The Anthropological Study of Religion in China: Contexts, Collaborations, Debates, and Trends

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ABSTRACT

In a country where "religion" is narrowly defined and strongly regulated, de facto religious activities vibrantly revived in the last three decades along with the steady growth of state-legible religions. The paper reviews the anthropological study of religion in the last three decades against the social, political, and academic contexts. I argue that this field is a fuzzy one. In response to the religious revival since the 1980s, the anthropological studies are rather fragmentary and diffused. One of the reasons is the fact that many scholars consciously or unconsciously adopt terms alternative to "religion" as subjects of study, terms like "culture", "folklore", "symbol", "heritage". Intensively involved in cross-border academic collaborations, anthropological studies of religion also cross-fertilise with history, folklore, religious studies, and ethnology. However, quality empirical studies on Chinese religious landscape is still insufficient, to the extent that two theoretical proposals are far from satisfactory. New trends include a focus on institutional religions and the creation of the journal Anthropology of Religion.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is revived at the very beginning of China's Reform and Open-up (*gaige kaifang*, 改革开放) policy. So did religion (Liang 2015). Both institutional, officially recognised religions and non-institutional, folk religions grow steadily over the last three decades. How, then, the anthropological study of religion make sense of the religious landscape in post-Mao China? What are the major concerns and findings? How to understand them? The chapter tries to provide a general answer to these questions.

While there is inspiring literature on Chinese anthropology as a discipline (Guldin 1994; Wang, Zhang and Hu 1998: 312-382; Harrell 2001; Wang 2005a, 2005b; Hu 2006: 179-226; Pieke 2014), little is said about how Chinese anthropologists respond to the religious landscape with its particular situatedness. When mentioned, the anthropology of religion is treated as a part of the overall construction of anthropology as a discipline rather than its connection to the changes in Chinese society and academia. I would like therefore highlight this important relationship because only through connecting to the historical specificity and current context, can we understand why the new anthropology in China approaches to religious landscape in such a particular manner that may make the field appear "fragmented" and "unsystematic".

Two articles on Chinese anthropology of religion have made significant contributions. Chen Jinguo (2009)'s review of the study of Chinese folk religion finds a demarcation between folkloristic and anthropological studies. However, the distinction seems to go little beyond the allocation of academic resources, while the affinity of the two is apparent. Comparing anthropological studies of religion in mainland China and Taiwan, Zhang Xun (2015) proposes that mainland China favours "the study of institutional religions". But Chen's encyclopaedic review of the study of "folk belief" actually challenges Zhang Xun's conclusion, which is perhaps valid only when contrasting the studies across the strait. Both may not give sufficient attention to the fact that many studies may approach religion metaphorically without using the word "religion". Therefore, a review of Chinese anthropology of religion needs to extend beyond the keywords of "religion", "anthropology", and "the anthropology of religion", a subject far from clarity. It needs to take into consideration the Chinese social and academic setting, especially the deep impact from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Euro-American academia.

The paper reviews the anthropological study of religion in the last three decades against the social, political, and academic contexts. I argue that this field is a fuzzy one. In response to the religious revival since the 1980s, the anthropological studies are rather fragmentary and diffused. One of the reasons is the fact that many scholars consciously or unconsciously adopt terms alternative to "religion" as subjects of study, terms like "culture", "folklore", "symbol", "heritage". Intensively involved in cross-border academic collaborations, anthropological studies of religion also cross-fertilise with history, folklore, religious studies, and ethnology. However, quality empirical studies on Chinese religious landscape is still insufficient, to the extent that two theoretical proposals are far from satisfactory. New trends include a focus on institutional religions and the creation of the journal *Anthropology of Religion*. Like other papers in this issue, the anthropology of religion in China refers to the studies conducted by scholars who work in mainland China since 1980.

I firstly put anthropology of religion in the contexts of religious revival and regulations and discusses its relation to religious studies and folkloristic studies. I then explore the ways and reasons which religion is studied under alternative labels. Thirdly, I will review the external academic impact and cross-disciplinary studies that both profoundly changes the field. Fourthly, I will offer a critical review of the two theories explaining the religious landscape of China—religious ecology and religious market. Finally, I will mention some new trends in recent years. I do not intend to provide

an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, I will highlight some works characteristic of the field. Due to word limitation, I will review monographs most of the time rather than papers.

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL, REGULATION, AND ACADEMIC TRANSFORMATION

"Anthropology" (*renleixue*, 人类学) is imported (Pan 2008). So is "religion" (*zongjiao*, 宗教) (Chen 2002). They are imported because they are not Chinese concepts but introduced by Chinese elites from colonial powers (usually from Japan) as universals deployed to re-interpret and re-organise Chinese society, which consequently creates new sets of relations and institutions. As time goes by, the concepts may be indigenised but never entirely able to describe the social world. In other words, by creating things anthropological or religious, both "anthropology" and "religion" leave some indescribable residues. Like "wearing a poorly tailored outfit", to borrow Ge Zhaoguang (2001), "religion" and "anthropology" are introduced to describe China, not without the support from political power. We are therefore unable to clarify what is "religion", "anthropology", or "anthropology of religion", which have been and will continually be changing.

The conviction that religion is illusionary, unscientific is an elitist unanimity in post-imperial China, rather than a view of the lay practitioners. "Religion" and "superstition" (*mixin*, 迷信) were introduced from late 19th century Japan exactly for the purpose of deeming them responsible for the weakness of China. Therefore, at the outset, "religion" is a pejorative word subjected to Enlighteners' condemnation (Nedostup 2013). Intellectual and political elites of post-imperial China have been more or less consistent with their attitude toward religion, as demonstrated in the 1898 campaign to "Build Schools from Temple Property" (*miaochan xingxue*, 庙产兴学), the Republican church engineering intended to create a secularist state, the Nanjing government's campaign against superstition, and the "Three-self Patriotic Movement" (*sanzi aiguo yundong*, 三自爱国运动) in the heydays of the PRC. One of the consequences of the persistent elitist perspective would be excluding a great variety of non-institutional practices from "religion", practices such as paying homage to gods, offering to ancestors, invoking Shamans, seeking for oracles, consulting horoscopes, practising geomancy, and performing mask-dances. Some even become inde"scribable (for example, secular rituals such as celebrations and funerals). Many "pseudo-religious" or "quasi-religious" activities—the qigong fever, spiritual-cultivation, national studies, Tantric, life-nurturing techniques, etc.—have become far from "religion" defined by the state. Moreover, when the state defines religion like Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam, it is impossible to eradicate the so-called "superstition". Nor is it able to take it into consideration of religion's relation to philanthropy, education, arbitration, and economy. The state has been insisting separating itself with an invented "religion".

When opening China for foreign investment in the early 1980s, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) realigned its religious policy orientation from eradication into tolerance-cum-vigilance. 1982 Constitution guaranteed religious freedom on the condition that religious engagement should not "disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State", as well as it should be free from "foreign domination". The most comprehensive statue so far— *Regulations on Religious Affairs* (*Zongjiao shiwu tiaoli,* 宗教事务管理条例) effective in 2005 and about to be amended—sought for accountable rules by laying out standard procedures in a variety of activities. When China announces that religion should "adapt to socialist society", it spells out a double-faced policy that sees religion vulnerable to separatism, extremism, superstition, disobedience, and foreign infiltration and dominance, while hoping to make use of its positive values that may contribute to better governance and international image.

Despite the strong regulatory measures, religious practices in post-Mao China is vibrant. Religious population steadily increases as religious infrastructure expands under governmental or non-governmental sponsorship. Restoration of sacred sites appeals to larger population for community and identity (re-)creation. Officially recognised religions retrieve different regimes of transcendence into different localities. Unofficial, translocal, or transnational movements explore their sphere of activities with underground proselytising or with NGO instruments. Folk religion legitimised by cultural renaissance is embraced by astonishingly large population and commercialised with the state-agents' incentive of generating revenue through translating invented tradition into the tourist industry. Ancestor veneration and rituals of almanacs, geomancy, horoscope, and spirit medium intermingled with new waves of salvationist movements, and body, spiritual, healing techniques. The increasing social, political, economic disparity creates greater anxiety to seek for old ways of oracle-reading, mask-dancing, sutra-chanting, karma-fair hosting, and so on. Lastly, the national and global flow of capital, symbols, ideas, and practices also poses an unusual problem of religious pluralism with increasing mobility.

