

Chapter IV-8

Sacred, Secular, and Neo-sacred Governments in China and Taiwan

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Abstract:

Taking stock of the rapid progress in neurotheology, this paper offers a new explanation for the puzzle in comparative religion-state relations: both the atheist Chinese communist government and the democratic Taiwanese government have substantially restored the traditional, pluralistic, religious state of Chinese dynasties. After both the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party failed to transplant the Western secular state from 1911 to 1949, the Chinese government and the Taiwanese government developed different types of religion-state relations afterwards. The Chinese Communist government initially aimed to eliminate all religions but lost its religious legitimacy. Since 1979, it swiftly established a Leninist religious state that would regain its religious legitimacy but maintain its dominance over all other religions. Similarly, the Taiwanese government started with a quasi-Leninist state to keep religions at arms-length. But after the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Taiwanese government gradually developed a democratic religious state by which religious freedom and equality are maximized. Given the same human capacity for religious behavior and the long tradition of pluralistic religious state, both the Chinese government and the Taiwanese government developed neo-sacred states with differential impacts on religious freedom and equality.

Key words: China, Taiwan, State, Religion, Neurotheology

I. Introduction

In the past thirty years, the Chinese people have become more religious. In this atheist country, about 85% of the population practice various kinds of religious behaviors with some regularity (World Values Surveys, 2005, 2010; Yao and Badham 2007). The number of registered believers, religious organizations, and clergy continue to increase at a rapid pace. Even among the “five venoms” (*wudu*) on the Chinese leadership’s top political agenda (Xingjian independence movement, Tibetan independence movement, Falungong, Taiwan independence movement, and the democratic movement),¹ the first three political movements are visibly embedded in religion. To accommodate the political needs of legitimation and control, the Chinese state is equipped with an institutional trilogy of the United Fronts Department of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), and five state-sponsored peak religious associations (Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Christianity, and Islam) to deal with every aspect of religious life. In coordination with the military, the para-military and the police, the Chinese state has been constantly criticized by the US State Department and other international human right organizations for its violations of religious freedom.

About the same time, the Taiwanese people have grown even more religious than their Chinese counterparts. About 90% of Taiwanese people worship at least one deity with some regularity (Tsai 2013). Not including the ancestral altars in most households, there are more than 20,000 temples, shrines, churches and mosques in this country of 23 million people. The Taiwanese government is equipped only with a small Religion Division within the Bureau of Civil Affairs, under the Ministry of the Interior, to provide financial and legal assistance to religious activities. The US State Department’s annual reports on Taiwan’s religious freedom have nothing but praises for its congenial legal and cultural environments.

The Chinese communist government and the Taiwanese government have been brothers in feud since 1949 when the government of the Republic of China, led by Kuomintang (KMT; the Nationalist Party), was defeated by the CCP and fled from mainland China to Taiwan.² Given their common inheritance from traditional Chinese culture, both their similarity in the restoration of a religious state and their difference in religious freedom is a puzzle to the secularization thesis. Why do they

¹ In Chinese traditional medicine, snake, toad, scorpion, lizard, and centipede are regarded as the most venomous creatures. The Chinese word of “independence” has the same pronunciation as “venom.”

² There have been political and academic debates about whether Taiwan is a state independent from China (Tucker 2009). This paper uses the words “state” and “government” interchangeably when they fit the context without explicit implications for Taiwan’s statehood.

restore the traditional religious state in the process of modernization? How do they keep religion from dominating the state as in those religious states in the Islamic world? Why does the Chinese religious state continue to restrict religious freedom while the Taiwanese religious state receives constant praises for its relentless enhancement of religious freedom and equality?

II. Neurotheology and Religion-State Relations

Neurotheology is an emerging discipline that consists mainly of biologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, sociologists, and religious scholars who share an interest in the relationships between the human brain and religious behaviors.³ The religious background of major proponents of neurotheology ranges from devoted religious believers and lukewarm believers of different religions to atheists. Although the path-breaking work of neurotheology, *Phantoms in the Brain*, was published only as recently as in 1998, numerous books and academic articles have prevented any scholar from doing a comprehensive survey of the literature. As early as in 2002 when psychologist Daniel Kahneman received the Nobel Prize in economics, a new academic era was ushered in whence social scientists could no longer ignore the significant impact of neurotheology on the basic assumptions and theories of social sciences.

Although still under construction and constant revisions, neurotheology generates five preliminary conclusions that would have significant impacts on current theories of religion-state relations. First, although the “God Spot,” “God Gene,” or “God Part of the Brain” has not been found, scientific evidence reveals that different parts of human brain work together to produce religious behaviors. Secondly, most humans acquire religious information early in their life and this information becomes parts of their long-lasting mental “modules” to deal with their social life. Thirdly, these religious modules seem to rank high in the mental hierarchy in initiating emotional and rational responses to environmental stimuli. That is, they mold, strengthen, re-direct, or override emotional and rational responses. Fourthly, whether a religious person is violent or peaceful is dependent upon the nature of a particular contextual theology which this person embraces. Finally, the current scientific evidence of neurotheology neither supports nor refutes the existence of deities.

Based on these neurotheological conclusions, this chapter generates five

³ Major works of neurotheology include Barrett (2011), Dawkins (2008), Jeeves and Brown (2009), Newberg and Waldman (2009), and Ramachandran and Blakeslee (1998).

arguments that cogently explain the evolution of religion-state relations in China and Taiwan. First, the temporary secularization in modernizing societies after World War II is likely replaced by de-secularization and growing interest in spiritual matters (Berger 1999; Norris 2004). Secondly, political leaders always find it useful or necessary to solicit support from major religious groups for its religious legitimacy (Billings 1994). Thirdly, if the major religious groups refuse to bestow legitimacy to them, or when religious groups are politically divided, political leaders may promote an existing religious group or create a new religion in order to consolidate their power. Fourthly, the specific form of the state-sponsored religion(s) varies according to the idiosyncratic cultural, historical, religious and political contexts of the country. It may be a theocracy, a state religion, pluralistic state religions, a statism of religious characters, or mixtures of these religion-state relations. Finally, the creation, maintenance and consolidation of democracy require the active participation of democratic religions.

