IIAS Seminar
21-22 April 2016
Leiden, the Netherlands

Program

New Religious Nationalism in Chinese Societies

Venue
Museum of Ethnology, Pavillion Steenstraat 1, Leiden

Convenor
Prof. Cheng-tian Kuo
Taiwanese Chair of Chinese Studies
IIAS & Leiden University
/National Chengchi University, Taiwan
New Religious Nationalism in Chinese Societies

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Organised by
IIAS
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Co-sponsored by
Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange
http://www.cckf.org
Thursday 21 April 2016

8.30 – 9.00
Registration and coffee

9.00 – 9.10
Words of Welcome
Willem Vogelsang, International Institute for Asian Studies, the Netherlands

9.10 – 10.40  Keynote Speeches

Chair: Willem Vogelsang

Signs of New Religious Nationalism in Chinese Societies
Cheng-tian Kuo
IIAS and Leiden University, the Netherlands / National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Contemporary Chinese Religions and the Challenge of Religious Diversity
Philip Clart
University of Leipzig, Germany

10.40 – 11.00  Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00  Session 1

Panel Chair and Discussant: Philip Clart

Sinocentric Religious Sensibilities in Modern and Contemporary China
Adam Yuet Chau
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

A Civil Religion in the Making: On the Peculiar Case of Chinese Intellectuals’ Using of Leo Strauss to Support State Ideology
Hao Yeh
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China
Robert D. Weatherley
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch
14.00 – 16.00 Session 2

Panel Chair and Discussant: Lennert Gesterkamp

The Idea of Chineseness and the Ethnic Thought of Wang Fuzhi
Chi-shen Chang
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Sinicization as National Mission: Political Strategy and Historiographical Theory
Julia Schneider
University of Göttingen, Germany

Questioning the Spectre of Religious Nationalism: Two Projects of Belonging in Taiwan
Edmund Frettingham and Yih-jye Hwang
Leiden University College The Hague, the Netherlands

16.00 – 16.20 Coffee break

16.20 – 17.50 Session 3

Panel Chair: Robert D. Weatherley

"We Are Good Citizens": An Examination of the Tension between Christians and the State in Contemporary China
Yen-zen Tsai
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Discussant: Robert D. Weatherley

Taiwanese Christianity and National Identities
Kong-hi Lo
Tainan Theological College and Seminary, Taiwan

Discussant: Stefania Travagnin
Friday 22 April 2016

9.00 – 11.00  Session 4

Panel Chair and Discussant: Julia Schneider

Multiple Religious Identification and Performance: Mazu Pilgrimages across the Taiwan Strait after 1987
Hsun Chang
Academia Sinica, Taiwan

The Vehicle of Religion in the Formulation of Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: From Goddess Mazu to God Nezha
Fang-long Shih
London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom

The Buddhist Homeland and the International Lineage of DDM Meditation Groups in US
Yu-chen Li
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

11.00 – 11.20  Coffee break

11.20 – 12.50  Session 5

Panel Chair and Discussant: Bart Dessein

Hajj and the Transformation of Chinese Muslim Identity in the Republican Era (1911-1949)
Yuan-lin Tsai
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Nationalism Matters: Among Mystics and Martyrs of Tibet
Antonio Terrone
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

12.50 – 13.50  Lunch
13.50 – 15.50  Session 6

Panel Chair and Discussant: Adam Yuet Chau

Daoism and Nationalism  
Shu-wei Hsieh  
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Religion and the Nation: Confucian and New Confucian Religious Nationalism  
Bart Dessein  
Ghent University / European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels, Belgium

I-Kuan Tao (Yiguandao) under the Shadow of Nationalism: Collaborator? Conspirator? Traditionalist? Loyalist?  
Ching-chih Lin  
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

15.50 – 16.10  Coffee Break

16.10 – 17.40  Session 7

Panel Chair and Discussant: Cheng-tian Kuo

The Question of Hong Kong Identity and the Rise of Localism  
Malte P. Kaeding  
University of Surrey, United Kingdom

Hong Kong Christianity and National Identity: From Civilizing, to Civilize, and to Re-civilization  
Yun Ray Wang  
National Chengchi University, Taiwan

17.40 – 18.00  Concluding remarks
Signs of New Religious Nationalism in Chinese Societies

Since the beginning of the 21st century, three models of religion-state relations have taken shape in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, each would have important implications for both its internal stability and external relations. While the “rise of China” has been fanatically propelled by a state religion called “Chinese patriotism,” in Taiwan a civil religion that promotes checks-and-balances between the state and religion have largely replaced the state’s dominance over religion. By contrast, religion-state relations in Hong Kong are moving precariously between the Chinese model and the Taiwanese model.

