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in Honour of Daniel L. Overmyer**

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INTRODUCTION

PHILIP CLART

The papers in this volume go back to a conference held September 14-15, 2002, at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Entitled "Religious Thought and Lived Religion in China: A Conference in Honour of Prof. Daniel L. Overmyer on His Retirement," this meeting was sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Green College, the Centre for Chinese Research (Institute of Asian Research, UBC), the Chung Wah Tao Tak Tong (B.C.) Society, the Faculty of Arts - Dean's Office (UBC), the Department of Asian Studies (UBC), the Office of the Vice President Research (UBC), the Department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies (UBC), the Fung Loy Kok Institute of Taoism, the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Canada, Mountain Province Diamonds Inc., and an anonymous donor. It was held in the beautiful grounds of Green College, a residential college on the campus of the University of British Columbia, and was intended to mark the occasion of Professor Daniel L. Overmyer's retirement from UBC's Department of Asian Studies by showcasing new research in fields directly influenced by his distinguished scholarship. Participants included many of Dan Overmyer's present and former students as well as a number of colleagues from North America, Europe, and Asia: Timothy Barrett, Judith Magee Boltz, Shin-yi Chao, Li Chuang-Paper, Philip Clart, Paul Crowe, Kenneth Dean, Jean DeBernardi, Stephen Eskildsen, Stevan Harrell, Christian Jochim, David K. Jordan, Paul Katz, Terry F. Kleeman, John Lagerwey, Randall Nadeau, Susan Naquin, Roberto K. Ong, Jordan Paper, Soo Khin Wah, Catherine Swatek, Barend J. ter Haar, Wang Ch'iu-kuei, Tuen Wai Mary Yeung, Chün-fang Yü, as well as an interested audience of students and members of the larger community. The conference had originally been planned for September of 2001, but had to be cancelled because of the terrorist attacks of September 11 that shut down all North American airports and made it impossible for participants to make their way to Vancouver. The second attempt in September of 2002, however, met with success. Many interesting papers were presented in an atmosphere of lively intellectual exchange, a fitting tribute to the long and distinguished scholarly career of Dan Overmyer.

After the conference, a call for revised papers was sent out, which resulted in the collection of sixteen research papers presented here. Earlier versions of eleven of these were first presented at the conference. The five excep-

tions from that rule are the papers by Wang Chien-ch'uan, Hubert Seiwert, Shin-yi Chao, Kenneth Dean, and Stephen Eskildsen. Wang and Seiwert were unable to attend the meeting at the new 2002 date, but still submitted their intended conference papers to this published collection. Chao, Dean, and Eskildsen chose to submit papers for publication that differed thematically from those presented at the conference. Irrespective of whether earlier versions were first presented orally or not, all manuscript submissions were subjected to peer review by scholars not involved with the conference and were often significantly revised on the basis of suggestions made by the reviewers. To these (anonymous) reviewers the editors would like to extend their thanks for their contribution to this volume.

Before we proceed to an overview of the book as a whole, a brief explanation concerning the use and placement of Chinese characters is needed. Characters for Chinese names and terms mentioned in the main text and the footnotes are listed in an alphabetically arranged glossary toward the end of the volume. The only exception to this rule are the bibliographic references in the footnotes: Here characters are provided for the authors and titles of Chinese- and Japanese-language works so as to make it easier for the interested reader to identify and locate them.

This Introduction is followed by a detailed account of and tribute to Dan Overmyer's scholarship by his former student Randall Nadeau. I do not want to duplicate this here, but instead will attempt to interweave some comments on Overmyer's contributions to the field with an overview of the articles contained in this volume.