Examples of these religion-state relations are abundant. Brubaker (2011) argues that the rise of modern states was intertwined with religion. Lutheranism and Calvinism found favor in the eyes of the feudal lords in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, England, and Prussia who struggled for political independence from Vatican. John Locke ([1683] 1993) provided a religious justification for “divine” human rights to challenge Hobbesian religious/political Leviathan (Hobbes [1651] 1955). American colonists embraced John Locke’s conception of “divine” human rights and established the first Christian democracy in the world (Tocqueville 1969). Deist Napoleon Bonaparte started the modern secular-state project by, first, occupying Rome in 1798, then, subjugating the French Catholic Church to his *étatisme* cult via the Concordat of 1801 and imprisoning Pope Pius VII from 1809-1814 (Rose 2011). The Meiji Restoration of the Japanese imperial house literally created a new state religion (State Shinto) out of the obscure folk religion of Shinto (Hardacre 1989). Even the post-communist Russian regimes found it vital to restore the Orthodox Church in order to provide a religious legitimacy for their neo-Slavic ambition (Knox 2005). Therefore, both the Chinese and Taiwanese governments are likely to maintain close religion-state relations as these examples do, although their styles might be different due to differences in political regimes and democratic religions.

III. Religious State in Chinese Dynasties

The Chinese popular mythology about Emperor Yu (around 2100 BCE), who was the last emperor before Chinese recorded history began, laid a solid foundation of

the religious state in China for the next four thousand years (Ding 2011, 219). Yu's father, Gwun, was a hydraulic official of Emperor Shun whose political constituencies were in the mountain area in northern China. The Yellow River flooded frequently and Gwun was summoned to contain the flood. He failed and was executed by Emperor Shun. Yu was then summoned to finish Gwun's job or die. Instead of exclusively relying on the political support of the mountain people as Gwun did, Yu solicited political support from the riverbank people who would be direct victims if the hydraulic project failed. How did Yu solicit a persistent commitment to this national project from the riverbank people? He allocated to tribal leaders religious and administrative leadership functions related to the hydraulic project. This institutional design turned out to be the key to Yu's success in mobilizing local support to contain the flood and build a nation-wide irrigation system. After the successful completion of the hydraulic project, Yu replaced Shun as the emperor and has been worshipped by the Chinese as the Water God since. Across nine provinces in north and east China, there are still thousands of Yu Temples along the riverbanks of the Yellow River and the Yangzi River (Lu 2002, 270-84).

The first recorded history of Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BCE) described the annual exorbitant religious rituals conducted by the emperors and public officials.⁴ But it was the Zhou dynasty (1122-221 BCE) that built upon Emperor Yu's religious state and bureaucratized the religious state: "The Son of the Heaven (*tianzi*; the emperor) conducts offerings to the most famous mountains and the largest rivers under the heaven; offerings to five major mountains are the responsibilities of three chancellors; offerings to four major rivers are the responsibilities of feudal lords; and feudal lords also conduct offerings to mountains and rivers within their territories."⁵

In the late Zhou dynasty (776-221 BCE), the country was divided by feudal lords while the emperor served only as a symbolic head. Witnessing constant wars among these feudal lords, intelligentsia began to espouse various political/religious ideologies in order to restore peace. Among them, Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism were the most popular ones ascertained by feudal lords who conspired to replace the Zhou royal family.

It has been debated whether Confucianism in its original form was an atheist political ideology or not. Those "neo-Confucian" scholars of the Republican era (1911-1949), like Xiong Shili (1975) and Mo Zongshan (2003), insisted that the prototypical Confucianism was an atheist political ideology, because Confucius urged

⁴ *Liji* (Book of Rites); *Shijing* (Book of Songs). See also Zhang (1997) for the early history of religion-state relations in China.

⁵ *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian): *Fengchan Shu*.

political leaders to “honor the gods and ghosts but keep a long distance from them,” “if you do not know how to serve the people, how can you serve the ghosts,” and “pay your attention to the living rather than the dead.”⁶ Confucius did elaborate much more on issues of social-political ethics than of religion. He abhorred the extravagant religious rituals adopted by political leaders at a time when the common people were suffering from poverty and war. Particularly, his political ideology promoted a merger of the public sphere with the private sphere by treating the nation as a big family: citizens become the children of their “parental officials”, who are in turn children of the patriarch emperor. But Confucius also left with his disciples many teachings about orthodox religious rituals, which were edited into the Book of Rites (*Liji*).

Even if Confucius had intended to secularize the state, as alleged by neo-Confucian scholars, his intention was thwarted when the first emperor of the Western Han dynasty (202-9 BCE) promoted Confucianism as the “state religion” intermingled with Daoism, and applied the syncretistic religion to state administration (Shryock [1932] 1966; Kuo 2013, 10-13). Public officials and intellectuals became equally immersed in Confucianism and Daoism. In the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD), “official Daoism” attracted many bureaucrats and intelligentsia due to its alchemy of health and spiritual aloofness from daily politics, but was occasionally entangled in palace politics. “Folk Daoism,” however, spread even faster among the populace and was frequently associated with peasant revolutions (Qing 1996).