Although “revisionist” scholars have successfully challenged the hitherto dominant school of “modernity” to explain religion-state relations in Chinese societies, they fall short on normative and political analysis. This paper proposes a neuro-institutional approach to compliment the revisionist approach with a normative and political assessment of proper religion-state relations in Chinese societies.

This paper traces the roots of Chinese religion-state relations to common psychological and institutional responses of Chinese intellectuals and political leaders to threats of modernity from the late Qing dynasty to the Republican era. After 1949, threats of modernity and, concomitantly, religion-state relations evolved differently in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong due to idiosyncratic domestic and external political relations. In China, the United Fronts strategy of religion-state cooperation was soon replaced by a radical Leninist strategy to eliminate religion from 1957 to 1979. Although liberal reforms since 1979 brought back the United Fronts strategy, a new state religion of Chinese patriotism has been under construction and is near its completion. In Taiwan, a similar United Fronts strategy of religion-state relations provided political stability to the KMT party-state from 1949 to 1987. However, the initiation and consolidation of democracy after 1987 have contributed to the rise of a civil religion shared by most religions that provides for healthy checks-and-balances between the state and religion. In Hong Kong, a strict separation of state and religion was maintained by the British colonial government from 1949 to 1997. But the turnover of sovereignty to the Chinese government after 1997 saw increasing confrontations between Chinese patriotism and an emerging civil religion.

Then, this paper systematically compares these three models of religion-state relations in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, in terms of their contemporary treatments of five interrelated issues in religion-state relations: (1) the state religion, (2) the separation of state and religion, (3) the conflict between national sovereignty and religious autonomy, (4) the “superstition” of Chinese traditional religions, and (5) the applicability of Western democracy to religion-state relations in Chinese societies.
Philip CLART  
Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leipzig, Germany

Contemporary Chinese Religions and the Challenge of Religious Diversity

The gradual relaxation of the People’s Republic of China’s political control over religious life since the late 1970s has enabled an unprecedented upsurge in religious activities (dubbed “religion fever,” zongjiaore, in public discourse). Christian house churches, lineage ancestral shrines, community temples, Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, to name just a few phenomena, have sprung up in many places. This paper will not study these developments per se, but instead will focus on the attempts of Chinese academics to develop theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks that account for this upsurge and for the highly diversified nature of the emerging religious scene. At present, there exist two major models: (1) a religious market approach propounded mostly by sociologists, which sees the various religious groups engaged in competition for adherents in locally, regionally, and nationally defined markets; (2) a religious ecology approach favoured by historians and folklorists, which regards the diversity of religious groups as existing within a larger cultural system tending towards a state of balance. Competition happens in such a system, but is ultimately subordinate to the system’s overall tendency to harmonize its components and bring them into complementary rather than competitive relations.

The sometimes acrimonious nature of the debates between the two scholarly camps indicates that there is more at stake than purely academic differences. Each of the two positions has political ramifications that tend to make the establishment of a middle ground difficult. Thus, through the study of these debates we can gain insights into the close relationship in PRC academia between research and policy-making.

Adam Yuet CHAU  
University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Sinocentric Religious Sensibilities in Modern and Contemporary China

This paper proposes to examine the rise of sinocentric sensibilities in modern and contemporary China (late 19th century to today) through a few case studies. There are two key periods in modern Chinese in which sinocentric religious sensibilities came to the fore. The first period is during the late Qing and Republican eras, where various religious traditions faced severe modernist and imperialist challenges. It was during this period that some religious and political elites attempted to link various religious traditions to the fate and even the survival of the Chinese nation. The Republican-era state-led mobilisation of religious forces was also often couched in patriotic terms (e.g. during the Sino-Japanese War). The second period of religious sinocentrism is during the reform era (1980s to the present), when nationalist sentiments intermingle with new forms of religious expressions (e.g. the exploration of military uses for qigong 气功, the proposed Chinese-language theology 汉语神学, the controversial notion of a ‘China religion’ 中华教 to characterise Chinese indigenous, especially popular, religious traditions in order to counter the infiltration and expansion of ‘foreign’ religions 洋教, the transformation of Confucianism into a universalist religion, etc.).
A Civil Religion in the Making: On the Peculiar Case of Chinese Intellectuals’ Using of Leo Strauss to Support State Ideology

With the rise of China over the past two decades, there emerged a group of Chinese intellectuals who have read and used the thought of Leo Strauss to participate in a number of debates ranging from the legacy of Mao, the nature of Cultural Revolution, to the future of Chinese renaissance. They feature prominently in today’s intellectual scene in the mainland, and have together been known as the Chinese Straussians.