A unique quality of Overmyer's scholarship is his attention to religion in its less well-known manifestations, religion located along paths less travelled by scholars. This emphatically does not mean marginal religious phenomena less deserving of study—quite the opposite. Much scholarship in the study of Chinese religions focuses on the big figures, the great texts, the lofty ideas. Overmyer, on the other hand, chooses to study the religious life of common people. The great figures, texts, and ideas may play a role here as well, but they do so in the context of a religious system that functions according to a logic of its own. His first book, *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China* (Harvard University Press, 1976) introduced Western scholars to the role of popular sectarianism in Chinese religious history. He broadened our view of these religious movements in many subsequent publications, of which I should mention the book he co-authored with David K. Jordan, *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* (Princeton University Press, 1986). This work continued the history of Ming/Qing period sectarianism into the twentieth century.

An important contribution of his work was that he brought to our attention the fact that texts play a major role in the religious life of commoners—

and not only or even primarily the canonical texts of the great traditions. He unearthed for us the rich repository of popular religious texts produced from the late imperial to the modern period. His third major monograph, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Harvard University Asia Center, 1999) took these texts as its sole focus, proving their value as documents of popular religious thought and windows into the religious experience of commoners. Appropriately, then, several articles in the present volume take their cue from Overmyer's themes of popular sects and popular religious texts.

While most articles contain case studies, Hubert Seiwert in his chapter on "The Transformation of Popular Religious Movements of the Ming and Qing Dynasties: A Rational Choice Interpretation" presents a broader analysis of historical trends in Chinese sectarianism. He notes that Qing sects, while evolving out of their Ming predecessors, developed patterns in their doctrines, structure, and interactions with authorities that make them quite distinct from related groups in the previous dynasty. We see a growth of millenarianism, tensions with the state, organizational and doctrinal differentiation of sects emerging from the same patriarchal line, and homogenization of doctrines across different traditions. He applies Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge's rational choice model to account for some of these developments, arguing that changes in the social composition of sects, inter-religious competition, doctrinal changes, and rising tension with authorities were mutually reinforcing factors that have to be seen against the background of a religious marketplace where potential adherents make rational choices, weighing the mundane and religious rewards of sect membership against its costs. The result is a bold sketch of the principal dynamics of the sectarian world in the last two Imperial dynasties and a fitting opener for this volume.

Shin-yi Chao's "*The Precious Volume of Bodhisattva Zhenwu Attaining the Way: A Case Study of the Worship of Zhenwu (Perfected Warrior) in Ming-Qing Sectarian Groups*" illustrates aspects of the Ming/Qing sectarian dynamic already addressed by Seiwert: the growing diversification of sectarian doctrine by the adoption of originally unrelated beliefs and the growing friction between sects and state. While Seiwert discusses the integration of Maitreya millenarianism into Qing sectarian systems, Chao provides a view of a similar, if less prominent case, the sectarian adoption of the Daoist deity Zhenwu (a.k.a. Xuanwu). Chao's case study demonstrates that Zhenwu could supply a similar focus for sectarian militant action as Seiwert attributes to the Maitreya millenarian complex. These insights are worked out in a close textual analysis of several precious volumes, culminating in the late Qing text mentioned in the chapter's title. The main point here is to show how this Daoist deity is "superscribed" with a sectarian interpretation that remakes him into an emissary of the Venerable Mother, the primordial god-

ness worshipped by many sects. While remaining recognizable as Zhenwu, the god acquires new meanings by being placed in a sectarian doctrinal framework and provides an excellent case-example for sectarian approaches of co-optation and subordination towards competing religious figures and ideas.