During the Eastern Han dynasty, Buddhism arrived in China from Tibet. It had very rough first encounters with suspicious Chinese emperors and the coalition of Confucian and Daoist elites, and resulted in four major Buddhist tribulations (444-450, 574-578, 842-846, 955 AD). All these tribulations were related to succession crises of the royal families. Fortunately, these tribulations lasted for only short periods of time and probably were limited to certain localities in northern China. Buddhism recovered its popularity among common people and intelligentsia soon after these persecuting emperors died. Furthermore, learning a hard lesson from these tribulations, Chinese Buddhism went through what Wright (1959, 42-64) called the “domestication” process and integrated its social/political ethics with Chinese ones. By the time of Song dynasty (960-1279), Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism had merged into one (*sanjiao heyi*), particularly after emperor Huizong (1082-1135) promoted the movement of “converting Buddhism into Daoism” (*zhaofu guida*).

The Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties saw the intensification of state control over religion, but the state remained highly religious. The Ming Code and local gazetteers of the Qing dynasty meticulously regulated temple tax,

⁶ *Lunyu* (Analects): Book VI, *Yongye*, and Book XI, *Xianjin*.

clergy-officials' behaviors, sacrificial rites and the number of religious institutions (Brook 1993). But these regulations were mainly directed toward those religious institutions that posed a potential threat to social stability or to the emperors. These regulations tended to be short-lived or ineffective (Brook 1993, 23-24, 27, 30, 33; Yang 1961, 187-99; Qing 1996, 278-91). In the end, the "modernist-secularist" attempts, which had started in the late Qing period, to strengthen the state's control over religion might have "actually created 'religion' as a foil and autonomous category" (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 3).

Furthermore, the strong control of the state over religion during the Ming and Qing dynasties did not contribute to the rise of a secular state. On the contrary, various emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties enthusiastically promoted Buddhism and Daoism. Emperor Taizu, who proclaimed the suppressive Ming Code, established the dynasty with critical help from a folk Buddhist sect called White Lotus (*bailianjiao*). After his inauguration, he promoted orthodox Buddhism and Daoism in order to curtail this "rebellious" folk religion with the help of the Ming Code (Zhao 2007; Qing 1996, 265-73). It was also during this dynasty that Islam, Judaism, Tibetan Buddhism and Catholicism made great strides inroad to Chinese society. Popular novels written during the Ming dynasty, such as *Journey to the West* (*xiyuji*), *Canonization of the Gods* (*fengshenbang*) and *Outlaws of the Marsh* (*shuihuzhuan*), became the bibles of many new folk religions that are still popular in contemporary China and Taiwan. The Qing dynasty was less enthusiastic about Islam and Chinese Buddhism. Instead, Qing emperors promoted Tibetan Buddhism to strike a balance against traditional Chinese religions. But folk religions continued to mushroom during the Qing dynasty, while Christianity also found its way into royal courts and society. Most Chinese people had a variety of religions to choose from and probably enjoyed as much religious freedom as those who live in modern democracies.

After reviewing the religion-state relations from the Zhou dynasty to the late Qing dynasty, John Lagerwey (2010, 1) challenged the conventional Confucian view that the state had dominated religion. Instead, he argues that "China is a religious state and Chinese society is a religious society." Although we should probably clarify his definition of "religious" in the Chinese pluralistic and syncretistic context, rather than the Western monotheist context, Lagerwey presents Chinese religion-state relations in a much more reciprocal way than the secular state thesis does.

IV. The Secularization of the State in the Republican Era (1911-1949)

Dr. Sun Yatsen led a revolution to abolish the Qing dynasty and establish the

Republic of China. Many intellectuals blamed the failure of the Qing dynasty on the pernicious impacts of traditional Chinese religions on the state and society. Instead, they proposed the transplantation of the Western secular state. The epitome of the secular state was the Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (*jiandu simiao tiaoli*) promulgated in 1929. It contained regulations on registration, religious buildings, artifacts, management and finance. Local governments frequently expanded these regulations and encroached upon the property and management of local religious organizations (Kuo 2013, 13-15).

However, the Republican state's experiment with a secular state was limited and short-lived. Without religious legitimacy, the secular state fell into near anarchy immediately after its establishment. Warlords controlled different areas of China with different attitudes toward religion. Official Daoism declined but folk Daoism expanded rapidly (Qing 2007, 237-543). Traditional Buddhism revived under the leadership of Ven. Taixu and Ven. Yinshuen via the modernized Humanistic Buddhism (*renjian fojiao*) (Shi 1974, 277-358; Welch 1967). In 1928, China was unified by Christian Generalissimo Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kaishek), who vacillatingly followed "the separation of state and religion" principle set up by his mentor Dr. Sun Yatsen. However, whatever secular policy he adopted to reform religion-state relations probably could not have left any lasting legacy, because Japan invaded China in 1937 setting of a war that lasted for eight years.

In fact, the Western principle of the separation of religion and state met a bizarre political and cultural environment when it was transplanted to China in the Republican era. Dr. Sun Yatsen was probably the first Chinese political leader to promote the authentic American principle of separation of state and religion. In the draft constitution of the Republic, in which the non-discrimination clause was incorporated (Hu 1979), he correctly introduced the principle of separation of state and religion to the public. He accurately translated the principle of separation of state and religion as "separately standing entities" of state and religion (*zhengjiao fenli*; difference in Chinese intonation is critical here), instead of strict "separation" of state and religion (*zhengjiao fenli*). The former translation was consistent with the Chinese translation of the "separation" of powers (*quanli fenli*), which the American principle of state-religion separation was built on, while the latter translation prohibits the state and the religion from any contact.