The vibrancy of religious revival is perhaps the most unexpected phenomena to the state, who holds the old conviction that religion will decline as people are enlightened with scientific truth, or enriched by economic growth. The contrary reality convinced the authority keep a close eye on the subversive or infiltrated religious groups, and when necessary, launched countermeasures such as the anti-superstition campaign in late1980s and the crackdown of Falungong at the turn of the century. However, the state also kept a laissez-faire attitude toward communal religions, non-institutionalised religions of the ethnic minorities, and quasi-religious activities, which, having little chance to become another legitimate religion, is nonetheless peaceful and hard to eradicate. It is this fuzzy field that anthropological studies pay much attention.

Some deem the reasons for religious revival is "the invention of tradition" while others propose that religion is an important venue for the society to resist the state. Still others believe that the increase in religious demand reflects the inadequacy of religious supply. I have argued elsewhere that all of them are problematic since religious revival could not be reduced to calculation or material pursuit, but a desire to connect with the otherworldliness, which entails authority and tradition beyond the realm of individual. In other words, though religion is defined in the modern world as a personal choice, it cannot be not social or collective (Liang 2015). The reason for the religious revival in China lies in the diversified ways of connecting the other-worldliness, which is what China is all about. China is never a theocracy. It allows different ways of transcendence in the social world (Duara, 2013: 170).

As an academic discipline, anthropology was formally re-established by the creation of the Chinese Anthropological Association in 1981. However, it has been a marginal discipline in Chinese academic landscape, lacking professionals, programs, and funding. Compared with other fields such as economics, demography, or ethnicity, anthropology of religion is a small one. Forefathers who lead the revival of anthropology paid little attention to religion. Those who did— Li An-che (李安宅, 1900-1985), Francis Hsu (许烺光 1909-1999), Ch'ing K'un Yang (杨庆堃, 1911-1999), and Tien Ju-kang (田汝康, 1916-2006), were at the end of their careers and barely remembered. The seminal work on Chinese ancestral worship, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow*, and the "bible" of the study of Chinese religion, *Religion in Chinese Society*, were almost never quoted for a long time. Liang Zhaotao (梁钊韬, 1916-1987), one of the founding fathers of the new Chinese anthropology, published his *Chinese Ancient Magic: Origin and Development of Religion* (《中国古代巫术：宗教的起源和发展》) (Sun Yat-sen University Press) as late as 1999. The Chinese version of Li An-che's *History of Tibetan Religion: A Study in the Field* was published only in 2005. Tien Ju-kang's *Pai of the Borderland People at Mangshi* (《芒市边民的摆》, English version: *Religious Cults of the Pai-i along*

the Burma-Yunnan Border [Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asian Program, Cornell University, 1986]) was reprinted in 2010 since the 1940s. Anthropologists in the western countries who work on Chinese religion during the Cold War were known to mainland Chinese anthropologists only in the mid-1990s: Maurice Freedman, Arthur Wolf, William Skinner, Stephan Feuchtwang, James Watson, Daniel Overmyer, Kristofer Schipper, Philip Kuhn, to name a few.

Meanwhile, religious studies remains a marginal field, too, entirely different from the place divinity schools hold in the western universities. Established in 1965 by the instruction of Mao Zedong, the field has always been a subfield of philosophy, which emphasise textual studies of doctrines, canons, thoughts, and religious figures. Most importantly, the field is dominated by the study of institutionalised religions, which is close to the state power under the cooption of the State Bureau of Religious Affairs. Studies based on ethnographic fieldwork is rare, appearing only recently.

One of the common experience of the active anthropologists of the 1980s and 1990s is the so-called "cultural fever" (*wenhua re*) in the 1980s, an academic and cultural milestone of the time. The "cultural fever" is a movement in which old and new academics created new venues of publications and speeches where "culture" was celebrated as the keyword for understanding the social, economic, religious and political China and the world, contemporary and historical (Zhang X. 1997: 35-77). Serving as an alternative trophy to the hegemonic Marxist-Leninist paradigm of class-struggle, the word "culture" becomes a "fever" by reconnecting itself to early intellectuals and the international academic world. Among hundreds of translated works done in this period, classics of cultural anthropology widely influence the emerging scholars. These works, serving as the major sources of inspiration for early waves of anthropological work, include Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Boas' *The Mind of Primitive Man*, Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Lévi-Bruhl's *Primitive Mentality*, Lévi-Strauss' *Savage Mind*, and, of course, Peter Burger's *The Sacred Canopy* and Max Weber's classic *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

During the 1990s, a few works on the anthropology of religion were also translated. They include Wang Zijin (王子今) and Zhou Suping (周苏平's translation of Yoshida Teigo's *Anthropology of Religion* (Shanxi People's Education Press, 1991), Zhou Guoli (周国黎)'s translation of Brian Morris' *The Anthropological Study of Religion* (Today's China Press, 1992), and Zhou Xing (周星)'s translation of Watanabe Yoshio's *Folk Religion of the Chinese* (Tianjin People's Press, 1998). The most important translation is, of course, Jin Ze (金泽) and his team's translation of *Selected Works in 20th Century Western Anthropology of Religion* (Shanghai SDX, 1995). In this two-volume, 1000 pages collection, we find important pieces by Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Franz Boas, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Clyde Kluckhohn, Ralph Linton, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Edmund Leach, Clifford Geertz, Eric Wolf, Sherry Ortner, Roy Rappaport, Rodney Needham, Renato Rosaldo, George Stocking, and Stanley Tambiah. It was (and still is) the most complete collection in Chinese about the anthropology of religion.

In the 1980s and 1990s, many scholarly works on the anthropology of religion were conducted by scholars from other disciplines such as Chinese literature, folklore, philosophy, archaeology, history, and ethnology, or by amateurs in local gazetteer offices and cultural centers. Recording the local temples, myths, festivals, rituals, and customs in general, they comprise the staple part of original studies. In mid-1990s, anthropologists from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Europe and America began to work with mainland anthropologists, producing Ph.D. students for mainland too. Some key universities recruited anthropologists who obtained their Ph.D. home or abroad, starting systematic, professional training programs throughout China. They and their students conducted much more intensive, qualified fieldworks, producing hundreds of new monographs about the religious life of China. Meanwhile, the early self-taught anthropologists, along with emerging folklorists,

ethnomusicologists, industrial artists, choreographers, filmmakers, painters, photographers, continue to produce works reporting the fieldwork they conducted. Taken together, anthropology of religion in post-Mao China has grown phenomenally significant.

One of the chief promoters of western anthropology is Professor Wang Mingming (王铭铭) at Peking University. One of his earliest works *Social Anthropology and Chinese Studies* (《社会人类学与中国研究》) (SDX Joint, 1997) contributes a significant chapter on the most update genealogy of Chinese religions in western anthropology. In his ethnographic works, he explores the state relations with local family and other social organisations, the status of folk traditions, modern philanthropic system, local authority, etc. These topics also become the content of his two monographs: *The Pathway of a Community* (《社区的历程》) (Tianjin People's Press, 1996), revised edition being published under the title *Lineage in Xicun* (《溪村家族》) (Guizhou People's Press, 2004), and *Culture and Power in Village Perspective: Five Papers on Three Villages in Fujian and Taiwan* (《村落视野中的文化与权力：闽台三村五论》) (SDX Joint, 1997). His research topic and method threw new lights and lead new discussions in Chinese and English academia. In his *Prosperity Bygone* (《逝去的繁荣》) (Zhejiang People's Press, 1999), he presented the intricate relations between the state and the local world in the city of Quanzhou. The book dealt with religion in full scale, including the symbolic making of the city space, interactions between official orthodox and folk ritual, legend of geomancy, order of the folk ritual, the transformation of different gods and "heresies", ritual of universal deliverance, spirit-writing, secret society, etc. His meticulous study of the folk religions makes the book a milestone in the landscape of Chinese anthropology.

"CULTURE", "FOLKLORE", "BELIEF", "HERITAGE":
ALTERNATIVE STUDIES OF THE "ANTHROPOLOGY" OF "RELIGION"

During the 1980s and 1990s, most anthropological studies of religion choose not to use "anthropology of religion", especially avoiding the use of "religion". There are perhaps two reasons. First, many believe that "religion" refers to the five institutionalised ones so that their study on non-institutional ones do not count. Second, some avoid "religion" on purpose, which has the advantages of neutralising the sensitiveness of "religion" on the one hand, and catering for the emerging populist sentiment on the other, a sentiment which takes the pride in an imagined communal culture, be it national or local.