Christian Jochim pursues another example of sectarian appropriation of mainstream religious themes in his article, "Popular Lay Sects and Confucianism: A Study Based on the Yiguan Dao in Postwar Taiwan." Focusing on three post-1945 Yiguan Dao commentaries on Confucian canonical texts (*The Analects*, *The Great Learning*, and *The Mean in Action*), Jochim argues that Yiguan Dao exegesis is based on the assumption that beyond the texts' surface there exists a deeper, esoteric level of meaning referring to the true Dao. The Yiguan Dao initiation rite opens the believer up to that Dao and hence enables him or her to discover the true meaning of sacred texts deemed to be part of the Dao's historical line of transmission. Thus, Yiguan Dao exegetes apply a hermeneutical framework that differs significantly from that of traditional Confucian scholarship and consequently come up with interpretations that would seem unusual to a traditional scholar, but that make eminent sense within the teleological context of Yiguan Dao cosmology. For example, Zi Gong's famous statement that he has not heard the Master speak on the Way of Heaven (*Tiandao*; *Analects* 5:13) is not interpreted in the traditional mode to mean that Confucius never spoke of the Way of Heaven, but merely that Zi Gong was excluded from Confucius' transmission of that Dao, while other disciples certainly did receive the Master's teachings on *Tiandao* (which also happens to be an alternative name for the Yiguan Dao). For Jochim, sectarian exegesis of Confucian scriptures is an important way by which Confucian ideas are reread into a novel, more popular religious context. Such interpretations complicate an often too simplistic "two-tier model in which at the elite level of Confucian intellectuals we find specific sophisticated interpretations of the Confucian textual heritage, while at the popular level we find the unconscious absorption of vaguely conceived Confucian moral values." The sectarian appropriation of Confucian texts mediates between these two tiers and, perhaps more clearly than other channels for the transmission of ideas between social and cultural strata (such as opera and local schools), demonstrates that this mediation does not mean simple translation of "Great Tradition" notions into "Little Tradition" terms, but involves creative reinterpretation and superscription.

Whereas Chao's and Jochim's papers dealt with the development of sectarian doctrine, Soo Khin Wah's study of "The Recent Development of the Yiguan Dao Fayi Chongde Sub-Branch in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand" focuses on the institutional development of one Yiguan Dao sub-branch as it spread from Taiwan to Southeast Asia, beginning in the mid-1970s. Soo paints a detailed and statistically supported picture of Fayi Chong-

de's mission work in the three Southeast Asian nations. This case-example allows us to observe the development of complex and highly rationalized institutional structures as a Chinese religion goes multinational. At the same time, Soo's article complements Jochim's by describing some of the structural changes within an Yiguan Dao sub-branch that provided a fertile environment for the rising profile of Confucianism within the movement as a whole. Fayi Chongde is one of the more self-consciously "Confucianized" and intellectual branches of the Yiguan Dao. Its children's classes in the classics (*ertong dujing*) and its think-tank-like "Academic Division" (*xuejie*) are examples of the institutional framework within which exegetical efforts such as those studied by Jochim may be placed.

Philip Clart's chapter on "Merit beyond Measure: Notes on the Moral (and Real) Economy of Religious Publishing in Taiwan" shifts our focus from Yiguan Dao to Taiwanese spirit-writing cults, or "phoenix halls" (*luan-tang*). However, thematically there is a line of continuity with the previous two articles in combining attention to a religious group's belief system with an analysis of the institutional structures supporting that system. As the title says, the chapter's focus is on the concept of merit (*gongde*) as a key operative principle in phoenix hall "theology." The spirit-writing carried out by a phoenix hall produces morality books (*shanshu*) that are intended to effect the moral transformation of society and individuals as part of the cult group's mission to "proclaim transformation on behalf of Heaven" (*daitian xuanhua*). The production and distribution of morality books is therefore regarded as a highly meritorious endeavour for all participants. The merit earned is quantified according to formal regulations used by some phoenix halls, such as so-called ledgers of merit and demerit. The tabulation of merits and demerits gains soteriological significance from the fact that posthumous ascension to Heaven depends on clearly specified surplus amounts of merit. As one of the richest sources of merit, *shanshu*-writing and publishing motivates believers to invest considerable amounts of time and money in the activities of a phoenix hall, allowing some modern phoenix halls to develop professional publishing concerns with full-time, salaried staff that enable them to publish, print, and distribute large numbers of religious publications each year. At the same time, this professionalization requires a constant inflow of money from people wishing to earn merit by sponsoring the printing of morality books. The phoenix hall therefore has to keep producing new *shanshu* on a regular basis to keep attracting merit money, thereby covering its overhead and maintaining its institutional structures. Here we see a neatly complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship between a modern phoenix hall's belief system and its economic functions. Clart employs Stark and Bainbridge's religious economy model (which is also used in Sei-

wert's chapter) to analyse some aspects of this relationship, even while revising and adapting it in accordance with his specific set of data.