However, very few Chinese intellectuals followed Dr. Sun's translation or his argument of checks and balances between the state and religion. Most intellectuals of the Republican era, probably due to their lack of knowledge of the American background, adopted the strict "separation" translation and argument.⁷ A different

7 Liang Qichao, a leading intellectual in the Republican era, proposed strict separation of the state and

translation of a single word made a world of difference in the development of state-religion relations in both China and Taiwan over the next hundred years. In the Republican era, religious organizations suffering from state encroachment called for state-religion separation in order to protect themselves. Few actively promoted involvement of religion in politics under the anti-religion atmosphere at that time. By contrast, many statist or atheist intellectuals also called for state-religion separation because they did not want Chinese religions to corrupt China's modernization, or see Western religions replacing the Chinese culture (Cha 1994, 355-526). It is this particular translation and (mis-) interpretation of historical state-religion relations in China that has decisively framed state-religion relations in Taiwan and China after 1949.

V. Building a Democratic Religious State in Taiwan

After being defeated by the CCP in 1949, the KMT state went through radical secularization in order to consolidate its legitimacy on this formerly estranged island.⁸ The architect of this secular Leninist state was Jiang Jinguo, the heir-to-be to President Jiang Jieshi. Jiang Jinguo became a devoted communist after his father sent him to the Soviet Union as a political insurance for Sino-Soviet cooperation from 1925-1937. Although he was later baptized, probably upon his father's insistence, there was no record showing that he ever practiced Christianity or any other religion (Jiang 1997). Once the party-state was established in 1950, it began to penetrate society by setting up corporatist associations and implanting party cells in all large social organizations, including religious ones.⁹

Under corporatist law, only one national umbrella association was allowed for each religion to represent the interests of its clergy and believers. For instance, at the national level, there were the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, the

religion. But he also proposed governance by Buddhist doctrines (Liang 1974, 20, 29-35).

⁸ Comprehensive studies of Taiwan's religion-state relations are few. Notable works include Laliberté (2009) and Kuo (2008, 10-12). However, neither work fairly addresses the historical legacies and the recent important development of religion-state relations in Taiwan. Both ended their analysis with the "laissez-faire" period and were not able to analyze the current "checks and balances" period. An updated review of Taiwan's religion-state relations is Kuo (2013, 13-31).

⁹ Corporatist associations refer to social organizations that are organized according to the criteria of singularity, compulsion, government sponsorship, non-competitiveness and functional differentiation (Schmitter 1971). Wu Naithe (1987) meticulously studied Jiang Jinguo's efforts to establish corporatist controls over Taiwanese society in the 1950s.

Daoist Association of the Republic of China, the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference and the Confucian Association of the Republic of China.¹⁰ No other associations of the same religion were allowed to compete with these state-sponsored associations. The only exception was Christianity. Although most Christian denominations had their own national associations, such as the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, the Chinese Baptist Convention and the Local Church, there was no national umbrella association representing all Christian denominations.

Under the KMT regime, the state exercised all-encompassing control over religion through both formal and informal means. In addition to general martial law regulations restricting free movement, information and speech, the major formal instrument was the Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (LRTS) enacted in 1929 in China. More effective forms of state control over religion came from various state intelligence-gathering agencies, such as the local police, the Garrison Command, the Investigation Bureau, the military intelligence office and the National Security Bureau.

In addition to these bureaucratic controls over religion, the KMT also implanted party cells in large religious organizations. These party cells assumed at least three functions: to recruit party members within the religion, to monitor religious organizations' political activities and to elect party members to lead national religious organizations. The KMT coordination center was the First Office of the Social Works Department. There was a loose party caucus (*dangtuan*) set up in the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China, but no smaller party cells existed in monasteries or temples. There was no evidence indicating party organizations were present in Christian denominations, although their KMT members kept the KMT center informed of any suspicious activity of their colleagues. Because of the dual supervision of the state and party machinery, most religious organizations during the martial law period had no choice but to adopt either a submissive position or an isolationist attitude toward the state.

In his case studies of three Buddhist organizations (Ciji, Foguangshan and Dharma Drum Mountain) and one folk religious organization (Enacting Heaven) during the KMT regime, Madsen (2007, 136) gave credit to these large religious organizations for their contribution to Taiwan's smooth transition to democracy because they "nurtured a spirit of engagement with public affairs and a cooperative attitude toward the government." However, we should not mix up making contribution to "smooth democratization" with making direct contribution to

¹⁰ For the relations between the state and Buddhism in Taiwan during the martial law period, see Jones (1999).

democracy. These large Buddhist organizations were apparently more supportive of the authoritarian government than the Presbyterians.

The major exception to the Leninist religion-state relations was the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) (Kuo 2008, 43-44). During the early period of Japanese rule, the colonial government welcomed Presbyterian evangelists in order to provide medical and social services to the Taiwanese. After 1945, Taiwanese Presbyterians resumed evangelism via indigenous leadership, with foreign missionaries serving as auxiliary arms.¹¹ In the 1970's, after repeated encroachments on their religious freedom by the state, the PCT issued three religious-political documents challenging the legitimacy of the secular state. The Declarations and Suggestions on National Affairs (1971), Our Appeals (1975) and the Declaration of Human Rights (1977) promoted democracy and establishment of a "new and independent nation" for the Taiwanese people. These three documents were severely criticized by the KMT government and by some Mandarin churches as an act of treason and an inappropriate intervention in politics by the church (Lin 1990, 110-17). Condemnations also came from the rank and file of the church: pastors, elders, deacons and lay believers who were KMT members (Hu 2001, 235-36, 252-55). Nevertheless, the majority of the Presbyterian churches stood firm against the state that had lost its religious and political legitimacy.