After the "Cultural Fever", the concept of "culture" (*wenhua*, 文化) remains in the academia, a concept that no longer connotes "high cultures" such as music, dance, and literature, but refers to all aspects of life. The classical definition of "culture" put forward in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* translated in 1992 matches the connotation of "culture" in Chinese "Cultural Fever". The definition becomes influential among the emerging scholars who begin to pay close attention to "cultural anthropology", to which Tylor belongs. Those who adopt Tylor's definition are usually from sister disciplines like folklore. Different from Marxist concepts such as "class", "infrastructure", or "superstructure", "culture" creates a neutral field that eliminates the internal differences of Chinese people with its inclusiveness, thus constitutes a perfect type of bricks for building up the imagined community of Chinese nationalism.

Because of the neutrality and inclusiveness of "culture", many intellectual and political elites began to use "culture" as an alternative to "religion". For example, Mazu (妈祖), a sea goddess originated from Fujian, based on a thousand-year-old myth that manifested perhaps mostly by the presence of temple networks, has been represented as "Mazu Culture"). With its root in the Meizhou Island of Putian, Mazu temples are found everywhere along the Chinese coastline from Guangxi all the way to

Liaoning, as well as in Southeast Asia, Japan, and the U.S. Mazu involves a span of elaborate celebrations and sacrificial activities of offering and incense dividing, as well as inheriting a continuum imperial titles bestowed by emperors over time. Because of its symbolic ties with Taiwan, the Mazu temple at Meizhou Island and other places of "Sojourners hometown" (*qiaoxiang*, 侨乡) received generous donations or funding for renovation and events of workshops and book launches. It has become a UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009 under the category of "belief and custom", whereby Mazu is represented as the "Mazu Culture", or "Mazu Belief" (discussed below) to characterise a spectrum of practices that include myths, temples, images, and rituals. Though the Mazu Temple on the Meizhou Island is stated as the "Mecca" for all Mazu temples in the world in the application materials, it is almost never described as "religion".

Similar practices of culture for religion are numerous. The study of the cult of Guandi, God of War, is called the study of the "Guandi Culture"; the Dongba cult of the Naxi, not dissimilar to the Tibetan Bon, is known as the "Dongba Culture"; the Benzult temple system in Dali of southwest China is referred to as the "Benzult Culture". The traditional rituals and customs across the Tungusic peoples are lumped together as the "Shaman Culture", such as in Se Yin (色音)'s *Studies on Chinese Shaman Culture* (《中国萨满文化研究》) (Ethnic Press, 2011). Bimo, who provides exorcist healing and funeral service among the Yi in southwest China, is called the "Bimo Culture", as in Meng Huiying (孟慧英)'s *The Bimo Culture of the Yi* (《彝族毕摩文化》) (Ethnic Press, 2003). The studies of worshipping animals and natural phenomena inspired by the obsolete concept "totem" constitute the field of "totem culture", as in He Xingliang (何星亮)'s *Totem and Chinese Culture* (《图腾与中国文化》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 1992). The popular practice of geomancy and horoscope upon the rise of commercial demand is called "Geomancy Culture", "Culture of Fate Studies", not to say a variety of other forms of "culturalisation" such as the "Oboo Culture", "Beiye Culture", "Sacrifice Culture", "Witchcraft Culture", "Qigong Culture", etc.

In addition to "culture", many empirical studies on religion come out with the titles of "folklore", "custom", "myth", "cult", "symbol", etc. For example, in a book series "Chinese Folklore Series" edited by folklorists Liu Xicheng (刘锡诚) and Ma Changyi (马昌仪), almost all books are about religion with titles containing the word "god" or "belief". Zhang Zichen (张紫晨, 1929-1992)'s *Chinese Magic* (《中国巫术》 (Shanghai SDX Joint, 1990) does not mention "religion". So does Guo Yuhua (郭于华)'s *Trouble from Death and Desire for Life* (《死的困扰与生的执着》) (Renmin University of China Press, 1992)". The study of myth has also become a focal point. Starting from Yuan Ke (袁珂)'s seminal work *Chinese Myth and Legends* (《中国神话传说》) (Chinese Folk Art Press, 1984), myth studies produces a series of monographs, such as Tao Yang (陶阳) and Zhong Xiu (钟秀)'s *Chinese Creation Myth* (《中国创世神话》) (Shanghai People's Press, 1989), Chen Jianxian (陈建宪)'s *Deities and Heroes* (《神祇与英雄》) (SDX Joint, 1994), and Ye Shuxian (叶舒宪)'s edited volume, *Structuralist Mythology* (《结构主义神话学》) (Shanxi Normal University Press, 1988). While picking up the stories about ghosts and deities in ancient Chinese literature, they also pay attention to Euro-American anthropology, attempting to explore the possibility of the anthropology of myth. "Cult" is another term many early scholars favour: He Xingliang's *Chinese Gods of Nature and the Cult of Nature* (《中国自然神与自然崇拜》) (Shanghai SDX Joint, 1992), Zhang Mingyuan (张铭远)'s *Fertility Cult and Resistance to Death* (《生殖崇拜与死亡抗拒》)(Overseas Chinese Press, 1991), and Wang Zijin's *Sacrifice to Door and Door Cult* (《门祭与门神崇拜》) (Shanghai SDX Joint, 1996) etc. The keyword "symbol" is deployed to investigate Chinese religious life too, such as Wang Mingming and Pan Zhongdang (潘忠党) edited *Symbol and Society: Inquiry to Chinese Folk Culture* (象征与社会：中国民间文化探讨》) (Tianjin People's Press, 1997), Liang Yongjia (梁永佳)'s *Symbol from the Other* (《象征在别处》) (Ethnic Press, 2008), and Bao Jiang (鲍江)'s *Origin of*

Symbol (《象征的来历》) (Ethnic Press, 2008). "Symbol" is an academic term comfortably situated in the western anthropology, and like "culture", it encompasses the field of religion.

"Belief" (*xinyang*, 信仰) is an important alternative to "religion" and inspires significant publications. Compared with "culture", "belief" endorses the religiosity of the subjects studied, but it may mean differently from "religion". Many employ the term on the ground that "religion" should refer those "beliefs" or "worships" with institutions, rituals, sites and clergies, while "belief" applies to those practices without institutions. Such a conscious dichotomy, particular in the realm of "folk religion" vs. "folk belief" and by highlighting the non-institutional aspects of "belief", replicates the "religion" invented by the intellectual and political elites during the last century. By so doing, it avoids the possible political pressure vested in the usage of "religion" on the one hand, while further reifying the institutionality of "religion" itself. By any means, studies on "belief" intend to situate in the approaches and debates popular among the anthropologists of religion. Most of such studies are again conducted by folklorists, for example, Wu Bing'an (乌丙安)'s *Chinese Folk Belief* (《中国民间信仰》) (Shanghai People's Press, 1995), Yang Lihui (杨利慧)'s *Nuwa Myth and Belief* (《女娲的神话与信仰》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 1998), and Bamo Ayi (巴莫阿依)'s *Studies on the Yi's Belief in Ancestral Soul* (《彝族祖灵信仰研究》) (Sichuan Ethnic Press, 1994), etc. One of the central figures to revive Chinese anthropology, Chen Guoqiang (陈国强, 1931-2004), edited a monograph titled *Mazu Belief and the Ancestral Temple* (《妈祖信仰与祖庙》 (Fujian Education Press, 1990). Recently, Fan Lizhu (范丽珠) and Daniel Overmyer produced a book, *Folk Belief in North China's Rural Society* (《中国北方农村社会的民间信仰》) (Shanghai People's Press, 2013), in which they discuss how intangible "belief" is made tangible through government, headman, organisation, and rituals.