This paper is meant to examine the way they read Leo Strauss, the resulting findings of this reading, and how they have used their findings to offer a defence for Mao and today’s political elitism associated with the Chinese Communist Party. Also will be discussed is the way some of the leading figures of the school of thought have traced a mythical Christian roots in the ancient Chinese texts, and used this mysticism to justify a new form of civil religion in the communist regime.

This paper argues that these Chinese Straussians not only abused the thought of Leo Strauss, but also turned it into a form of relativism against which he throughout his life fought. By placing this case against the background of China’s search for modernity over the last century, this paper offers a diagnosis of this school of thought as a phenomenon resulting from a national wound – in nature not much different from the Boxer Rebellion.

History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China

This paper will examine how the CCP is attempting to utilise certain aspects of Chinese history to bolster its nationalist legitimacy. Drawing on two examples - the destruction of the Old Summer Palace (1860) and the legacy of the Republican era (1912-49), I will show how the CCP has drawn on two types of nationalism. The first is an aggressive and uncompromising form of nationalism, emphasizing the trauma of the “century of humiliation” and intended to stir up public resentment towards “hostile” foreign powers. This is apparent in the frequent official reminders of the annihilation of the Old Summer Palace by Britain and France. The second form of nationalism is more conciliatory and consensual, emphasizing common ties with the KMT and intended to demonstrate a commitment to peaceful re-unification with Taiwan. This is apparent in the increasing acceptance that the KMT’s achievements during the Republican era were more creditable than previously depicted.

But the party’s attempt to fortify its nationalist legitimacy appears to be backfiring. In both cases, an energetic public debate has arisen involving the media, academics and netizens which has questioned the party’s nationalist credentials. On the Old Summer Palace, critics have accused the CCP of fabricating the official narrative of the incident and allowing China to remain subordinate to foreign powers despite more than 60 years of party rule. On the Republican era, critics have accused the CCP of withholding basic civil freedoms in contrast to those enjoyed during the Republic and of inadequately safeguarding Chinese sovereignty after 1949 despite CCP claims to the contrary. Ironically, instead of augmenting
its nationalist legitimacy, the CCP has precipitated a series of debates that are serving to erode its legitimacy.

Chi-shen CHANG
Department of Political Science, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

The Idea of Chineseness and the Ethnic Thought of Wang Fuzhi

Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692) has been widely regarded as a significant figure in the history of Chinese nationalist thought. Admitting that some ideas of Wang’s ethnic thought bear striking resemblance to those of nationalism, in this paper I attempt to explore his ethnic thought from a new perspective.

First, I present a thesis regarding the three elements of Chineseness upheld in the history of Chinese ethnic thought, namely, the cultural, the geographical and the ethnic. Based on these elements, thinkers in each age constructed their respective ideas about the essence of China, thus forming their own version of Chinese identity.

Second, by employing this thesis as the theoretical framework, the ethnic thought of Wang is analyzed, and its main points are interpreted in the new light. Among these points, the most interesting ones include the priority of the Chinese interest over the interest of dynastic regimes, the new ethics regarding the protection of Chinese interest as the ultimate good and the supreme natural law, and the new concepts concerning the nature of the Chinese and Yidi.

Third, comparisons are undertaken between Wang’s ethnic thought and the ideas of modern nationalism on the one hand, and between Wang and those prior to him on the other. The former comparison enable us to see how Wang’s ethnic thought are similar to as well as different from modern nationalism. By the latter comparison, the contributions made by Wang to the development of the Chinese ethnic thought are evaluated.

Julia C. SCHNEIDER
University of Göttingen, Germany

Sinicization as National Mission: Political Strategy and Historiographical Theory

In my paper I want to address the thesis of a “Chinese assimilative power”, i.e. the thesis of a power of sinicization as a nationalist strategy in intellectual discourses of the 1900s-1920s. The thesis has been part of Chinese nationalist thinking since nationalism was introduced into the intellectual discourse around 1900. It was applied in two ways: first, as a historiographical theory used to interpret contacts between the Chinese and Non-Chinese in all periods of time; second, as a possible political strategy to integrate Non-Chinese people into the Chinese nation as a people and as a state. The application of the thesis of a “Chinese assimilative power” to historiography was in fact based on its necessity as a political strategy. History was used as theoretical evidence for the applicability and success prospects of sinicization when the “Chinese assimilative power” was used strategically.