Major confrontation between the Presbyterians and the government broke out in 1979, when the government cracked down harshly on an opposition rally. Leaders of the movement were arrested, along with some Presbyterian pastors who had participated in the demonstration.¹² During the martial law period, the PCT supported the opposition movement with concrete actions. Pastors urged their believers to vote for opposition candidates. National and local churches co-sponsored rallies and demonstrations to protest against the KMT government.

Taiwan's political and religious environment significantly transformed in the early 1980's when Jiang Jinguo's health deteriorated (Kuo 2008, 12-13). The opposition movement made great progress in attracting grassroots supporters by combining democratic ideals with Taiwanese nationalism. The KMT government finally lifted martial law in 1987.¹³ Li Denghui, who succeeded Jiang Jinguo as president in 1988 after Jiang's death, was a devoted Presbyterian. Although he was

¹¹ Some foreign missionaries and theologians, such as Michael Thornberry, Donald J. Wilson, David Gelzer and Daniel Keeby supported the PCT's Taiwan independence cause and were expelled by the KMT government (Zheng 1999, 71; Huang [1986] 1988, 304-309).

¹² Taiwan Jidu Zhanglao Jiaohui Zong Hui Bianji Xiaozu (2000, 40).

¹³ On domestic and external causes for the lifting of martial law, see Qi (1996).

not involved in the Presbyterian protest movement in the 1970s, he was familiar with and sympathetic to their religious and political causes. Subsequently, most laws and regulations violating human rights were rescinded, and new laws protecting human rights were instituted. Most important among these new laws were the revised Law on the Organization of Civic Groups and the Law on Assembly and Parade, which guaranteed Taiwanese the same freedom of association and movement as citizens in other democratic countries. This meant that the increasing pluralism of religious organizations that began in the early 1980s was finally endorsed by the state. The corporatist structure of religious groups soon yielded to the burgeoning religious pluralism (Lu, Johnson, and Stark 2008).

In the post-martial law regime from 1987 to 2000, the state bureaucracy tried to maintain close supervision over religion but its intentions and methods were very different from those of the Leninist state. The increased freedom of association brought about the mushrooming of "new religions" (*xinxing zongjiao*) made both locally and imported from abroad. At the same time, however, sexual and financial scandals in these unregulated new religions were exposed from time to time. Partly due to the concern over their collective image, and partly due to strong competition for membership and financial donations from these new religions, most religious groups supported the government's effort to re-regulate all religions (Ye 2000, 263). But the content of the proposed law by the Ministry of the Interior, Law of Religious Groups (*zongjiao tuantifa*), aroused heated debate not only between the state and religious organizations, but also among the principal religions, on issues such as accounting procedures, property management, building construction and internal governing structures (Laliberté 2009, 70-71).

The increased political autonomy of religious groups from 1987 to 2000 was evident in several ways. Benefitting from economic prosperity, new religious groups mushroomed outside the state-controlled religious associations (Katz 2003, 395; Laliberté 2001, 97-129; Paper 1996, 105), while religious support of the KMT government declined. Many religious leaders openly blessed politicians from both the KMT and opposition parties, while state and local elites competed for votes by supporting local religious traditions (Katz 2003, 412). In turn, religious organizations solicited support from different political parties via their social networks, in order to maximize government funding for religious activities. More and more religious organizations supported candidates to run against KMT candidates. Furthermore, some clergy ran for public offices under different party banners. However, most religious organizations decided to maintain their separationist position or maintain equal distance from all political forces. Their believers still could not get used to political debate among believers or between the pulpit and the pew.

While the state's negative intervention in religion was reduced, its positive assistance to religion was not. The Bureau of Civic Affairs of the Ministry of Interior routinely provided small grants (up to about US\$33,000) to religious organizations that planned to hold religious parades, conferences, exhibitions, ceremonies, charity programs or neighborhood activities. These small grants were given to religious organizations without discrimination, but proportionality was considered. Larger activities tended to receive larger funding. Very few, if any, religious organizations complained about the Bureau of Civic Affairs for violating their religious freedom or the separation of state and religion.

In the year 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party toppled the fifty-five-year rule of the KMT government, whose extensive corruption and intricate connection to local gangsters had alienated itself from major religious groups. DPP President Chen Shuibian, who became an initiated believer of the syncretistic religion Yiguandao in the early 1990s, won the election probably due to large amount of religious swing votes. His Religious White Paper propagated religious freedom and promised solutions to problems of land acquisition, which was the major concern of small-and-medium sized religions (Kuo 2011, 266). This first turn-over of the Taiwanese government resulted in major restructuring of not only political coalitions but also state-society relations, including state-religion relations. A neo-sacred state was now on the rise to replace the secular state of 1949-1987.

However, the second term of Cheng Shuibian made the same mistakes as the KMT did before 2000: its extensive corruption and intricate connection to local gangsters disillusioned major religious groups. In 2008, board-serving on the society's anti-corruption waves, Ma Yingjiou led the KMT to win the presidency back and passed what Samuel T. Huntington calls the "two turn-over test" for a consolidated democracy. Never publicly disclosing his Catholic baptism at childhood, President Ma was nevertheless committed to further promoting religious freedom as part of his commitment to expanding human rights in general. In May 2009, he signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The new Human Rights Committee of the Ma government has regularly and diligently monitored different ministries to revise laws and regulations that might have infringed upon human rights, including religious regulations.