Jean DeBernardi's article "Ascend to Heaven and Stand on a Cloud: Daoist Teaching and Practice at Penang's Taishang Laojun Temple" explores religious beliefs as presented in the oral teachings of Penang spirit mediums and in religious writings circulating among Penang Chinese, in particular texts connected with the local Taishang Laojun Temple. DeBernardi's research shows that the "merit complex" traced by Clart is also very much in evidence among the Chinese community of Penang where "the free distribution of sacred texts [...] is a merit-making activity that improves a person's fate, and devout Chinese patrons support their publication and distribution at popular religious and Buddhist temples." Such continuities in worldview can be accounted for in general terms by the shared Chinese cultural heritage of Penang Chinese, but more specifically by the fact that many of the morality texts in circulation on the island stem either from pre-1949 mainland China, or from post-1949 Taiwan. DeBernardi also demonstrates that text-based religious notions of merit and moral causality reappear in the oral disquisitions of possessed spirit mediums who thus serve as an important channel of cultural communication. Beyond the continuities with Chinese popular culture elsewhere, however, Penang Chinese religious discourse also shows numerous unique features connected with the specific social, cultural, and political circumstances of the Chinese minority in Malaysia. Political and economic pressures from the Malay-dominated state foster popular and other religious activities as vehicles of Chinese identity affirmation, but at the same time identity-construction differs significantly between two major groups in the Chinese community: the Mandarin-educated and the English-educated. DeBernardi devotes particular attention to the religious thought of English-educated members of the Taishang Laojun Temple, which often involves a creative blending of Chinese and non-Chinese elements and perspectives. The latter may, for example, be drawn from Theosophy, Christianity, Theravada Buddhism, or from neo-Hindu movements such as that of Sai Baba. Here we see Chinese religious tradition engaged in dialogue and exchange with Western and Asian traditions right within the lives of ordinary people. This makes the Malaysian-Chinese experience somewhat unusual, but it may also perhaps allow it to serve as a window on future religious developments in increasingly globalized Chinese societies such as Taiwan, where phenomena as diverse as Tibetan Buddhism and the prophecies of Nostradamus have already come to make an impact on popular religious beliefs and practices.

The six articles in Part I by Seiwert, Chao, Jochim, Soo, Clart, and DeBernardi all can be seen as building on Dan Overmyer's pioneering work on popular sects, their textual tradition, and the textual aspect of popular religion more generally. The six papers in Part II can be linked to Overmyer's

turn to the study of local religious practice, in recent years especially in Northern China. Each of these six articles addresses specific practices as embedded in a local and historical context. The section opens with John Lagerwey's "The History and Sociology of Religion in Changting County, Fujian." Part of a larger project on the local religious history of Changting county in the hilly interior of Fujian province, this article explores the potential of local gazetteers as data sources for the writing of a history of local religious life. Lagerwey mines gazetteers from the Song dynasty to the Republican period for information on the establishment and development of local temple cults. He compiles these data into tables that provide clear indications of a major trend starting with the dominance of Buddhist, Daoist, and local hero temples in the Tang and Song periods, while village- and lineage-based local temples come to predominate in the Ming and Qing dynasties. This development is linked to a strengthening of Confucian orthodoxy during the last two dynasties, which pushed back the influence of Buddhism and Daoism, while at the same time somewhat ironically aiding in "the creation of a local religion in which shamanism, Buddhism, and Daoism were so thoroughly intermingled as to be in some sense indistinguishable." Thereby "Confucians, insofar as they formed a sociologically distinctive village-based elite, ended up not only participating in local worship but also promoting state recognition of local gods." While calling for the systematic utilization of local gazetteers in writing the history of Chinese popular religion, Lagerwey also cautions against the inherent biases of these texts and devotes sections of his article to an analysis of the ideological agendas of his sources and to an exhibition of modern ethnographic data so as to give an impression of the richness of local religious belief and practice that is not reflected in the usually very terse gazetteer entries on temples. In this manner, he provides us not just with a rich picture of the religious history of Changting, but also raises important methodological issues for the historical study of popular religion. As he points out, historians of Chinese religions unfortunately lack quality sources like the detailed inquisition files that allowed Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie to write his study of a medieval heretical village in southern France, or Carlo Ginzburg to compose his portrait of the religious world of a sixteenth century miller in northern Italy.¹ Under these circumstances, we cannot but use what we have, including ideologically skewed gazetteers and the potentially problematic projection of modern ethnographic observations into the past. It may be added that other scholars have in addition tried to broaden the source base by using anecdotal writings (*biji*) and