When Chinese intellectuals began to think about China as a nation, they considered certain theories of nationalism as correct which postulated that those nations which were most homogenous with regard to factors were most stable and thus most powerful. These factors were for example place of living, blood relation, physical appearance, language, script, religion, tradition, and way of living. But with very few exceptions they imagined the Chinese nation-state in the territory of the Qing Empire with its inhabitants being extremely diverse concerning the above these factors.
Thus the idea of a “Chinese assimilative power”, based on the assumption of Chinese superiority as race and culture represented in Chinese Classics like the Mengzi and the Gongyang zhuan, and on social Darwinist ideas of superior and inferior people, came as a handy strategy. According to it, all Non-Chinese people in the Qing Empire could and eventually would be assimilated to the Chinese—they would be sinicized.

I will try to link the thesis of a “Chinese assimilative power” as used in early Chinese nationalism to religious concepts of missionizing. To approach Chinese nationalism based on the suggestion that nationalisms are like or are religions, means that it might be reasonable to apply concepts of missionizing to the thesis of a “Chinese assimilative power”. In how far does the idea of sinicization resemble certain aspects of religious missionizing as transformation and change of a people’s identity?

Edmund FRETTINGHAM
Leiden University College The Hague, the Netherlands

Yih-Jye HWANG
Leiden University College The Hague, the Netherlands

Questioning the Spectre of Religious Nationalism: Two Projects of Belonging in Taiwan

This paper examines the constitution of the religion-nation nexus in the discursive practices of two religious societies in Taiwan: the Buddhist Fougushan movement and the Christian Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. The paper examines, in particular, the distinctive ways in which relations of belonging are framed in the two movements, the ways in which national and religious identity are conceived, and the ways in which tensions between national, cultural, ethnic and religious belonging are negotiated. It concludes that the broader religious traditions of which these movements are a part provide distinctive discursive contexts constraining and enabling the production of powerful discourses on the nation. However, the diverse nature of these traditions, and the ways in which they are mediated by social and political context of Taiwan, means that the generic concept of ‘religion’ has little to contribute to understanding these developments. This conclusion in turn points more broadly to the limits of general models of religion and nationalism.

Yen-zen TSAI
Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

“We Are Good Citizens”: An Examination of the Tension between Christians and the State in Contemporary China

Benefiting from China’s Reform-and-Open policy implemented in 1978, Chinese Christians have in general enjoyed more religious freedom in the post-Mao era than before. This relative freedom, however, is fragile and precarious. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), based upon its atheist ideology, sets up rules and regulations that restrict the religious group’s activities. Violators or non-conformists are easily arrested and sentenced to prison. Since Xi Jinping ascended to the presidency of the People’s Republic of China in 2012, suppression of the Chinese Christian churches has intensified. In my paper, I propose to approach this church-state tension by examining official documents that stipulate CCP’s religious policy and rules and regulations as the context in which the tension arises. I also analyze some of the important manifestos, petitions or theses recently produced by
unregistered Christian communities or individuals as responses to the state’s afflictions upon their faith, making clear where and why they oppose the official position. On the basis of my findings, I argue that both CCP and the unregistered Christians subscribe to a notion of religious nationalism but they emphasize this notion differently, and that this difference remains as a key factor underlying their present antagonistic relationship.

Kong-hi LO
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Taiwanese Christianity and National Identities

The issue of national identities that matters in Taiwanese Christianity is related to either legitimizing Chinese colonization or authorizing Taiwanese independence. Though Christians in Taiwan believe in One Lord Jesus Christ, they belong to different denominations such as the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Catholic Church, the Local Churches (also known as Chau-hoe or Assembly), the Bread of Life Christian Church (also known as Ling Liang Church), the True Jesus Church, the Chinese Baptist Convention, Taiwan Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Diocese of Taiwan, etc. Among these denominations, some like the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the biggest denomination, propose to make Taiwan independent, while others postulate themselves as Chinese or show no interest on national identity. The reason why the churches in Taiwan differ themselves on the choice of national identity might be derived out of their difference from one another in terms of biology, language, history, or scope of territory. For example, the Bread of Life Christian Church and the Local Churches, founded in China and moved to Taiwan after the World War Two, regard themselves as Chinese in terms of biology, speak Chinese as their mother tongue, and following the Chinese government in Taiwan treat Taiwan as part of China. However, implanted by the British church and the Canadian Church in the second half of the 19th century, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan spent more time with the native Taiwanese peoples and thus tends to stand with them. In the PCT’s understanding of history, Taiwan has been colonized by the Chinese Qin dynasty, by the Japanese Empire, and after the Second World War by the Chiang Kai-shek’s Republic of China. Based on the theology of the justice of God and Jesus’ love for the little ones, the PCT cannot justify such colonization and wish Taiwan never be invaded again. In current situation, the one that might annex Taiwan is the People’s Republic of China for her usual claiming Taiwan as part of China. The pro-Taiwan national identity of the PCT is, therefore, a form of resisting the PRC’s colonialism but by no means to exclude Chinese in Taiwan.

