

one of its most enthusiastic proponents. The list of authors is a veritable who's who of legal scholars writing about Taiwan in English, and it is a major achievement to bring these chapters together in a single volume of original scholarship written in engaging and accessible prose.

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*The Sinicization of Chinese Religions: From Above and Below*

Edited by RICHARD MADSEN

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From 2015 onwards, the motto of the Chinese government's religious policy has been to resolutely implement the "Sinicization (*Zhongguohua*)" of practices, beliefs and organizations. The wording may be misleading: "Sinicization from above" (as Richard Madsen, the editor of this volume, designates the official line) refers first and foremost to the obligation imparted over all religious organizations to fit the needs of China's present state of development and the characteristics of a socialist society. Modes of implementation differ according to the degree of integration into Chinese culture and ethos (the latter being normatively defined by the party-state) proper to each officially sanctioned religion. Therefore, behind the unicity of the motto lie a variety of challenges and objectives arbitrated by intersecting culturalist and political motives. This book contrasts the strategies and effects associated with such an imperative to those that derive from "Sinification from below," traditionally called inculturation, indigenization or localization, an endeavour that has necessarily been undertaken by every religion entering China throughout the ages. In general, inculturation is mainly a product of the agency of ordinary believers.

Madsen's introduction aptly sketches a landscape in which the interactions that continue to occur produce "an irrepressible diversity that the homogenizing project of Sinicization from above fails to contain" (p. 12). The first chapter, penned by Fenggang Yang, scrutinizes the political background of the motto, and notably the efforts dedicated at Sinicizing Marxism. In parallel, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed numerous scholarly efforts at understanding the way Buddhism acculturated in China. It is upon this double background that the challenge met by Chinese Christianity is presently articulated: the contrast between (acceptable) cultural "Sinicization" and (intrusive) political "Chinafication" (as Feng would like us to translate *Zhongguohua*) has become accented with particular strength, presenting Christian churches with sometimes harrowing dilemmas.

Yong Chen draws the outlines of a model of "Official Confucianism" accepted by the Party. Though rich in references, the thesis developed in this chapter is debatable: do the numerous (and very scattered) quotes of the Classics to be found in Xi Jinping's discourses for instance amount to a form of "Confucianism," a label (as Chen himself recognizes) that is avoided in Party documents? Till today, the uneasiness of the relationship existing between Confucianism and Marxism and the prominence of the references to the latter remain a striking feature of the regime.

The chapter on Buddhism authored by Weishan Huang illustrates the interactions taking place between Sinification(s) from above and from below. It shows how difficult it may be for Buddhist Masters and temples to satisfy to official directives and, notably, to operate the “return to tradition” that, according to Huang, the Sinification campaign aims at fostering. By introducing the category of tradition, Huang stresses the “culturalist” dimension of the current religious policy more than the other contributors to this volume do. This feature may derive from the specificity of the tasks requested from Buddhist institutions contrasted with, say, Muslim or Christian actors: the Chinese government presently elects a form of Chinese Buddhism emblematic of the national tradition rather than turned towards modernization and internationalization. As shown by Dong Wang in the next chapter, which is focused on the reception of the Buddhist stone images of Luoyang, this “traditionalist” view of Chinese Buddhism is anchored into stereotypes and omissions. Throughout history, the richness and religious diversity of the site where these sculptures are located were interpreted according to shifting representations, which political power decisively shaped.

Alexander Steward’s chapter on Sinicized Islam in Qinghai and Ningxia is by far the richest of the book in ethnographic data, and the one that best illustrates the subtleties and contradictions that Sinification from below entails. If Islamic revivalism in the Chinese context has aspired, from the 1980s onwards, to internationalization and greater orthopraxis, it maintains and continues to grow specifically Chinese features, reinforced by the continuous adaptations that Chinese Hui communities need to negotiate with the state apparatus. Neither assimilating with Han secularism nor maintaining traditional Hui lifestyle at all cost, Chinese Muslim revivalism fosters a subjective understanding of its faith as well as private practices of it.

J. Gordon Melton’s chapter on heterodox cults offers a useful historical narrative and a classification of the various movements that the *xiejiao* (“evil cults”) category encompasses. However, probably because of the current quasi-impossibility to undertake fieldwork on the subject, the material of the chapter is slightly outdated, and this contribution inserts itself only with some difficulty into the framework of the book.

Though offering stimulating contributions, this remains a rather slim volume for an important and multifaceted topic. More could have been said on the practical challenges met by official Catholic and Protestant communities (Madsen’s introduction partly fills the gap), and official guidelines and strategies would have required detailed examination. Additionally, the presentation of the Sinification campaign would have benefited from being located within the question of the sacrality that the party-state imparts to itself, of the progressive rebuilding in the Xi era of forms of “secular” sacredness, so to speak. As it is, this book well testifies to a major shift in the field: the focus on state initiative has taken precedence over the stress that, for a few decades, had been given to the agency exercised by religious actors. Nowadays, grassroots religious creativity in China is of a reactive rather than of a proactive nature.

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