Since the year 2000, the state has painstakingly transformed itself from a secular state toward a neo-sacred state. In 2001, the Ministry of Education began active promotion of religious curriculum in primary and secondary schools as well as in universities (R.O.C. Ministry of Education 2001). Primary and secondary schools cooperate with Buddhist, Christian and Yiguandao organizations, among other

religious groups, to offer Life Education classes (Lin 2012). In universities, Life Education classes are also added to curricula as optional general knowledge classes, most of them offered by faculty members with different religious backgrounds. As a result of dwindling government subsidies, universities often welcome religion-based foundations to sponsor credited classes and lectures at universities. Students and faculty members can choose from a variety of religion-based clubs, freely wear different religious garments or symbols of their faith and live peacefully on campus.

In a landmark decision in 2004, the Grand Justice Council declared many clauses stipulated in the 1929 Law Regulating Temples and Shrines (LRTS) to be in violation of constitutional principles of religious freedom and equality. The Grand Justice Council provided detailed arguments based on extensive reviews of domestic and foreign documents of state-religion relations (R.O.C. Grand Justice Council 2004). Although still using the translation of strict separationism, its substantive explanation of the principle gradually shifted from separation toward checks and balances between the state and religion.

As mandated by this Grand Justice decision, the Ministry of the Interior began to work on a draft of the Law of Religious Groups. Earlier drafts tended to be highly regulative and filled with punishment clauses -- a reflection of the secular-state mentality. The current version has largely toned down these elements. Most important of all, with regard to the procedure of registration, a report system has replaced the approval system of the LRTS's legacy, which had intruded upon religious freedom. New applicants for the various benefits provided by the Law of Religious Groups will only need to fill out some simple forms and need not go through complicated approval procedures. Although it requires further fine-tuning, most religious groups warmly endorse its current format.¹⁴

In 2009, the Ministry of Education began to accept applications for the establishment of Religious Study Institutes (R.O.C. Ministry of Education 2008). Once approved, these religious seminaries would be able to issue state-recognized diplomas to their students, which would allow them to apply for graduate programs in regular universities. They could also receive government subsidies, which usually constitute a significant portion of a university's annual revenue in Taiwan.

With steadily narrowing margins of victory in various elections, religious organizations, whose memberships range from hundreds of thousands to millions, have acquired the ability to influence political issues that are of vital religious value, such as abortion, homosexual education in public schools, legalization of gambling

¹⁴ André Laliberté's (2009, 74-75) pessimism about the bill's approval was due to the regulative nature of earlier drafts.

and sex industries and sustainable development. Conservative religious organizations have actively lobbied the Legislature to uphold their religious values. As a result, some liberal bills were postponed or even terminated at the preparation stage. Others were passed, but only after they were watered down drastically, as in the cases of the Regulation on Development in Offshore Islands in 2006 to legalize gambling, and the revision of the Social Order Maintenance Ordinance in order to legalize the sex industry in 2010.

As a combined result of the state's self-restraint and the growing political influence of religious groups, religious freedom in Taiwan has greatly expanded since 2000 to a level higher than in traditional dynasties. The U.S. State Department has published annual reports on religious freedom in all parts of the world since 2001; among them, Taiwan has received nothing but adulation for full religious freedom.

VI. Building a Leninist Religious State in China

A “Leninist religious state” seems a self-contradictory phrase, given the fact that Leninism is rooted in atheist Marxism. But from 1949 to the present, the Chinese state has gradually transformed the secular Leninist state into a religious Leninist state, which is more adaptable to the Chinese religious society. What is a Leninist religious state? How did it come about?

The Chinese Leninist religious state is based on a new state religion (or pseudo-religion) called “Chinese nationalism” (Kuo 2014, 192-98, 210-14; Yang 2009, 14). Its sacrosanct god is “China”, with aliases of the Dragon, Han, or the Yellow Emperor. This god demands total commitment and sacrifice from believers. Any Chinese who opposes or blasphemes it is a “traitor to Han” (*hanjian*) or a “historical sinner” (*lishi zuiren*), and is punishable by death. This Chinese god has a number of auxiliary deities canonized, including Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and other General Secretaries of the CCP.

The holy scriptures of Chinese nationalism consist of the writings and speeches of these mortal gods, together called “Chinese communism” or “Socialism with Chinese characteristics.” All the Chinese from kindergarten to college levels are required to diligently study the wisdom of these mortal gods. CCP cadres, government officials, and CCP members of large-scale private enterprises and social organizations conduct routine political-study courses to memorize, discuss, reflect and apply these scriptures to their daily life. In defending major policies, CCP officials and scholars routinely cite these sources for apologetics, prophecies, and prayers in order to facilitate the coming of the utopian Chinese socialism.

Chinese nationalism prescribes a political theology of trinity, which sets rules and boundaries to religion-state relations. The political theology of trinity consists of three elements: China, socialism, and the CCP. China is socialism; socialism is the rule by the CCP; and China cannot survive without the CCP. Being patriotic to China, Chinese people need to assert socialism and uphold communist leadership. Anyone who opposes socialism or communist leadership is a traitor to China. All religious groups in China should place this political theology of trinity at the top of their religious creeds: Love your country, (then) love your religion (*aiguo aijiao*) (Zhang and Zhou 2007).

The priests of Chinese nationalism are the CCP cadres and scholars. These priests teach these nationalist scriptures and provide unified new hermeneutics of these scriptures. They hold offices in all governmental branches and social organizations. They are also the religious police to discover, censor, re-educate, or remove political heresies, including those religious believers who refuse to embrace the political theology of trinity (Shambaugh 2008).