Since the Christianity in Taiwan is multi-denominational and differs themselves in national identities, this study will search church histories of major denominations in Taiwan and their postulations of national identity in the colonial context. The key way to analyze the related information will be derived from Manuel Castells’ sociological approach. Though major approaches in understanding nationalism include primordialism, perennialism, and constructivism, I agree with Castells that from a sociological perspective, all identities are constructed. One may ask how, from what, by whom, and for what a pro-china or a pro-Taiwan national identity is constructed. The building materials of either national identity might be derived from history, from geography, from biology, from institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and/or from religious revelations. The key issue in analyzing denominational postulation of national identity will be for what purpose such an identity is constructed. In Castells’ words, is it a legitimizing identity, resistance identity, or project identity? But for me, a member of the PCT, there can be added one more question: is it for the colonizer or for the colonized?
Hsun CHANG  
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Multiple Religious Identification and Performance:  
Mazu Pilgrimages across the Taiwan Strait after 1987

After the lifting of Martial Law in 1987 and the opening of cross-Strait trade, transportation, and postal service between Taiwan and China in 2000, pilgrimages to China have become a routine activity for many temples in Taiwan, especially in the case of temples to Mazu, who is the patron goddess of Taiwan. To the residents of Taiwan, Mazu is a symbol of Taiwanese identity; to the Chinese, Mazu is a symbol of peace between Taiwan and China. There are thus two coexisting interpretations of Mazu, and many little-known tensions between the Mazu believers and between the temples of Taiwan and China.

This paper focuses on the cross-Strait pilgrimage from Xingang Mazu Temple in Taiwan to Yongchun, Fujian in China in 2011, and the establishment of a branch temple in Fujian. In addition, the author shows that local politicians are employing Xingang Mazu Temple to attract tourists and as a platform for debate of a new religious nationalism.

Keywords: Mazu, pilgrimage, cross-Strait, religious nationalism

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The Vehicle of Religion in the Formulation of Nationalism in Contemporary Taiwan: From Goddess Mazu to God Nezha

This paper explores religion in Taiwan and its act in the formulation of Taiwan’s nationalism. Religion has since the 1980s reflected Taiwan’s politics and national identities; a shift from Chinese nationalism (1949-1987) to Taiwanese nationalism (1988 onwards), and a further transformation of Taiwanese nationalism from the first wave between 1988 and 2008 to the second wave from 2008 onwards. Sangren suggests that goddess Mazu and her island-wide pilgrimages which have constituted a ritual of pan-Taiwaneseness have served as the vehicle in the formulation of Taiwanese nationalism toward building a valid nation in itself. However, in this paper, I argue that the role of Mazu has gradually been replaced by that of Nezha in the formulation of the second wave nationalism. In the case of Mazu, there were issues of dividing incense, dispute over the authenticity, and the ancestral temple in Mei-chou in China which were considered as irreconcilable. This has further complicated with political economic situation; since taking office, President Ma has prioritised the establishment of closer ties with rising China, and there have been 21 agreements made with China during the last 7 years. The unruly god of Nezha has thus been favoured by Taiwan’s youth and has further become a new actor for the formulation of a new Taiwanese nationalism; the youth perform in a traditional Nezha giant body puppet but dress up in modern fashions, wearing sun glasses as they dance to techno music and in time to disco beats, and this adaptation is known as “the Techno Nezha the Third Prince”. Many performers of the Techno Nezha have been travelling as many countries as they could within a body puppet of fourteen kilograms as well as with ROC national flags at the back decorated with LED lights. Acting so they are seeking to connect Taiwan via the performance of Nezha with the rest of the world and thus to create a political space for Taiwan. In the conclusion, I claim that the second wave of Taiwanese nationalism has been formulated through symbolic struggle; the performance of
the unruly god Nezha has been identified as unruly Taiwan, and Nezha’s attempt to establish his autonomy from his father is drawn as an analogy with Taiwan’s struggle to build its own nation. However, Nezha’s conflict with his father that is the precondition to human being is an analogy of the conflict of Taiwan with its “fatherland” China that has been seen as inevitable and unavoidable. The problem is not conflict and resistance as such, but how to ensure that the energies of conflict and resistance do not spill out into actual violence but can be constructively contained and directed towards the production of symbolic capital in the 21st century’s culture wars.