When the State Administration for Religious Affairs created the Fourth Department, which is supposed to oversee "other religions", the legal status of "folk religion" becomes a focus again, but it seems impossible to give it the status of the "sixth" religion before the law is amended. Therefore, "belief" has become a proper name to describe the communal religious activities across Chinese rural society, as well as the reason for many to accept it. For example, Chen Jinguo's *Belief, Ritual and Rural Society* (《信仰、仪式与乡土社会》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 2005) takes Geomancy as "belief" when examining its relation with local gods, sacrifice, funerals, and spirit-medium. Yue Yongyi (岳永逸)'s *Efficacy, Kowtow, Legend: the Dark and Bright Sides of the Folk belief* (《灵验·磕头·传说：民众信仰的阴面与阳面》) (SDX Joint, 2010) intends to reveal some common practices of the popular religion through the lens of "belief". Liu Zhaorui (刘昭瑞) and Wang Jianxin (王建新)'s edited volume, *Territorial Society and Belief Custom* (《地域社会与信仰习俗》)(Sun Yat-sen University Press, 2007), suggests that "belief" might have a broader significance than "religion" because of its encompassment of popular religion, Christianity, and Islam.

Another reason for preference to "folk belief" is the study of sectarianism, which, since the 1980s, has been a field largely under the rubric of "folk religion" but the study of rebellious religious movements in history. Ma Xisha (马西沙) and Han Bingfang (韩秉方)'s *History of Chinese Folk Religion* (《中国民间宗教史》) (Shanghai People's Press 1992) is perhaps the most significant contribution, in addition to Pu Wenqi (濮文起)'s *Folk Religions and Association* (《民间宗教与结社》) (International Cultural Press, 1994), and the alternative view from Shao Yong (邵雍)'s *Chinese Secret Society* (《中国会道门》) (Shanghai People's Press, 1997). To mark the difference from these studies, historians tend to use "folk belief" to describe the non-subversive folk religiosity, though some suggest it may create further confusion (Clart 2007).

A major turn took place in 2004 when China joined in the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, encouraging a majority of folklorists, a few anthropologists, and many artists, historians, tourism managers, and cultural studies experts to re-align themselves into the expertise of "heritage-making". Cultural heritage institutes and academic journals are set up in many universities. Governments at all levels pump enormous amounts of money and create new organs to "forge" or "construct" projects of cultural heritages, hoping to secure a place on the provincial or national list of cultural heritages, some even attempting to apply for UNESCO list. At the wake of heritage-making, large scales of religious activities are re-interpreted into "cultural items" legible to the state agents who wish to support them as candidates for cultural heritages categorised into techniques, festival, or spaces, constituting important ways of legitimising religions. The new process immediately attracts attentions from some anthropologists (Zhou 2013). A case in point is perhaps my study on the local government of Dali, southwest China, who, after successfully securing the National Intangible Cultural Heritage status for the Gwer Sa La Festival in 2006, campaigned to apply for UNESCO world Intangible Cultural Heritage (with failure). The project applied under the official category of "cultural space" involves a significant amount of rituals and legends for fertility and prosperity in a network of hundreds of temples (Liang 2013). Similar heritage projects involving folk, non-institutional religiosity include the Naxi Ancient Music (*naxi guyue*, 纳西古乐), Sacrifice to Communal Fire (*ji shehuo*, 祭社火), Sacrifice to Oboo (*ji aobao*, 祭敖包), and Temple Fair (*miaohui*, 庙会). Wang Jing's paper in this issue will deal with cultural heritage in detail, so that I will only mention that anthropologists play a significant role in heritage-making that legitimises the popular religious practice.

Though alternative terms to study religion predominate Chinese anthropology of the 1980s and 1990s, there is one exception: the study of the religions among the ethnic minorities, which are not part of the officially recognised religions. The ethnic religions are often seen as "living fossils" legitimate in Chinese social sciences and the society in general dominated by social Darwinism. The idea supposes that all ethnic minorities are socially backward--in the feudal, slavery, or primitive stages, in contrast to the prevalent majority Han. Therefore, it is natural to find religions, or "primitive religions", among the ethnic minorities. Early works on the topic include Qiu Pu (秋浦)'s *Studies of Shamanistic Religion* (《萨满教研究》) (Shanghai People's Press, 1985), Cai Jiaqi （蔡家麒)'s *On Primitive Religion* (《论原始宗教》) (Yunnan Ethnic Press, 1988), Ma Xueliang (马学良)'s *Reports on the Yi's Primitive Religion* (《彝族原始宗教调查报告》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 1993), and Lu Daji (吕大吉) and He Yaohua (何耀华)'s edited volume *Collections of Data on Chinese Primitive Religions* (《中国原始宗教资料丛编》) (Shanghai People's Press, 1993). Recent work includes Yang Fuquan (杨福泉)'s *General Course on the Dongba Religion* (《东巴教通论》) (Chung Hwa Book Co., 2012). As early as 1993, Zhang Qiaogui (张桥贵) and Chen Linshu (陈麟书) attempted to use anthropological knowledge from the west in an edited volume *Anthropology of Religion: Investigations on the Ethnic Primitive Religions in Yunnan* (《宗教人类学——云南少数民族原始宗教考察研究》) (Sichuan University Press, 1993). These scholars do not necessarily accept the category of "primitive religion", but they are able to use the term "religion" for their research.

Two major national surveys worth special attention. The first is the publication in the 1980s of the "social historical investigations" on the ethnic minorities, which was conducted in the 1950s and 1960s by a team of 200 professional anthropologists who, under the initiative of Mao Zedong, conducted extensive ethnographic investigations during the "Democratic Reform", a campaign for the Chinese Communist Party eventually exercised effective control in the vast China's west. This extensive collection produced one billion words of precious records, forming a solid foundation for the rise of Chinese new anthropology yet to make more use of in their pursuit of a comparative perspective on religion. The second is a publication series "Three Collections" (on Folk Stories,

Ballads, and Proverbs), initiated by the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles in the early 1980s, a series which so far has produced nearly one hundred of volumes amounting to another one billion words. The two consecutive surveys both record a great deal of religious life in China, which, by "saving" and "safeguarding", reflects the nation-state's concern on its continuity narrative.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Along with the deepening of Chinese open-door policy, China rapidly became the fieldwork site again to international anthropologists, as well as one of the largest county sending students overseas. The mutual influence is yet to be studied, but it is safe to say that most Chinese anthropologists of religion today are in a sense its products, especially those who frequently visit foreign academic institutes, or even obtain Ph.D. degrees in anthropology. Many long-term projects collaborated between Chinese and overseas scholars also produce a number of domestically conferred Ph.D.s. collaborations。 Particularly, David Faure of the Hong Kong University and Helen Siu of Yale University, in collaboration with Chen Chunsheng (陈春声) and Liu Zhiwei (刘志伟) of Sun Yat-san University, extensively study the Chinese ancestral worship and folk religion in China. Kenneth Dean of McGill University in collaboration with Zheng Zhenman (郑振满) of Xiamen University exhaustively studies the temple system in Putian, Fujian. The study in Guangdong and Fujian is sometimes called "the South China School", which, by focusing on lineage, folk religion, civilising process, has made a substantial impact on historical studies. Because one paper by Zhang Yahui in this issue is dedicated to the anthropology of history, I will only point out that profound mutual influence between history and anthropology, particularly the methodological merging of archival studies and ethnographic fieldwork, benefits both disciplines immensely.

The collaboration between mainland China and external institutes have deepened to the point that such endeavours are almost everywhere. Top universities —Cambridge, London, Harvard, Yale, Stanford, HKUST, Academia Sinica, Perdue, Tokyo are in close contact with Chinese universities such as Peking, Tsinghua, Renmin, Minzu, Nanjing, CASS, Sun Yat-san, Xiamen, Fudan, East China Normal, Zhejiang, Sichuan, Yunnan, Yunnan Minzu, Southwest Minzu, and Inner Mongolia Normal. The collaborations have produced iconic publications and influential anthropologists and historians, broadening our understanding of the landscape of Chinese religiosity. More importantly, it has become increasingly difficult to demarcate between studies done by mainland Chinese and external scholars.