¹ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

tales of the supernatural (*zhiguai*) as windows on popular belief and practice in Chinese history.²

Kenneth Dean, the author of our next article, is a pioneer in the collection and analysis of yet another type of textual source on historical dimensions of popular religion: stone inscriptions recording such matters as temple construction and renovation, communal covenants, and official decisions on local matters. Having collected and published numerous such inscriptions in Fujian, Dean makes use of them in his study of “The Growth of Local Control over Cultural and Environmental Resources in Ming and Qing Coastal Fujian.” He argues that from the mid-Ming through the Qing to the Republican period, coastal Fujian witnessed a “gradual downward transfer of powers over culture, local governance, and environmental control [from the state] to local communities.” Attempts by the state to exert local control by, for example, community compacts (*xiangyue*) typically ended up being co-opted by local elites and merged into the local “ritual power formations” dominated by them. Ever since the mid-Ming we can thus observe a trend of “of growing organizational strength at the local level,” administered through the imbricated structures of lineage and temple networks. The principal function left to the state at the local level is the resolution of conflicts between communities that local mediation failed to address successfully. Here we may perhaps be seeing in coastal Fujian another aspect of the same process observed by Lagerwey in the province’s hinterland: the strengthening of local cults that Lagerwey described as an unintended consequence of the increasing imposition of Confucian orthodoxy through the Ming and Qing dynasties may well have occurred in the context of social-structural changes similar to those analysed by Dean, i.e., the strengthening of local organization by lineages and temple networks and their increasing assumption of regulatory functions at the local level.

Paul Katz’s paper on “Religion, Recruiting, and Resistance in Colonial Taiwan: A Case Study of the Xilai An Incident, 1915” shows that at least for some areas and some time periods we do possess quite rich data sources that allow us to reconstruct historical events in considerable detail. While John Lagerwey points out the limitations of late Imperial local archival records for our study of local religious conditions, Katz was able to draw on quite rich and detailed records kept by Japanese colonial authorities on a major rebellion in southern Taiwan in the year 1915. Combining information drawn from “local gazetteers, archives, newspaper accounts, demo-

² See for example, Edward L. Davis, *Society and the Supernatural in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), and Xiaofei Kang, *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

graphic information in household registers, and data collected during field-work,” Katz compiles a detailed picture of the recruiting process of the rebellion and the motivations of participants. He emphasizes that religious factors played a key role in the recruiting of rebels and identifies components of messianic and demonological paradigms operative in the rebels’ religious outlook. Such components include vegetarianism, oath-taking, banner worship, use of amulets, and occasionally, human sacrifice. These paradigms are not specific to early twentieth century southern Taiwan, but can be detected in rebellions in southern China since at least the eighteenth century. The wide distribution of these markers among a great variety of groups and movements leads Katz to question the utility of distinguishing strictly between “sects” and “secret societies,” therein following and confirming the lead of Barend J. ter Haar in his studies of Triad ritual and myth.³