Yu-chen Li  
Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, National Chengchi University, Taiwan  
The Buddhist Homeland and the International Lineage of DDM Meditation Groups in US

In this paper I will investigate the expansion of Dharma Drum Mountain in the United States of America through its central practice of Chan. Its founder Venerable Shengyan (1931-200) began to teach Chan meditation both in New York and Taipei in 1976, and established the DDM school of Chinese Chan in 1997 (中華禪法鼓宗). He had devoted himself to revive the Chan practice in the Sung Dynasty for contemporary life-style, known as the spiritual environmentalism (心靈環保), differentiating from the traditional ritual-and-merit practice of other Chinese Buddhist groups. In 2005 he appointed 12 heirs with different ethnic and citizen background. He made it clear that the “heirs” were appointed to serve the organizational functions of propagating the Buddha-Dharma based on Chan practice; the “Dharma heirs” were not modeled after the idea of “eldest sons” as in the “transmission of lamp” tradition.

Originally rooted in Chinese immigrant communities, DDM communities which have moved beyond the cultural boundary of Chinese Buddhist groups and relatively successfully integrated the “ethnic” practitioners and “convert” practitioners. The identity of the renewed Sung Chan, as well as non-Chinese-dominated Chan lineage, creates a religious niche for DDM followers to resolve the cultural, ethnic and political conflicts in an immigrant society. I will focus on the internationalization of Taiwanese Buddhism and the concept of DDM lineage shared by followers who migrated from Taiwan and China to the United States.

Yuan-lin TsaI  
Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, National Chengchi University, Taiwan  
Hajj and the Transformation of Chinese Muslim Identity in the Republican Era (1911-1949) — Islamic Ummah vs. Chinese Nation

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam and the most important symbol of the unity of the Muslim Ummah. The Hajj pilgrims who return to Makkah and observe the mandated rituals at the holy sites would have a profound feeling of having gone through a life-transforming spiritual experience and belonging to a global community that shares the same religious beliefs. Before the mid-19th century, few people were able to make their way to Makkah for the pilgrimage, especially Chinese Muslims, who had lived in the far eastern corners of the Islamic world and had to dedicate a year or more to the journey through the difficulty “silk routes” by either land or sea. After the western colonial powers reopened the door to China after the Opium War (1840-1842) and used firearms and steamships to control the sea routes, it made easy for the Chinese Muslims to perform the hajj pilgrimage. Many
researches have already related the first global wave of Islamic revival to the hajj pilgrimage at the tide of western imperialism from the mid-19th to early 20th century, but few of them deeply concern the impact of the re-opened pilgrimage way to the Chinese Muslim communities.

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the founding father of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen, immediately proclaimed that the new country belonged equally to the five nationalities, including Han, Manchu, Mongol, Hui (Chinese Muslim), and Tibetan. But according to Sun’s first People’s Principle, Nationalism, all ethnic nationalities in China should eventually be assimilated into a new Chinese nationality. The Nationalist government followed Sun’s Nationalist Principle and tried to implement the assimilation policy to ethnic minorities. In the new historical context of pan-Islamism and Chinese nationalism, it is interesting to see how the Chinese hajjis, and the Chinese Muslims as a whole, understood and responded to the Islamic revivalist call to the unity of the Ummah and the Chinese nationalist voice to build up a new nation-state.

My article will explore the relationship between the re-awakening of the Chinese Muslim identity and the hajj pilgrimage in the Republican era on the basis of a large amount of original official documents, news reports, memoirs and other biographical materials regarding the Chinese Muslims’ hajj experience and their responses to Islamic revivalism and Chinese nationalism. Indeed, both the unity of the Ummah and equal right among ethnic nationalities were ideals, not realities. Perhaps under the shadow of the massacre on the Hui communities in the northwestern and southwestern regions in the late Qing era, most Chinese Muslims doubted that the Han majority would treat them as equals. Some of them might put their great expectations with their religious homeland. But it was not all of the hajj experience positive. Once a Muslim pilgrim saw that Arab and non-Arab Muslims were not really equal even in the Holy Land, or Muslims from different countries were not in unity at all in the Islamic world, he or she could disillusionize the ideal of the Muslim unity and return to their mother country to join the reform movement to improve their minority status. However, for the Chinese Muslim hajjis in the historical context of Republican China, their choice would not simply be the either/or question between the Muslim jihadist and the patriotic Hui citizen.

