” “Ethnic” in this usage means the characteristics of a people or culture. It should be noted that the term *minjian zongjiao* copied the Japanese usage, as did the term for religion itself, *zongjiao* 宗教, and many of these borrowings poorly fit the Chinese language context and have caused much confusion over the years.

### *The Development of Religious Studies*

The earliest students of comparative religion were the Jesuits, who wrote their *Relations* to Europe from their missionary centers in (present-day) China, Canada and Paraguay describing the religion and other features of non-Western cultures as they perceived them. Eventually non-Western religions began to be taught in divinity schools, institutes for the training of Protestant ministers and missionaries. Within European and American universities, it was taught under the umbrella of knowing the enemy to better convert the “natives.” As late as 1960, when I wished to study comparative religion in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago under the tutelage of Eliade and Kitagawa, I had to leave after a year because as a non-Christian I could not honestly pass the faith-based examinations designed for the Christian ministry required before one could specialize in non-Christian religions. As I discovered, the same requirement was also to be found at such universities as Harvard and Princeton. Accordingly, I shifted to the study of classical Sinology with a focus on intellectual history. When I was able to move back into religious studies in the early 1970s, I approached religion not from a Christian or even a Western perspective but from a Chinese one. This allowed me to more readily perceive Native American and African religions than my colleagues trained in divinity schools, and these studies, in turn, further heightened my understanding of Chinese Religion.

The religious studies situation only began to change in the mid-1960s with the development of religious studies programs in state-supported American universities. But even in the 1970s at the University of Toronto, for example, those who taught East Asian religions were retired Christian missionaries from

China and Japan, and one was replaced following retirement by a former Catholic nun with close ties to an influential European Catholic theologian. She was a major influence on turning the Center for World Religions at the Chinese Academy for the Social Sciences for a while towards Christian theology rather than religious studies—the two fields considered distinctly separate in the West.

Thus, students who came out of these programs were indoctrinated to understand religion from a Christian perspective, often without understanding the degree of the indoctrination and how it influenced their understanding of non-Christian religions. With regard to Chinese Religion, a change took place beginning in the 1960s when scholars began to either intensively study literary, Daoist or Buddhist Chinese, and thus begin to think in Chinese terms, or became fluent in spoken Chinese and studied Chinese Religion in situ, that is, did actual field work, particularly in Taiwan, and perceived how Chinese live their religion. Most Western scholars of religion in China now do understand Chinese Religion, but this understanding has not by and large influenced contemporary Chinese thinking on religion in their own culture, an understanding which is rooted in a non-Chinese Christian model.

The contemporary rise of fundamentalism in the monotheistic traditions, however, is now having an impact on some Western scholars of Chinese civilization. Several decades ago, a few neurobiologists and psychiatrists were arguing that the concept of a monotheistic deity is hardwired into the brain. Two proponents moved from biology to the new cognitive approach to religion to argue that Christ is a part of all human minds.<sup>8</sup> Recently, a classical Sinologist working with a Protestant theologian has understood the new cognitive science of religion to posit as a fact that “a high, moralizing god with strategic knowledge who exercises of kind of high moral providence”—that is, the God of the Hebrew Bible—is an essential feature of human cognition. They analyzed pre-Han dynasty texts and found ample proof that a punitive monotheistic deity was present in early Chinese culture.<sup>9</sup> It is not being suggesting that those in the

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<sup>8</sup> Eugene G. d'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1979), 87.