Historians are also actively involved in the discussion of "belief". In *Folk Belief and Social Space* (《民间信仰与社会空间》) (Fujian People's Press, 2003), the editors Zheng Zhenman and Chen Chunsheng highlight the diffusion and non-institutionality of the "folk belief". They suggest that the resilience of the folk belief lies in the non-institutional realm—family and community—hard to be usurped by the privileged few. They argue that the folk belief demonstrates some level of continuity because it lies outside the governmental system. In *Where is "the Folk", Who's "Belief"* (《"民间"何在 谁之"信仰"》) (Chong Hwa Book Co., 2009), the editor Ge Zhaoguang (葛兆光) summarises three achievements of the historical study of the folk religion. Firstly, it makes an excellent use of the legacy in Chinese historical studies that emphasises archival studies; secondly, it employs the method of anthropological fieldwork, having expanded the breadth of sources; thirdly, it has become a field where Chinese historical studies can engage in the theories from the west. He warns, however, that the "Chinese studies" in the West is actually "foreign studies" in the sense that research questions raised are never Chinese. He suggests that the study of Chinese folk belief should raise questions out of the historical traditions of China, rather than taking questions pertinent to Euro-American countries as Chinese ones. Such a proposal to raise "Chinese questions" in contrast

to the western ones is typical in Chinese academia, which has turned increasingly nationalistic by an urge for "Chinese questions", "Chinese academia" and "Chinese tradition" away from theories from Euro-American countries. The turn, not without anti-western sentiment, is not a simple academic "nationalism" but worries about the decline of Chinese-speaking academia.

In *Ritual and Social Change* (《仪式与社会变迁》) (Social Science Literature Press, 2000) edited by Guo Yuhua, contributors from anthropology, folklore and ethnology offer interdisciplinary views on religion. Later on, they develop their chapters into monographs such as Liu Xiaochun (刘晓春)'s *Ritual and Symbolic Order* (《仪式与象征的秩序》) (The Commercial Press, 2003), Zhou Daming (周大鸣)'s *Lineage and Society in Modern South China* (《当代华南的宗族与社会》) (Heilongjiang People's Press, 2003), Liu Tieliang (刘铁梁)'s *Ethnography of Chinese Folkloric Culture* (《中国俗文化志》) (Central Editorial and Translational Press, 2006), and Gao Bingzhong (高丙中)'s *Folk Culture and Civil Society* (《民间文化与公民社会》) (Peking University Press, 2008). Some of the contributors produce books not necessarily on religion, such as Luo Hongguang (罗红光)'s Exchange without Equivalent Prices (《不等价交换》) (Zhejiang People's Press, 2002), Weng Naiqun (翁乃群)'s Eight Villages along the Nanning-Kunming Railway (《南昆八村》) (Ethnic Press, 2001), Naran Bilik (纳日碧力戈)'s Ethnic Construction in Modern Context (《现代背景下的族群建构》) (Yunnan Educational Press, 2000).

Studies on different ethnic groups flourish at this moment. Zhuang Kongshao (庄孔韶) revisits the Huang Village in Fujian, the fieldwork site of Lin Yueh-hwa (林耀华) who produced *The Golden Wing* (Institute of Pacific Relations, 1944). Zhuang publishes *The Silver Wing* (《银翅》) (SDX Joint, 2000), in which he describes the changes in the Huang lineage since 1949 as well as the local cult of Chen Jinggu, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism and Christianity. In his *Temple of Memory* (Stanford University Press, 1996; Chinese version translated by Wu Fei, Fujian Educational Press, 2013), Jing Jun (景军) discusses the revival of the Kong family in Gansu Province, where the lineage temple is revived not in a mechanism of returning to the past, but accompanied by cultural creation with local and current concerns.

Studies on the ethnic minorities abound too. For example, under the co-supervision of Professor Fei Xiaotong (费孝通) and Professor Wang Mingming, three students published their dissertation-turned monographs based on the fieldwork on the sites once visited by Chinese anthropological forefathers in 1940s. Zhang Hongming (张宏明) publishes his *Earth Symbols* (《土地象征》) (Social Science Literature Press, 2005), based on the restudy of Fei Xiaotong's *Rural Land in Lu Village* (English version in Fei et al.'s *Earthbound China*, University of Chicago Press, 1945). *He* develops Fei's concept of "leisure economy" by examining the elitist music bands (Grotto Canon) and community celebrations (Flower Lanterns), arguing that the public rituals demonstrate the changing relations between state and local society. Liang Yongjia's *Territorial Hierarchy* (《地域的等级》) (Social Science Literature Press, 2005) investigates the local and supra-local territorial cult systems in the West Town, where Francis Hsu conducted his fieldwork for his *Under the Ancestors' Shadow* (Columbia University Press, 1948). Liang suggests that the systems contribute to communal solidarity and encompass it at the same time, and illustrate the social life at the frontier of China. Chu Jianfang (褚建芳)'s *Between Human and Gods* (《人神之间》 (Social Science Literature Press, 2005), studies the ritual life and economic-moral life in the village where Ti'en Ju-kang conducted his fieldwork, and suggests a particular mode of reciprocal relations between giving and receiving. The three studies are conducted among the officially classified ethnic minorities of the Yi, the Bai, and the Dai. The Peking University Ph.D. graduates produce more works on the topic. Chen Bo (陈波)'s *Living in Shambhala* (《生活在香巴拉》) (Social Science Literature Press, 2009) put forward "the civilised Tibetans" by describing the life in a village in central Tibet, where sacrificial and pilgrimage spaces,

calendars, orthodoxy and heterodoxy interplay. In Zhang Yahui (张亚辉) et al., *History, Mythology, Ethnography* (《历史、神话、民族志》) (Ethnic Press, 2012), the contributors suggest the presence of a "Shamanistic Civilisation" in ancient China, where there was a "unity in diversity scheme" centred around "magicians". Examples include the official Shamanistic sacrifice and mythology of the Qing dynasty, the convergence of Confucianism and Buddhism of the Wutai Mountain in the Qing dynasty, the sacred mountains and house of the Rgyal Rong, the ritual governance at the Jinci Shrine, landscape in Chengde and the imperial religion, and the historical metaphor and mythological reality in the puppet drama of northern Sichuan. Wu Qiao (吴乔) in his *Cosmology and Life World* (《宇宙观与生活世界》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 2011) reports the social life of the Colourful-waistband Dai in southwest China, situating the witch's time, life and death in the community, and the "governing spirit" of the village into the people's cosmology.

Both collaboration with external institutes and interdisciplinary studies are cross-border. On the one hand, it reveals the difference between international and Chinese academia resulted from decades of isolation. On the other, it again confirms the fluidity and segmented-ness of the anthropological study of religion. For differences, Chinese anthropology is for sure benefited from international anthropology, but it is not merely a passive receiver to the external theoretical concerns. After all, Chinese-speaking academia hardly ceases to function despite the long-term political pressure, as demonstrated in many academic writings which bear particular views not easily found in the West. For example, the "Intermediate Circle" (*zhongjian quan*, 中间圈) put forward by Professor Wang Mingming (2011), who has conducted long-term studies in southeast and southwest China, is distinctively different from such paradigms as functionalism, structuralism, practice theory, or post-colonialism. He revives the epistemological scheme of traditional China by which the world is divided into three circles: the inner, intermediate, and outer circles. He proposes that the intermediate circle, conventionally called the "ethnic area of China" is a fertile field of political interactions and ideational imaginations. This seemingly Sino-centric scheme, as he believes, is potentially the genuine knowledge Chinese anthropology can bring about to the world. For interdisciplinary studies, mutual benefits are the key to anthropology, history, folklore, and ethnology, where some suggestions grown out of the concerns within one discipline may inspire another. For example, the concept of "civilising process" in the study of folk religion conducted by historians greatly help the anthropologists rethink the discussion of "state-society relation" and "great and little traditions", making them pay more attention to the nodal function of literacy and gentry. We can safely conclude that cross-border collaborations and interdisciplinary studies not just illustrate the diversity of the anthropological study of religion in China, but also constitute the strength of this field.

"ECOLOGY" AND "MARKET": TOW THEORETIC IMPACTS

The anthropological studies mentioned so far are dominantly empirical with particular concerns regarding theoretical debates, but they lack coherent voices for a conspicuous theoretic orientation. In contrast, two theories proposed in the last decade from the disciplines of religious studies and sociology make louder sounds by debating with each other, overshadowing other proposals. These are the "religious ecology" and "religious market".