The Tainan temple Xilai An that stood at the centre of the rebellion studied by Katz, also figures prominently in Wang Chien-ch’uan’s chapter on “The White Dragon Hermitage and the Spread of the Eight Generals Procession Troupe in Taiwan.” The Eight Generals (*Bajiajiang*) play an exorcistic role in temple processions primarily in southern Taiwan. Wang argues here that the first Taiwanese temple to establish such troupes was the White Dragon Hermitage (Bailong An) in Tainan, the Xilai An’s mother temple. Using Japanese-period newspaper reports and archival sources, as well as oral histories collected during field visits, Wang traces the spread of these troupes from their founding at the White Dragon Hermitage some time between 1863 and 1898, and then within the next twenty years or so first to other Tainan temples, then to Jiayi, and from there to Tainan county. This article confirms something we already saw in Katz’s research on the Xilai An incident: namely, that we have exquisitely rich sources for Taiwanese religious history during the Japanese period (1895–1945). The scholar willing and able to devote a lot of time conducting field interviews, digging through colonial era official archives, and browsing through volume after volume of contemporary newspapers, can assemble a wealth of data allowing him or her to reconstruct local religious practices in quite amazing detail.

Different from the preceding articles with their emphasis on written sources, Tuen Wai Mary Yeung’s study of “Rituals and Beliefs of Female Performers in Cantonese Opera” is largely based on interviews with Cantonese opera performers in Hong Kong and Vancouver, B.C., supplemented by a number of secondary studies on historical dimensions of Cantonese opera, as well as observations of ritual practices in Hong Kong. Through her privileged access to actors and actresses, Yeung provides her readers with

³ *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998).

unique insights into the religious dimensions of the daily life of stage artists. Rather than dealing with the already comparatively well-studied religious functions of opera performances, she chooses to focus on the worship of actresses' patron deities such as Huaguang and Tangong, thereby throwing light on an underreported religious facet of traditional opera troupes and enhancing our understanding of the cultic dimensions of professional groups in traditional trades and crafts.

Contrasting with the specialized case foci of most contributions to this volume is Jordan Paper's chapter, "The Role of Possession Trance in Chinese Culture and Religion: A Comparative Overview from the Neolithic to the Present," which ranges widely across Chinese history and utilizes comparative data drawn from other cultures. Paper argues that Western scholarship has tended to underestimate the importance of spirit-mediumship in Chinese culture and seeks to restore it to its proper place in Chinese religious history, namely, at the cultural centre rather than the margins. He approaches his subject matter from a comparative perspective that demonstrates the universal nature of mediumship, which he distinguishes sharply from shamanism. Given such universality, it would be rather unusual if mediums had occupied the mere margins of religious life in a vast civilization such as China. And indeed, Paper argues, an unprejudiced reading of the sources reveals the ubiquity of mediumistic phenomena among all social strata of traditional Chinese society. His article thus provides a synthetic conclusion to the foregoing case studies, of which several addressed spirit-mediums in various historical and religious settings (see especially the articles by Jochim, Clart, DeBernardi, and Katz). It also leads over to this book's final section where the issue of mediumism is taken up again in Judith Magee Boltz's study "On the Legacy of Zigu and a Manual on Spirit-writing in Her Name."

In Part III, we are moving out of the study of sectarian and popular religions into the religious worlds of Daoist practitioners, Buddhist monks, emperors, and literati. However, there is continuity in the way these worlds are approached in that each article emphasizes the impact of religious ideas on religious praxis. Judith Magee Boltz studies a Daoist ritual manual for spirit-writing; Stephen Eskildsen links Daoist notions concerning immortality with data on burial practices among Daoists; Roberto K. Ong introduces a Ming scholar's encyclopedic work on dreams and their meanings; while Barend J. ter Haar looks into the Yongzheng emperor's personal religious beliefs as they became apparent in his interactions with Chan-Buddhist monks. Each article represents the spirit of Dan Overmyer's scholarship in that it locates religion not primarily in the realm of ideas and doctrines, but in the lived experience of people, be they peasants, merchants, sectarians, literati, Daoist clerics, Buddhist monks, and even emperors. Religious thought (e.g.,

notions concerning immortality or the nature of dreams) needs to be studied in its practical context (e.g., which form of burial to use or how to interpret specific dreams). Let us look at the four chapters in this section in more detail.

