

Cheng-tian Kuo, ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*

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This timely collection addresses two issues that have received much scholarly attention in recent years, although they have not often been considered alongside one another. The first is Chinese nationalism and the second is contemporary Chinese religion and its engagement with different social and political domains. Kuo's edited volume makes a genuine contribution to the literature on these subjects. Approaching the topic of religion and nationalism from a variety of angles, it will do much to add to the ongoing scholarly discussion of religion in the contemporary Chinese world and will certainly inspire more work in years to come.

Each of the individual chapters focuses on particular topics while also providing overviews of the situation of different religious groups in the Chinese world. This makes the volume an excellent resource for scholars and students interested in Chinese religion, as well as the background to contemporary issues in the realm of religion and politics in pre-modern China. The chapters themselves are contained within three sections, each focusing on a different geographic area. The range of topics addressed within this framework is appropriate, facilitating comparison and reflection.

Kuo's introduction comes first in the volume. This presents an analysis of the "totalitarian state religion of Chinese patriotism" in the PRC, "a civil religion shared by many religions" in Taiwan, and the conflict between these state and civil forms in Hong Kong (13). Following on from this, the volume's first section considers the relationship between religion and nationalism before 1949.

The first chapter, by Chi-shen Chang, explores the ethnocentric thought of the seventeenth-century philosopher Wang Fuzhi. This is followed by Julia C. Schneider's chapter comparing Chinese notions of "compelled change" to European "missionizing" (89). Adam Yuet Chau then contributes a chapter on the emergence of the "religion sphere" (*zongjiaojie*) (129) in the context of the Chinese nation. Robert D. Weatherley and Qiang Zhang consider how the Party employs history in the construction of a

national identity—examining a “confrontational form of nationalism” and one that is “more consensual, emphasizing common ties with the KMT” (143). And Yuan-lin Tsai rounds out the section with an analysis of Islamic pilgrimage in the republican period.

These chapters show us that the engagement between religion, identity, and the nation are not new phenomena in China and help us to contextualize later debates. The section effectively makes the case that religion should not be cordoned off when discussing Chinese politics, but rather there has been much interplay between religion and politics both in history and today.

The second section shifts focus to the contemporary PRC. Bart Dessein offers a chapter showing how various aspects of Confucianism are selectively embodied in the Party’s ideological platform. Ching-chih Lin’s analysis shows how Chinese administrations have portrayed Yiguandao in different ways, each in the name of nationalism, and how adherents have in turn presented Yiguandao as compatible with Chinese tradition. Shu-wei Hsieh examines the Daoist encounter with modernity. Antonio Terzone’s chapter on Tibetan Buddhist encampments and self-immolations since 2009 suggests that these represent “soft” and “hard” forms of nationalism (279). Finally, Yen-zen Tsai’s chapter demonstrates that both Chinese Protestants and the Chinese Communist Party assert Chinese patriotism, even as they uphold worldviews that differ from one another quite markedly.

With these chapters, the second section shows us that the engagement between religion, politics, and the nation continues in the modern era. In particular, it demonstrates that there have been different understandings of nationalism, and its relationship to religion, in China after 1949. Moreover, it demonstrates that within religions, too, there have been various kinds of engagement with nationalism.

The volume’s third section turns to religion and nationalism in Taiwan and Hong Kong. In the first chapter of this final section, Edmund Frettingham and Yih-Jye Hwang, through the example of Foguangshan and the Presbyterian church in Taiwan, write about the opposing forces of state formation, and culturally-mediated expressions of modernity in the state-religion relationship. Hsun Chang writes an informative chapter on Mazu worship on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and how different political contexts shape the experiences of adherents. Moving to Hong Kong, Mariske Westendorp shows that Buddhists engaged with the 2014 Umbrella Movement in a variety of ways that were related to individual ideals of practice.

From these chapters we learn that, as in the PRC, the religious engagement with the nation, and politics, in Taiwan and Hong Kong is diverse. The section continues to develop another important thread in the book—locating the individual within the larger context of religion and nationalism. Here, we also come to understand that the engagement between religion and the nation is not only driven by political, but also personal considerations.

The volume does not provide a conclusion, but with such diverse content, it is perhaps apt to allow the reader to consider this as a collage of themes and case-studies, so that they may draw their own. What the collection does well is alert readers to the range of issues current in the Chinese religious world, and how they interact with ideas concerning the nation, history and politics. It also acts as an invitation to other scholars to extend this analysis and build upon the studies presented here. With such an ambitious historical and geographic scope, this book will find a wide readership, and is an informative, engaging addition to the literature.

Scott Pacey
The University of Nottingham