"Religious ecology" was put forward in 2006 by an eminent scholar of religious studies, Mou Zhongjian (牟钟鉴). Borrowing the theory of multilineal evolution by Julian Steward, Mou characterises religious ecology as "seeing the religious and secular cultures within a relatively independent community (such as a nation, a state, or a region) as a social life system, which maintains internal structural strata and external interactions with the social-cultural system of the larger context. Through adjustment and contentions, the system survives and develops through

internal, continuous renewal and external interactions. Therefore, religious ecology is the study of the dynamics of religion as a life system, a theory viewing religion as live culture and aiming at promoting religious harmony" (Mou 2012: 2). He believes that the religious ecology in contemporary China has lost balance because the Chinese traditional culture is over-devalued for the sake of atheism hard to accept, leading to the over-suppression of the peaceful religious activities such as the folk religion, while keeping exclusive religions such as Christianity. He proposes that, while insisting freedom of religious belief, China needs to promote inter-religious respect and cultural awareness. China needs to reconstruct the ecological balance by tolerating more folk religion and indigenising Christianity, in order to realise the cultural strategy of "harmonise the diversity, strengthening the essential and indigenising the foreign."

In fact, as early as 2008, Chen Xiaoyi (陈晓毅) has already suggested an ecological interpretation in his *Religious Ecology with Chinese Characteristics* (《中国式宗教生态》) (Social Science Literature Press, 2008). The book describes the religious landscape in a Guizhou town, southwest China, as a "structure with three floors": folk religion at the bottom; Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism in the middle; Christianity and Catholicism on the top. The book delineates the dynamics of religious diversity in a multi-ethnic area inhabited by the Han, the Buyi, and the Miao. Moreover, Duan Qi (段琦) argues improper interference with religions directly leads to the ecological imbalance that contributes to the rapid growth of Christianity. PRC's extensive suppression of the folk religions unintendedly helps to remove the main obstacles to the spread of Christianity. The imbalance deteriorated further when the state decides to revive Christianity upon the Open-door policy, making the non-institutional church (house church) boost as the institutional church is under excessive control. She suggests that "[we] should foster a relaxed environment for religious belief to make all religions develop sufficiently, create a competitive mechanism to let the winners win, and restore balance in the religious ecology. The rapid growth of Christianity would be naturally contained" (Duan 2006: 148-9). For a sympathetic review of "religious ecology", see Clart (2013).

Suggestions to balance Christianity with folk religion meet with alternative opinions, such as that by Li Xiangping (李向平), who argues that Chinese religious landscape is not the ecology of religions, but the ecology of religion and power. Reducing the issue to the mutual exclusivity of Christianity and folk religion may reactivate the illusion that Christianity is a "foreign" religion and intensify the Sinocentric debate between "Chineseness and barbarity". He suggests that instead of balancing one religion with another, China should relax the control over the religious relations by creating a free religious space (Li 2011). An anonymous scholar criticises Chen Jinguo's view on "Chinese religion" (*zhonghua jiao*, 中华教), which is based on religious ecology, arguing that Chen's suggestion relies on the antagonism between China and the west and neglects the characteristics of the folk religion. The imbalance in Chinese religious market is not entirely a policy consequence. The radical social change also makes the rapid growth of Christianity, which has its internal variations that can't be lumped together and balanced as a whole (Ni 2009). Those against religious ecology argue that there is no correlation between the growth of Christianity and the wane of folk religion on the one hand, and worry that the state might indeed balance Christianity with folk religion on the other. Such a self-contradictory opinion demonstrates that the religious landscape is still too far from clear to reach a meaningful conclusion.

"Religious ecology" is barely an outline of a theory-to-be with numerous missing links yet to be filled. For example, how to find "a relatively independent community"? How to decide "the internal" and "the external" of non-institutional religions? Why should religious and secular cultures be "life system"? If everyone knows culture is dynamic, why should "religious culture" has to be a "live" one? Whether and how a theory can "promote" religious harmony? The foundations for this theory—the multilineal evolution and ecological anthropology—have already lost validity in the West, where

people have also known much more on the religious landscape of Euro-America and Asia. If religious ecology wishes to continue to sustain its ambition to explain the world as a whole, it has to learn from the new knowledge of modern scholarship. More important is perhaps that much more empirical studies are needed to develop this outline. For example, the statement of the theory requires one defines *a priori* a community within which the boundaries of all religions have to be identified. However, this is extremely hard in practice without reifying the nation-state's border, deeming it academic legitimacy, or subduing to the dominance of administrative power, exactly the contrary to what this theory claims to archive—"spontaneous" interaction of all religions.

If the theory serves nothing more than a policy suggestion, it will rapidly lose its a grand ambition. In particular, if religious ecology is proposed for legitimising folk religion, its applicability will be further reduced. To a great extent, folk religion is a spectrum of diverse activities illegible to the state. Once legible, it immediately becomes a codified realm for dominance which involves a series of elitist concerns such as resource allocation, legitimacy justification, and the invention of traditions, to the degree of turning it into another "official religion". Such a process may contribute to the legitimisation of the various folk religious activities and expand its spaces. However, it will inevitably be reduced into organisations legible to the state by creating fixed sites, rituals, liturgy, canons by excluding diverse non-organisational practices and grassroots interpretations, making them more marginalised. The frenzy heritage-making over the folk religious practices in contemporary China has already proven a clear case in point. Due to their illiteracy, "absurd" explanations, "self-contradictory", "historical untruthfulness", or inability to meet the demand of the local incentive for economic development, ordinary practitioners are intentionally ignored by the political and intellectual powers responsible for making the heritage. Most of the time, these powerful heritage-making elites are only capable of creating an elitist version of the heritage incomprehensible to the silent mass who are the majority of the practitioners. We can certainly imagine that once folk religion is codified into a social domain subject to administrative regulation, the marginalised majority will naturally look for alternative ways to practice, a process that won't be much different from the non-institutionalisation of Christianity. Given the state's anxiety to take control of the society through legible organisations, particularly in the realm of religion, there is little room for the growth of self-organised religious system in contemporary China.

About at the same time when religious ecology was put forward, a number of religious sociologists, headed by Yang Fenggang (杨凤岗), began to introduce the religious market theory into China, holding a series of forums on "social scientific studies of religion" and producing a series monographs. For example, Gong Zhebing (宫哲兵), Yang Fenggang, et. al. *edit Field Investigation of Religious Anthropology* (《宗教人类学的田野调查》)(Wuhan Press，2004). Gao Shining (高师宁) and Yang Fenggang edit *From Study Room to the Field* (vol 1 & 2) (《从书斋到田野》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 2010). Yang (2011) proposes a theory of triple colours in Chinese "religious market" —"red, gray, and black markets". Excessive control on state co-opted religions (the "red market") will not control religion, but alter the supply-demand relations in the religious market, leading to the growth of the radical religions ("black market") and the in-between "gray market". The reason is simple, everyone needs religion, or, put it mildly, most humans are prone to supernatural beliefs or become religious virtuosos. Yang's theory rests on a dichotomy between "politics" and "religion", deeming the state's control of religion is rooted in its atheistic ideology. Despite its rapid popularisation, the market theory draws cautious attentions by sociologists such as Lu Yunfeng (卢云峰) who are, hoping to develop it, admits its limitation in explaining Chinese religious landscape (Lu 2008). Ji Zhe (2008a) severely criticises it, arguing that religious market theory simply reduces religion to a kind of social phenomenon rather than a central issue for modernity.

The fundamental flaw in the market theory, to me, is not so much a theory only applicable to Christianity. Rather, it sounds like a projection of fantasy with a certain kind of Christian root.

First, the competing relation between religions the theory tries to propose with a market metaphor is more likely capable of explaining "exclusive", Abrahamic religions similar to Christianity, such as Islam and Judaism. However, it is quite impossible to explain the non-competitive nature of Chinese societies full of non-institutional religions—inclusive or syncretic--flourished at the grassroots level. Second, assuming the state as political without considering its religiosity is of course based on the Biblical dichotomy of "Caesar" and "God". Equipped with the dichotomy, one can easily quote from certain liberal political philosophy to argue that religion is an individual choice that any external interference is illegitimate. Theologically valid it might be, the view is however based on a certain universal-in-disguise, prescriptive philosophy, rather than empirical, inductive social science. The scholars who prefer the market theory contributes PRC's strong regulation of religion as communist atheism, but they often ignore the similar persecutions in pre-1949 China, which are usually imagined as a free, authentic market.