<sup>9</sup> James Clark and Justin T. Winslett, “The Evolutionary Psychology of Chinese Religion: Pre-Qin High Gods as Punishers and Rewarders,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (hereafter *JAAR*) 79.4 (2011): 928–60. See also my response in *JAAR* 80.2 (2012): 518–21 and their rejoinder in *JAAR* 80.2 (2012): 522–24.

cognitive study of religion themselves would state this, for the logical corollary is that polytheists—in this case, most Chinese from the Han dynasty on—are sub-human, the ultimate paradigm of the colonialist-imperialist mindset. One hopes that this is an isolated development and not a trend. I am not the only Sinologist who has noted the ethnocentric bias of the new cognitive studies of religion. Harold Roth, for example, has also argued that the cognitive approach is often a matter of unreflective ethnocentrism and cognitive imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

*Defining Religion According to the Christian Model and Its  
Relationship to Chinese Religion*

The effect of studying non-Western religion through a Christian lens is to understand religion both in general and in various cultures on the model of Christianity. But Christianity, as I will argue, is an anomaly among religions worldwide and is so idiosyncratic that it is the worst possible model for understanding religion globally.

An analysis of Christianity presents at least twelve determining factors, most of which are unique to Christianity:

1. Belief: Belief is fundamental to Christianity in general (and is crucial to most Protestant traditions in distinction to Catholicism as they understand salvation by faith alone) because adherence to a creed is essential to membership, especially the belief in a triune, singular deity, which is inherently illogical and thus requires faith. Thus, most dictionary definitions of religion focus on belief. Religions are often called “faith traditions.” No other religious tradition centers on faith; for example, in Judaism, behavior—performing *mitzvah*—is far more important than belief. If one accepts the existence of God, which is not required, then God is necessarily understood to be singular. This is acceptance rather than belief. In Chinese Religion, belief is utterly meaningless, because knowing one has parents and grandparents, the numinous focus, is not a matter of faith but basic knowledge learned in infancy. A recent Supreme Court of Canada decision defined religion solely by individual belief.<sup>11</sup> Thus, now in Canada there is

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<sup>10</sup> Harold D. Roth, “Against Cognitive Imperialism: A Call for a Non-Ethnocentric Approach to Cognitive Science and Religious Studies,” *Religion East & West* 8 (2008), 1–26.

<sup>11</sup> *Syndicat Northcrest v. Amselem* [2004] 2 S.C.R. 551.

freedom of belief but not necessarily freedom of religious behavior or practices without belief in the Christian sense.

2. Singular truth: Arising from monotheism is the understanding that there can only be a single Truth. Therefore, all other religious traditions are necessarily wrong, misguided or incomplete. Other traditions or viewpoints, accordingly can be understood as a threat; hence, the justification for inquisitions and crusades. Polytheistic traditions are necessarily relativistic with regard to truth. Thus, in Chinese culture there is no potential tension between religious and other kinds of knowledge, such as scientific understandings, because truths are understood as multiple.
3. Life-cycle sacraments: Catholicism has seven sacraments necessary for salvation, including marriage (due to the doctrine of “original sin,” sexual intercourse is sinful save when sanctified by the marriage ritual solely for the purpose of reproduction). In other traditions, salvation, let alone salvation through sacraments, is uncommon, and the number of life-cycle rituals is far more limited and not sacramental. Traditionally in China, for example, marriage is a matter of relationships between families and the bringing of a new member into the patrilocal family, not to sanctify otherwise evil sexuality.
4. Focus on individuals: Although Christianity understands the Church to be the body of believers, the focus on individual salvation, along with a celibate priesthood, denigrates the family, an attitude found as early as the letters of Paul and the Gospels. Missionaries have informed Chinese that family rituals are the work of the Devil. This is contrary to all other major religions. Christianity focused on individual salvation because in its first generation it was expected that the world as we know it would come to an end. Because Roman religion included religion of family and state, Christianity’s focus on the individual was perceived as a threat to the social order. Chinese culture is opposite to Christianity and the focus is on the family, clan and group, and individualism is secondary to family membership. Salvation as such is through the continuation of the family.
5. Creation myths: Creation myths are also part of the related traditions of Judaism and Islam, but most other religious traditions have instead origin myths, which may be of a clan, a culture, a city-state, etc. In these traditions, existence is a given prior to the particular origin narrative. It was often