The religious rituals of Chinese nationalism are performed in all “reformed” traditional Chinese holidays (e.g., the rice-bundle holiday of lunar May 5th is re-interpreted as a patriot day) and new national holidays set up by the Chinese communist government after 1949 (e.g., the May 30th Memorial Day for the Japanese Massacre in Nanjing, the July 1st Memorial Day for the Birth of the Chinese Communist Party, the July 7th Memorial Day for the Japanese Invasion in China at the Lugo Bridge, the August 1st Memorial Day for the Establishment of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, the September 3rd Memorial Day for the Victory of Sino-Japanese War, and the October 1st National Independence Day). The major religious sites where these religious rituals are performed are those “Bases of Patriotic Education” (*aiguo jiaoyu jidi*) omnipresent in all major cities in China, with names like the Memorial Hall of Mao Zedong, Military Museum, Historical Museum, and Memorial Residence of Revolutionary Leaders. Local grade schools are required to arrange annual pilgrimages to these holy shrines of Chinese nationalism (Miyamoto 2012).

If there are gods, holy saints and true believers in a religion, there must also be devils, fallen angels, infidels and apostates. Who are the latter group condemned by Chinese nationalism? They are Western imperialism, liberalism, Catholicism, Christianity, and those Chinese citizens “polluted” by Western culture. The worst apostates are the “five venoms” mentioned at the beginning of this paper, who are led astray by Western political forces to desecrate the sacrosanct Chinese god (China) and prophets (CCP General Secretaries). Their fate is to be thrown into prison or summary execution, as deemed appropriate by the CCP court.

Guided by the adaptable catechism of Chinese nationalism, religion-state relations in communist China went through three phases: 1949-1965 (Zhou Enlai's "Religion Accommodates New Democracy"), 1966-1979 (Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution), 1980-present (Jiang Zeming's "Active Guidance to the Mutual Accommodation between Religion and Socialist Society").

Being atheists, Marx and Engels abhorred religion. Marx dismissed religion as the opium of the exploited people, while Engels proposed that criticizing religion is the premise of all criticisms. Religion had no use in the construction of a socialist state (Tang 1999, 1). However, this Marxist hostility toward religion was either ignored or downplayed in the first phase of constructing a secular Chinese state from 1949 to 1965. The CCP government promised religious freedom and mobilized religious groups to participate in the construction of a new China, including the five-year plans and the Great Leap Forward of 1957. With regard to the ultimate goal of terminating all religions, the Leninist state adopted incremental and soft policies of public discussion, criticism and education. In addition, the government sponsored the establishment of national religious associations to register all clergy and believers, and required that each religious organization be governed by the newly established "Democratic Management Committee", which was elected by lay believers under the guidance of local CCP.

The economic disaster of the Great Leap Forward discredited Mao Zedong's leadership and brought the reformers to power in the party, bureaucracy and military. In fear of losing all power, Mao Zedong initiated the Great Cultural Revolution with an aim to annihilate all anti-revolutionary forces, particularly, religions. Why? Because he thought the landlords and wealthy peasants were mobilizing local traditional religions to oppose Marxism, while Christians and Catholics had been the instruments of Western Imperialism to sabotage communist China. The Great Cultural Revolution was a holy war! The Red Guards were given the authority by Mao Zedong to burn down shrines, temples, churches, and mosques nation-wide. All clergy were forced to publicly renounce their religious positions, or faced brutality at the spot. This massive persecution of all religions lasted until Mao Zedong died in 1976 and his followers were arrested by moderate political leaders in 1979.

The radical leftist economic and religious policies of the Cultural Revolution severely undermined the legitimacy of the Chinese government. Under the *de facto* leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the CCP government promoted drastic economic liberalization along with the less drastic, but still significant, religious liberalization. In 1982, the Party Central produced the "Fundamental Perspectives and Policies of Religious Issues in the Period of Chinese Socialism" (dubbed "Document No.19). It proclaimed that religion and socialism will co-exist for long periods of time, and

religion should make contribution to socialist construction (P.R.C. Party Literature Research Office 1995).

In order to strengthen the ideological legitimacy of the new religious program, several CCP scholars in Shanghai and Nanjing waged a public debate called “the Third Opium War.” Citing the new religious program, they drastically revised Marxist thesis of religion as opium. They proposed, instead, that Marx’s opium thesis is applicable to European societies where institutions of class exploitation exist, but not applicable to communist China where there are no more classes. However, since there are still “internal contradictions among the people” and social problems, religion can provide positive functions and complement socialism. These prophetic hermeneutics were soon endorsed by the Party Central and became new textbooks to be used in the regular political-study courses in the CCP, bureaucracy and large religious organizations from 1982-1990 (Xing 2005, 30-49).

A few weeks after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre of students, Jiang Zeming was elected the General Secretary of the CCP. The Chinese government then suffered yet another major crisis of legitimacy. Unlike the Cultural Revolution, which could be blamed on radical leftists, the Tiananmen massacre was ordered by the economic reformers within the Party Central. Economic success alone was not sufficient to cope with the increasing popular demand for human rights and democratization. The communist leadership was in dire need to find an alternative source of legitimacy. Religion just came handy.

In 1993, Jiang Zeming advocated “three sentences,” which summarized all the experiences of religious reforms from 1982-1992, to be the new guidelines of religious policies: To implement the Party’s policies of religious freedom with full scale and accuracy; to regulate religious affairs by law; and to actively guide the mutual accommodation between religion and socialist society. Jiang Zeming (2006, 376) even followed up on the revised opium thesis in order to cleanse the original sin of religion in Marxism.

But what exactly is “to actively guide the mutual accommodation between religion and socialist society”? Ye Xiaowen, who was the Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) from 1995-2009, provided an official hermeneutics: “We do not demand that clergy and religious believers relinquish their faith. Rather, we demand that they passionately love the mother land, support socialist institutions, uphold the communist leadership, and obey the laws, regulations and policies of the state. We demand that their religious activities obey and serve the highest interests of the state and the holistic interests of the nation” (Ye 2007, 167). In a nutshell, the purpose of religious life in China is to obey and serve the state religion of Trinitarian Chinese nationalism.