Third, the statement that state's excessive regulation on the "red market" will lead to the "black market" grow actually presupposes a continuum from religion to superstition, attributing the "black market" a realm for "heresy" and assuming that people would be tempted to unreal, supernatural powers. When folk religion is said to be just an "inferior" religion in the "gray" or "black" markets, one might be reminded of the Biblical outlook that people may be corrupted by idolatry if not exposed to the Gospels. This is clearly expressed in another paper, in which Yang Fenggang (2012: 31) asserts that "the overall situation in the domain of Chinese spiritual belief could be qualified as 'the religion is not   prompted while magic prevails". The question is, what is "*the* religion"?

Fourth, the market theory holds that the complete absence of the state would be the ideal for the "religious market", a scenario desirable to the neoliberal construction of the market economy. However, such a condition will only benefit the evangelical churches who holds one of the strongest proselytising incentives and the richest economic resources in human history. Just like the situation in the global market, it is the giant transnational cooperations that will dominate, not small businesses. In a review article on Yang Fenggang's recent book, Anthony Yu (2012) contends if a market metaphor of religion is better than its proceeding one—Marx's metaphor of "religion as opium", which merits by describing the addictive nature of religion. If religion is what Yang defines as merely "a unified system of beliefs and practices about life and the world relative to the supernatural", a market metaphor can't explain why it has to be indispensable to an individual and why religious population shrinks in the ideal market of the U.S.

Neither the ecology theory nor the market theory attracts anthropologists much, especially the former. Anthropologists who do respond are divided into those who are interested in developing it (such as Lu Yunfeng and Huang Jianbo), and those who reject it (such as Ji Zhe and Liang Yongjia). In a conference held in Beijing, 2013, several active anthropologists--Stephan Feuchtwang, Wang Mingming, Adam Chau, Yang Der-ruey (杨德睿), Qu Jingdong (渠敬东), Chen Jinguo Ji Zhe, Liang Yongjia, Cao Nanlai (曹南来), expressed their criticism on the market theory, which, according to them, largely misses the anthropological literature for the last century, Chinese and English. Ji Zhe (2008b), Liang Yongjia (2014), and Zhao Bingxiang (赵丙祥) and Tong Zhoubing (童周炳) (2011) try to utilise vernacular concepts—"Bao" (return, 报), "Zhai" (debt, 债), "Huan" (exchange, 换)—to explain the religious life in China.

Theories of religious ecology and religious market are in direct debate, in which the ecologists, with "cultural relativism", criticise the market fundamentalists for favouring Christianity, while the market fundamentalists, with "freedom of religious belief", criticise the ecologists for endorsing popular religion. However, both share similar weakness. First, while claiming to be universally applicable and "scientific", both theories are just about state-religion relations. Moreover, both reduce the Chinese religious landscape as competitive markets. The major difference seems to lie in the fact that religious ecology hopes for the state's active interference, while the latter suggests the opposite. Such a difference is not dissimilar to the debates between the Republicans and the Democrats in the U.S. Congress. Secondly, both hope for influencing the state to change China with specific suggestions, which they are very confident of when it comes to predicting how religions in China will develop, despite their suggestions are directly opposite. However, their empirical studies are rather inconclusive. Though both are sure what is going on, they seem not aware that empirical studies on Chinese religions are fragmentary and far from clear. A simple comparison with the scale of studies conducted on the topics of stock exchange, rural society, industry, law, or population will immediately convince anyone how little empirical studies available in the study of religious life.

Thirdly, both presume that "religion" is a natural category discoverable in the empirical world, in which interpretations provided by the actors do not necessarily count. In both theories, religious adherents are significant statistically rather than sociologically. Studies that do take practitioners' interpretations into consideration often follow the models developed out of the study of Christianity, by which empirical studies mean little more than household visits, questionnaire interview, and software application. However, as analysed earlier, it is not possible to define "religion" *a priori* in China. The issue is to explain society and to study religion as a discursive term rather than take religion for granted and use the definition to influence policy-making. More empirical studies are needed to understand the religious landscape, because it cannot be simply reduced to a compartmentalised social realm called "religious phenomenon".

NEW TRENDS IN ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

In the last decade, new trends deserving closer attention has emerged in Chinese anthropology of religion. First, a series of new books is translated into Chinese, including Victor Turner's The Ritual Process (translated by Huang Jianbo and Liu Boyun [柳博赟], Renmin University of China Press, 2006), Marcel Mauss's A General Theory of Magic and he and Henri Hubert's Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function (translated by Yang Yudong [杨渝东], Liang Yongjia, and Zhao Bingxiang, Guangxi Normal University Press, 2007), Mary Douglas' Purity and Danger (Huang Jianbo, Liu Boyun, and Lu Chen [卢忱], Ethnic Press, 2008), Van Gennep's The Rites of Passage (translated by Yue Yongyi, on Folklore Studies [《民俗研究》], 2008), and E. E. Evans-Pritchard's Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande (translated by Qin Lili [覃俐俐], The Commercial Press, 2010), etc.

Secondly, some important works on Chinese religions are translated too, including C. K. Yang's *Religion in Chinese Society* (translated by Fan Lizhu[范丽珠], Shanghai People's Press, 2007), Stephan Feuchtwang's *The Imperial Metaphor* (Zhao Xudong [赵旭东], Jiangsu People's Press, 2008), Arthur Wolf ed. *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Peng Ze'an [彭泽安] and Shao Tiefeng [邵铁峰], Jiangsu People's Press, 2014), etc. Thirdly, Chinese anthropologists also publish several theoretical books, such as Jin Ze's *Outline of the Theoretical Genealogy on the Anthropology of Religion* (《宗教人类学学说史纲要》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 2009), Peng Zhaorong (彭兆荣)'s *Theory and Practice of the Anthropological Study of Rituals* (《人类学仪式的理论与实践》) (Ethnic Press, 2007), and Lu Yao (路遥)'s *Review on Chinese Folk Belief* (《中国民间信仰研究述评》) (Shanghai People's Press, 2012). These works expand the theoretical explorations further.

One of the turns in the recent years is empirical studies of institutional religions. For Christianity, most of the in-depth studies have to be published in Hong Kong due to censorship. Huang Jianbo published three ethnographic studies on rural and urban Christianity—*Belief, Politics and Life in a Rural Community: Anthropological Studies on Christianity in the Wu Village* (《乡村社区的信仰、政治与生活：吴庄基督教的人类学研究》）(Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2012), *Local Culture and the Formation of a Belief Community* (《地方文化与信仰共同体的生成》) (Intellectual Property Press, 2013), and *Rural Church in a City: Chinese Urbanisation and Rural Migrant Christianity* (《都市里的乡村教会：中国城市化与民工基督教》) (Logos and Pneuma Press, 2013), all focusing on the landing and evolution of Christianity in rural and urban China, providing vivid description of how belief is practiced in everyday life by Chinese Christians and churches. Huang put forward three dimensions of observing Chinese Christianity: the proselytised Christianity, the acquired Christianity, and the practiced Christianity, dimensions particularly illuminating with anthropological lens.

Cao Nanlai's *Constructing China's Jerusalem* (《建构中国的耶路撒冷》) adapted from English version, University of Hong Kong Press, 2013) studies the famous "boss Christians" in Wenzhou at China's coastal southeast. This particular Christian community enjoys a great amount of freedom with their economic power and political networks. Not unfriendly with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement church, the boss Christians are able to conduct religious activities outside this state-coopted system when they promote the faith in company premises and proselytise in business activities. Their attempt to maintain cooperative relations with the state is not just strategic, but out of the understanding of their commercial success, which is, according to their appropriated version of Max Weber, a success of the Protestant ethic, what they call the "combination of two civilisations"—material and spiritual, an appropriation of the state's ideology too. Cao suggests that the boss Christians do not form a closed system against the state's hegemony, but constitute a field accommodating different powers, national and local. They challenge the secularist theme that religion will decline in modernity, the stereotype that Chinese Christians are mainly the aged, the women, and the illiterate, and the impression that Chinese Christians are under severe persecution. More importantly, the book encompasses the model of "dominance-resistance" and makes significant theoretical contributions.

Christianity studies proliferate in recent years. In addition to Huang and Cao, Zhang Tan (张坦) publishes *The Stone Gateway at the Narrow Door* (《"窄门"前的石门坎》) (Guizhou University Press, 2009), and Wu Ziming (吴梓明) et al. edit a volume *Harmony at the Margin: Christianity in Urban China under Glocalisation* (《边际的共融：全球地域化视角下的中国城市基督教研究》) (Shanghai People's Press, 2009).