Antonio TERRONE
Graduate Institute of Religious Studies, National Chengchi University, Taiwan

Nationalism Matters: Among Mystics and Martyrs of Tibet

This paper looks at two cases that may reflect nationalistic strategies in contemporary Tibetan regions of China: one is the emergence of Tibetan Buddhist encampments and academies, such as Larung Gar originally founded by the Buddhist visionary Khenpo Jikmé Puntsok (1933-2004) and the other is the recent case of self-immolations in Tibet during the six years between 2009 and 2015. The paper considers the ways in which religious ideologies and practices intersect with politics when motivated by nationalistic sentiment. It argues that not only has ethno-religious nationalism not declined among Tibetans in China against the predictions of secularist theories such as Marxist-Leninism, but rather these two case studies show that ethno-religious nationalism still matters for Tibetans in today’s increasingly globalized world. The definition of religion and nationalism has not met with universal consensus and this is further complicated when we attempt to engage the notion of religious nationalism. At the same time, recent scholarly works have increasingly portrayed nationalism as a motivator for religious fundamentalism, extremism and violence. A general understanding of religion includes the notion that religious myths, doctrines and beliefs are
often major players in the development of ethnic and national identity. The mass movement behind the new hybrid Buddhist encampments in Tibet and the phenomenon of self-sacrificing individuals who immolate themselves calling for social change, respect for their traditions, and the return of their leader, the Dalai Lama can corroborate such a notion.

Can we interpret the engagement with an ancient traditions of scriptural revelation, charismatic leadership, nostalgic recover of ancient empire myths, and altruistic self-sacrifice as signs of fundamentalism taking deep roots among Tibetans? The surge of self-immolation in Tibet since 2009 has changed the history of the nation, shed further light on Tibetans’ deep frustration with the Chinese state, while unveiling the controversial issues of martyrdom, religious violence, and Buddhist fundamentalism. The paper suggests that forms of moderate fundamentalism, or “soft nationalism,” and militant nationalism may be at place in Tibet in response to a complex set of political, economic, and social maneuvers characteristic of both Chinese and global trends including increased state-level secularization programs, marketization of religion, the threat of the levelling effects of homogenization and loss of common identity, and the marginalizing of the cultural, language, and religious concerns of minorities.

Shu-wei HSIEH
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Daoism and Nationalism

This paper explores the Daoist encounter with modernity through twentieth-century China. It focuses on the nationalism and Daoist resilience, reinvigoration, and revival. Since both nationalism and Daoism are transformations of pre-modern traditions and identities, the emergence of the modern category of ‘Daoism’ is a product of the western encounter. The modern forms of Daoism and its relation with national identity are all produced in the twentieth-century China. Daoism is nationalized in early twentieth century and Daoism is made a part of national identity. Daoism as a native religion has to be tailored to fit a tale of national identity. During the twentieth-century, the efforts to renew and reform Daoism became deeply engaged with nationalism, science, the religious reform movements, as well as other movements of modernity. When Daoist renew movement conceived of the Daoist self-cultivation and philosophical traditions, they also offer a modernizing society a means of managing the body and the mind and provide a new cultural, spiritual, and religious identity. According to these Daoist leaders, promoting Daoism has a lot of effects in modern China, including building a sense of community, forging cultural self-identity, and strengthening the nation.

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Religion and the Nation: Confucian and New Confucian Religious Nationalism

In their description and assessment of the impact of the creation of a unified empire with the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE), and the recognition of Confucianism as the only official orthodoxy in the subsequent Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), Achim Mittag and Fritz-Heiner Mutschler claimed that the creation of the Chinese empire is significantly different from the Roman case: while the Romans saw history as a phenomenon of progressive expansion,
moving towards their domination of the world, for the Chinese, Confucian rulership meant the maintenance of harmony in the (then known) world that, through divine order, had been bestowed on the Confucian literati and that they held in trust for the ancestors above and the people below. Upholding the nation was therefore not only a political task, but also had religious ramifications. As a result, also the Confucian religious concepts (such as ancestor cult) were given a political interpretation. These interpretations were constantly revised in function of the historical events that shaped Chinese history. Also the position of other philosophies and religions in Chinese society was determined through this Confucian politico-religious paradigm.

The fact that, in China, any political action was considered to be a religious action as well, did not fundamentally change with the fall of the Confucian empire. Also the Republican zeal to re-establish a unified nation was – in its radical decline of Confucianism – fundamentally religious. This is confirmed in the fact that this anti-Confucian movement that has also been referred to as ‘iconoclastic nationalism’ was counterbalanced by the so-called ‘radical Confucian’ (junxue) movement, the adherents of which advocated that making a revolution in China did not mean that the country’s cultural heritage had to be overthrown, but that it was necessary to return to what they considered to be the ‘essence’ of Chinese civilization.

Also the recognition of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought as exclusive official orthodoxy in the first decades of the PRC was not a fundamental change with tradition. It can even be argued that Maoism took over Confucianism as a ‘religion’, endowed with its own peculiar sacred scripts, images, myths and legends.