Boltz introduces a text that for some reason was left out of the 1923–1926 reprinting of the Daoist Canon (*Daozang*) and only reappeared in the 1988 edition published by three major mainland presses. Entitled *Zhao Ziguxian fa* (Ritual for Evoking Purple Lady Transcendent), it appears in a Yuan dynasty anthology, the *Fahai yizhu* (Residue Pearls from the Sea of Ritual). Boltz presents the Chinese text, together with a complete and annotated English translation, which is based both on the *Fahai yizhu* version and a Ming dynasty rendering preserved in the *Shilin guangji* (Extensive Records of a Forest of Matters). She also traces the influence of this manual on the actual practice of spirit-writing as reflected in widely circulating ritual collections such as the *Wanfa guizong* (Ancestor to which the Myriad Rites Return). This meticulous and erudite study gives us insights into a Daoist approach to the practice of spirit-writing at a fairly early stage of its history. Is this method still used today? My own field experience in Taiwan would negate this question, as Taiwanese phoenix halls utilize a quite different ritual pattern. However, things may be different in Quanzhen-Daoist inspired spirit-writing cults in Hong Kong—future field research will tell.

Stephen Eskildsen continues in a Daoist mode by investigating “Death, Immortality and Spirit Liberation in Northern Song Daoism: The Hagiographical Accounts of Zhao Daoyi.” Drawing on two hagiographical collections by the Yuan dynasty Daoist Zhao Daoyi (fl. ca. 1294–1307), Eskildsen gathers accounts of burial practices among Daoist clerics of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126) and studies the interaction of burial practices and changing notions concerning the physical/spiritual nature of immortality. His sources show a shift among Daoist clerics from Buddhist-style cremation to traditional Chinese coffin burial—which is somewhat unexpected as these years witnessed the development of a new understanding of inner alchemy that would eventually culminate in the Complete Perfection (Quanzhen) school of Daoism. We would expect a movement from physical to spiritual notions of immortality and its conscious adoption of Buddhist ideas and outlooks to be accompanied by the Buddhist practice of cremating the bodies of monks and nuns. Eskildsen argues that the rejection of cremation should be understood as “consistent with the polemical stance of the *neidan* movement, which was eager to assert that it was both distinct from and superior to the Buddhism with which it coexisted and interacted.” One might note that contemporary Neo-Confucians were also engaged in an (in the long run successful) effort to roll back Buddhist influence in funeral rites and to

reassert Confucian models of ritual practice, including coffin burial.⁴ The Daoist drift towards coffin burial may perhaps also be understood as part of the increasing “Confucianization” of mortuary praxis in early modern China.⁵

“Sleep is a small death,” as the saying goes. Like dying, sleeping means entry into a liminal state in which the human spirit sees and knows things that are beyond its everyday powers of perception. In the liminal realm of the dream, it meets gods and immortals and is shown images that are felt to be meaningful, but that need to be decoded to yield their deeper significance. Fascination with dreams and their meaning is probably a human universal. Roberto K. Ong looks into a rich Chinese expression of that fascination in his study of “Chen Shiyuan and Chinese Dream Theory.” Chen Shiyuan (*jins* 1544) spent most of his life as a prolific private scholar in his hometown of Yingcheng (modern Hubei province). Among his more than thirty works, we find the *Mengzhan yizhi* (Vagrant Import of Dream Prognostication), which gives a comprehensive overview of both traditional Chinese dream theory and of the major types of dreams and their meaning, grouped by subject matter. Ong provides his readers with a succinct summary of this work and discussion of its significance both for our understanding of China’s spiritual culture and for the comparative study of dream lore in other cultural contexts. It may be added that dream analysis and prognostication retain a place in popular religious life to the present day, with some temples specializing in providing overnight stays in their sanctuaries for the express purpose of allowing the believer to commune with the gods in his or her dreams that night.⁶