Catholic studies are also productive. Wu Fei (吴飞)'s *Sacred Word over The Wheatland: A Study of a Catholic Group in Rural China* (《麦芒上的圣言：一个乡村天主教群体的信仰和生活》) (Logos and Pneuma Press, 2001; Religious Culture Press, 2013), based on the fieldwork conducted among a Catholic group in North China, delineates the collective memory of the sufferings in the Boxer's Rebellion, the Sino-Japanese War, and the Cultural Revolution. The author argues that unlike Christians who creates an ethic through effective techniques to change everyday life, Catholics merely form a distinctively collective identity out of memory. In other words, the Catholics do not wield unique everyday life to create an ethic called "modernity". The book is complimentary with Cao Nanlai's work.

In the vein of historical anthropology, Zhang Xianqing (张先清) delineates the growth of Catholicism in the context of the local society of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In his *Government, Lineage and Catholicism: Historical Narratives of a Rural Church in Fu'an, 17-19 Centuries* (《官府、宗族与天主教：17-19 世纪福安乡村教会的历史叙事》) Chong Hwa Book Co.，2009), the author finds that despite strong banning, the Catholics did well in Fu'an of southeast China. He argues that the elites, with the complicity of the governments, supported the spread of Catholic doctrines, because of the Catholic idea of women's chastity perfectly fit in morality sanctioned by lineages.

For Islam, *Fluid Spiritual Community* (《流动的精神社区》) (Chinese Social Science Press, 2006) studies the idea of "Jamaat" (community) of a Muslim group in Guangzhou, south China. The author, Ma Qiang (马强), suggests the essential power of Jamaat is its spirituality and fluidity, demonstrated by its resilience across time and space. The idea of Jammat is extensively found in mosques, restaurants, companies, schools and cyberspace. At the same time, Jamaat is further differentiated in terms of language, sects, and practices, such as the idea of "Chinese-speaking Muslim", which, as a non-political umma, challenges the politicised idea of umma.

For Buddhism and Daoism, in addition to what is mentioned earlier—Chu Jianfang's study on the Dai Theravada Buddhism and Chen Bo's study on the Tibetan Buddhism in Lhasa, Gong Hongqun (龚浩群)'s *Buddhists and Citizens: Political Ethnography of a Village in Thailand* (《信徒与公民:泰国曲乡的政治民族志》) (Peking University Press, 2009) provides a detailed description of a Theravada Buddhist community who involves in the civil society politics in Thailand. The book is reviewed by the author herself in a separate paper in this issue. Wang Jianxin's edited volumes *Studies on Ethnicity and Religion of the Nanling Corridor* (I and II) (《南岭走廊民族宗教研究》) (Religious Culture Press, 2011) set out to study the historical process and the current situation of Daoism in the provinces of Hunan, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou and Yunan, focusing on how ethnic minorities in the mountains accommodate and contend Daoism.

A publication venue deserving admiration is an annual review published by the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, namely *Anthropology of Religion* (《宗教人类学》), edited by Jin Ze and Chen Jinguo, published by Social Science Literature Press. With seven issues so far since 2009, the journal holds regular events to attract active anthropologists, Chinese and international, to discuss on a variety of topics. Each issue hosts regular columns— "voice from the field", "vernacular perspectives", "overseas horizon", "intellectual conversation", "book reviews", with some English papers. It maintains a high standard with a peer-review system not easily found in Chinese academia, in which a group of well-trained anthropologists have contributed articles on some critical issues: religious ecology vs. religious market, middle-range theories on folk religions, redemptive societies, sacrifice sphere, belief sphere, standardisation, gentry, renunciation, etc. Recently, the journal organises a series of events under the rubric of "the anthropology of self-cultivation" that deserves special attention.

The new trends in the anthropology of religion are under the direct influence of the frequent conversations between Chinese anthropology and its international counterparts, as well as some new developments in Chinese anthropology. Attention to institutional religions responds to some emerging issues in the Chinese society, especially to the rapid growth of Christianity. Studying this politically "sensitive" topic is a brand new attempt by Chinese anthropologists, who have largely abandoned the practice of adopting alternative terms ("culture", "folklore" etc.) to study religion. However, anthropologists of Christianity are predominantly Christians themselves who are not always separating their faith with value-free analysis. The field needs more studies by non-Christians. For Islam, Daoism, and "Confucianism", studies are not numerous, especially for Daoism and Confucianism, which, having a rich historical background to extend the study, are not closed

communities difficult to have access to, either. Moreover, more studies are needed on pseudo-religious or quasi-religious practices (such as breath-exercise, spiritual cultivation, tantric practices, yoga, life-nurturing, seclusion, etc.) or new religious movements (Eastern Lightening, Three Rows of Servants, Society of Disciples, Omnipotent God, etc.). Some young anthropologists have produced ethnographic studies on the religious life beyond China, including overseas Chinese religions, Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism, Astrology, Catholicism, Judaism, and Christianity, a field will be the topic in Gong Hongqun's paper in this issue.

CONCLUDING REMARK: ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION AT CROSSROAD

The paper highlights some characteristics of Chinese anthropology of religion since the 1980s. I firstly set the field in the context of religious revival and regulation in China, as well as its relation to the disciplines of religious studies and folklore. Secondly, I explore the ways and reasons for the proliferation of studies under names alternative to "religion", emphasising that the anthropology of religion in China is fragmentary and diffused, without many tied-up debates. Thirdly, I review the external collaboration and its impact on China, as well as interdisciplinary studies from history and ethnology. Fourthly, I provide a critical review of the two theoretical proposals from religious studies and sociology, namely the "religious ecology" and "religious market". Finally, I point out some new trends, including the study of institutional religions and the new journal, Anthropology of Religion. My argument is that the anthropology of religion in China is rather fragmentary and diffused, not just because of the academic power distribution and the political sensitiveness of "religion", but also because of the imported-ness of the term "religion". All trends demonstrate that quality empirical studies are few.

Recently, there gradually emerges a community of "anthropology of religion" through more frequent conversations through workshops and writings, domestic and international. It is a good time to discuss the future of the field, which is certainly closely related to the entire situation of Chinese social science.

Since the turn of the century, there are four new trends emerge in Chinese social science as a whole. First, while social science has become more rigorous, it is losing its autonomy to the extent that it is too close to policy studies, think tank establishment, and propaganda work. Secondly, English-speaking academics, particularly American ones, intensely influence Chinese scholars by laying out a variety of topics unimportant to Chinese society. Thirdly, fundamentalist empiricism arises, insisting that "theories" come out of purely empirical studies free of any theoretical premises. Recently, faced with severe criticism, it insists on the non-engagement with the so-called "western theories" and turns to a kind of direct enlightenment from Chinese ancient classics. Supposedly, recourse to these classics provides the fundamentalist empiricists an artificial aura of theories while leaving them to continue to practice as what they have been doing. Fourthly, humanities and social sciences are so deeply divided that those who consciously engage in value-laden studies and those who try to conduct value-free studies stop talking with each other. All these trends can surely be found in the anthropological study of religion.

Upon the rapidly changing landscapes of religion and religious policy, it might not be wise for anthropologists to influence policies at the cost of value-free analysis. After all, the handful empirical studies available are barely enough to suggest wise policies or minimise unintended consequences. This has been proven once and again but seldom able to alert the scholars who are keen to policy suggestions. At the same time, those who claim to be able to obtain the truth with pure empiricism actually cannot go without conceptual frameworks. Without rigorous training, the "empirical"

studies would never be "purely descriptive" as they claim, but coarse impressions at most. The anthropological study of the religious landscape cannot go without sufficient training in the western anthropology, though Chinese anthropologists have the right to raise their own research questions. Meaningful questions can be raised only through sophisticated reflection on the Chinese academic traditions and the current anthropological literature in western languages at the same time. Neither English-speaking anthropology nor Chinese ancient classics alone can help Chinese anthropologists produce world-class studies. Of course, we need time, but what is urgent is the accumulation of more empirical studies to give the world a clearer picture of what's going on in China. Until then, we are unable to expect much from the anthropological study of religion in China.

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