A faltered Marxism-Leninism and Maoism has given way to a revival of various religions in contemporary China. This challenges the PRC default line of official orthodoxy. The tension between state orthodoxy and religious diversity is aggravated by the fact that religious divides very often concur with ethnic divides. In these circumstances, the contemporary CCP government is increasingly embracing Confucianism (now called New Confucianism) to uphold the idea of China’s glorious past and as an instrument of ‘belonging’ to a unified nation. As this was the case in imperial China, also in contemporary China Confucianism has been bestowed with a religious component, and as in imperial China, this new position of Confucianism shapes the position of other religious (and ethnic) groups of whom – as in imperial times – any religious activity is also interpreted as a political activity.

This contribution to the seminar will discuss the religious aspect of New Confucianism and its dynamic relation with other religious and social movements, and, through a comparison with imperial times, show how also in contemporary China, the position of religion is determined by the new political status of Confucianism.

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I-Kuan Tao (Yiguandao) under the Shadow of Nationalism: 
Collaborator? Conspirator? Traditionalist? Loyalist?

I-Kuan Tao has been portrayed as various, contradictory faces by different political authorities in the name of nationalism since Zhang Tianran succeeded the patriarch in the 1930s. With sentiment of anti-Japanese campaign after World War II, I-Kuan Tao was linked up with collaborators or traitors, due to its connection to the leadership of Wang Jingwei's government during 1940-1945. Moreover, I-Kuan Tao was accused of being conspirators and Kuomintang spies soon after the People's Republic of China established in 1949. Ironically, Kuomintang in Taiwan also viewed I-Kuan Tao as conspirators and Communist spies and
hence suppressed its organization and transmission for more than three decades. After the Kuomintang government recognized I-Kuan Tao’s legal status and rehabilitated its reputation in late 1980s in Taiwan, the massive adherents became the favorable voters that different political parties would like to win over in the process of democratization. To strengthen its legitimacy, I-Kuan Tao has emphasized the Confucian teaching and proclaimed its orthodoxy status of succeeding the tradition of Chinese cultural heritage, working in concert with Kuomintang’s traditionalist ideology of politicalized Confucianism—a legitimacy tool against the Cultural Revolution launched by the Communist Party.

For more than two decades, I-Kuan Tao has successfully propelled Confucian teaching and helped preserved Chinese tradition by promoting the movement of children’s reciting Chinese classics and poets in Taiwan. This movement resonated with the new nationalist trend of restoring Chinese tradition in general education in mainland China recently. Some Taiwanese I-Kuan Tao educators were silently invited to return to mainland and help promote Chinese tradition.

I-Kuan Tao’s modern fate and face have been closely entangled with political struggles under the shadow of nationalism.

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The Question of Hong Kong Identity and the Rise of Localism

The Umbrella Movement of 2014 drew the world’s attention again to Hong Kong’s development, almost two decades under Chinese sovereignty. Indeed the complex relation with the Chinese motherland has been a key factor in the recent wave of social movements. A new generation of activists has been voicing concerns about the political, socio-economic and cultural consequences of rapid integration with mainland China. In key sites of the Umbrella Movement the different reactions and approaches to integration became apparent and illustrated the variations in the renewed interest in a unique Hong Kong identity. Among the most visible and politically active groups are the so-called localists or Hong Kong autonomy forces. Mustering significant support they have managed to influence the political agenda, yet are vilified by the political establishment and mainstream media for their anti-China rhetoric and confrontational actions. The surge of localism does pose a momentous challenge to the current policies of integration promoted by the Hong Kong and Beijing governments.

This paper addresses the gap in academic research by providing a systematic examination of the various localist groups and their ideological underpinnings. Using in-depth interviews with leading activists as well as ideological masterminds of the movement, it analyses Hong Kong’s localism along the civic versus ethno-cultural framework and thus positions it within the development of a Hong Kong identity.

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Hong Kong Christianity and National Identity: From Civilizing, to Civilized, and to Re-civilization

Hong Kong had been the crown jewel of colonial power and it initiated various civilizing missions to China that have challenged and shaped modern Chinese national identity since
the mid-19th century. Christian communities, in particular, have played a critical role in building a pro-West “civilized” society that sustained economic prosperity and political stability for 151 years. The political transition in 1997 updated the society with a pro-East, patriotic identity that is expected to embrace and celebrate the rising economic and political influence of China. Hong Kong as a special administrative region of China once again walks on the path of civilization, but in a different direction: receiving Chinese nationalist missions to reconstruct its own view and the views of other overseas Chinese communities. Hong Kong in the 21st century is walking on a rough path filled with conflicting identities, which have been shown clearly in the diverse attitudes and behavior of local Christian groups toward current political events, such as the Occupy Central/Umbrella Revolution in 2015. A review of recent developments in Hong Kong reveals that a “re-civilization” process is emerging, and its potentially dangerous implications await our attention and examination.
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