Last, but certainly not least we come to Barend ter Haar’s article on “Yongzheng and His Abbots.” While patronage of Buddhist figures and institutions by Qing rulers is well known, it is usually attributed to primarily political motivations (such as strengthening the government’s hold on Buddhist peoples, such as the Tibetans and the Mongols). By contrast, ter Haar

⁴ See for example, Sima Guang’s 司馬光 (1019–1086) critique of cremation in his manual of family rituals, the *Letters and Ceremonies of Mr. Sima* (*Sima shi shuyi* 司馬氏書儀), Congshu jicheng jianbian edition (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1966), 7.76. These strictures were incorporated into Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 (1130–1200) ritual handbook, *Family Rites* (*Jiali* 家禮), which strongly influenced late Imperial burial practices.

⁵ For more on the general trends in mortuary practices during the Song, see Silvia Freiin Ebner von Eschenbach, *Die Sorge der Lebenden um die Toten: Thanatopraxis und Thanatologie in der Song-Zeit* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1995).

⁶ An example is the Zhinan Gong in Taipei’s Muzha district. For an example on the Chinese mainland, see Brigitte Baptandier, “Entrer en montagne pour y rêver. Le mont des Pierres et des Bambous,” *Terrain* 26 (1996): 99–122.

argues that in the case of the Yongzheng emperor we can see a long-standing personal involvement with Buddhist, especially Chan, monks and an intense religious interest in Buddhist thought and, more importantly, practice. Drawing on two hitherto underutilized sources, Yongzheng's anthology of Chan sayings (*Yuxuan yulu*, Imperially Selected Record of Sayings) and the gazetteer of the Li'an monastery in Hangzhou (*Li'an sizhi*), ter Haar sketches a convincing picture of a close personal relationship between Prince Yong (Yongzheng's name prior to his ascension of the throne) and a number of monks linked to the Li'an monastery, but present in Beijing in various functions at monasteries there, most importantly at the Bolin monastery which was located just beside Prince Yong's famous Yuanming garden. This relationship changed after his enthronement, but it was not discontinued. In spite of his Confucian rhetoric as an emperor, Yongzheng remained committed to Buddhism as a personal spiritual interest—a fact that may help explain some unusual aspects of his reign, such as the Chan-like directness and occasionally rudeness he employed in his communications with officials, as well as his clemency towards a would-be assassin and his prohibition of cock-fighting. This article thus provides a valuable addition to our understanding of both the political and the religious history of the Qing dynasty—and reminds us that emperors, too, are human beings and not just incumbents of a particular social rank. “Lived religion” is not just to be studied among the peasants, artisans, and merchants of local society. The emperor, too, needed to construct a religious vision out of the cultural material available to him and within the social and political constraints that life at court imposed upon him. This study of Prince Yong/Yongzheng as a lay Buddhist practitioner demonstrates forcefully both the opportunities and the limitations for an emperor's personal religious creativity and exploration.

The articles in Part III are evidence that Dan Overmyer's methodological choice to study religion as it was and is lived by real people rather than as an abstract system of ideas and doctrines is not limited to the study of popular religions, but has applicability across the sphere of Chinese religious traditions. Thus, they nicely round off this volume in honour of a great scholar whose work is a constant reminder to us to look beyond text to context, beyond idea to practice, because it is only in context and practice that the religious traditions of China (or any culture) come to life and become meaningful both for the practitioners and for the scholars who study them. The articles in this volume show us on the one hand the impact of Overmyer's publications on the field as a whole, but perhaps more importantly, they also demonstrate the enormous potential inherent in his approach to the study of Chinese religions, making the lived religion of emperors, scholars, and monks as fruitful an object of inquiry as that of sectarians and soldiers, peasants and paupers.