Following up on Ye's political hermeneutics, SARA published a series of patriotic textbooks for the five major religions, which would strengthen the religious legitimacy of the new communist leadership under Hu Jintao (2002-2012). The goal of these textbooks was to "make students in religious seminaries embrace the socialist belief with Chinese characteristics, to raise their patriotism and socialist weakening, to strengthen their national pride and self-confidence; to combine 'love your country' with "love your religion" in order to adhere to the principle of religious autonomy... so that they grow to be a new generation of religious clergy who uphold the leadership of CCP, support socialist institutions, and become progressive patriots" (P.R.C. State Administration for Religious Affairs 2005, 4-5).

This series of patriotic textbooks consist of one master book and one for each religion. The first published textbook was for Catholicism in 2002, at a time when diplomatic relations between China and Vatican hit the bottom over the controversy about who had authority to appoint bishops in China. Thereafter, the master textbook was published, which provided detailed guidelines for the Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Daoist textbooks. In 2006, the textbooks for Christianity and Islam were published. The Daoist textbook was published in 2011. They also planned two textbooks for Buddhism: Han Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, but neither were, and probably never will be, published because of internal politics within the Buddhist community.

The editing process of these religious textbooks reflects a changing relationship between the state and religion. In the past, such materials of political nature would be edited by the state alone, and then imposed on the religious communities. But under the relatively liberal Director Ye Xiaowen, these textbooks were edited by the national religious association of each religion, reviewed by religious scholars in research institutions, and double-checked by researchers of SARA. Therefore, these textbooks integrated different perspectives toward religion-state relations from the government, academia, and religious communities. Interestingly, except for the master textbook, all these textbooks paid only lip service to patriotism, socialism and the leadership of the CCP. Most of their content was devoted to their authentic tradition, religious figures and Chinese martyrs. Occasionally, they also sneaked into paragraphs references to promote religious autonomy from the state.

The impacts of these textbooks on the religious communities and religion-state relations have been significant. After their publication, SARA required every religious seminary to hire a tenured teacher to teach this textbook, and all seminary freshmen take this core course. In addition, all large religious organizations in the major cities were required to purchase these textbooks to be used in regular political-study courses for clergy and lay believers.

In 2010, SARA published yet another important political hermeneutics, *Chinese Five Major Religions Discuss Harmony*, to address the relationships between the state and religion. In addition to the topics of harmony, social values, and scriptural citations, most of these essays also addressed issues of democracy, rule by law, and social justice. Particularly, using the language of Liberation Theology, the Catholic and Christian essays promoted not only “rule by law” but also “rule of law,” checks and balances among governmental branches in order to protect human rights, and issues of social justice. They encouraged believers to be patriotic, but to also be prophetic in promoting social justice.¹⁵

In addition to these patriotic education programs tailored to religious communities, Hu Jintao’s government further strengthened its religious legitimacy by simultaneously promoting Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism at an international scale, which is reminiscent of the “three-religions-in-one” (*sanjiao heyi*) policy of the Song dynasty. Jiang Zeming’s government established the Chinese Confucius Research Institute within the State Council in 1996. Starting in 2002, the Institute began to establish branches on foreign soil. From 2002 to 2012, the Chinese government sponsored 358 Confucius Institutes (*Kongzi xueyuan*) and 500 Confucius Workshops (*Kongzi ketang*) in 105 countries. The World Buddhist Forum was held in China once every three years after 2006; excluded were the supporters of Dalai Lama. More than 600 monks from over 50 countries participated in the 2012 Forum. Modeling after the World Buddhist Forum was the International Daoist Forum held in 2011, in which more than 500 Daoist specialists from a dozen countries participated.¹⁶

In retrospect, the Leninist religious state has gradually transformed itself into a pluralistic Leninist religious state in which Chinese nationalism retains the privileged and dominant position as state religion, while other religions expanded their religious freedom within the political parameters set up by the state. It is a “pluralistic” religious state in the sense of the traditional Chinese state, as described in the second section of this paper: there is a dominant state religion, moderate religious freedom and autonomy for other religions, but religious organizations should shy away from involvement in politics unless ordered to do so under the state’s scrutiny. It remains a “Leninist” religious state in the sense that Trinitarian Chinese nationalism is still sacrosanct and the state keeps solid and extensive control over religious organizations.

¹⁵ P.R.C. Center for Religious Research of China, State Administration for Religious Affairs (2010, 306-314, 406-413).

¹⁶ Kongzi Yanjiuyuan (Chinese Confucius Research Institute), <http://www.confucius.gov.cn/>; Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui (Chinese Buddhist Association), <http://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/>; Zhongguo Daojiao Xiehui (Chinese Daoist Association), <http://www.taoist.org.cn/>, accessed August 8, 2014.

Without further democratization, the Chinese Leninist religious state is not likely to turn into a democratic religious state as in Taiwan.

VII. Conclusion

From the perspective of neurotheology, it is not a surprise that both the atheist Chinese communist government and the democratic Taiwanese government have substantially restored the traditional, pluralistic, religious state of Chinese dynasties. The Taiwanese government started with a quasi-Leninist state to keep religions at arms-length. But after the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Taiwanese government, in response to the emergence of democratic religions, gradually developed a democratic religious state by which religious freedom and equality are maximized. Similarly, the Chinese Communist government initially aimed to eliminate all religions. But after these suppressive policies backfired, and the state lost its religious legitimacy, the Chinese Communist party established a Leninist religious state that would dominate all other religions. While religious freedom in China has gradually improved, this freedom is always precarious as long as the Leninist religious state remains dominant.

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