RELIGION IN CHINESE SOCIETIES

# From Trustworthiness to Secular Beliefs

## *Changing Concepts of xin 信 from Traditional to Modern Chinese*



Edited by
Christian Meyer & Philip Clart

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From Trustworthiness to Secular Beliefs

# Religion in Chinese Societies

*Edited by*

Kenneth Dean (*National University of Singapore*)
Richard Madsen (*University of California, San Diego*)
David Palmer (*University of Hong Kong*)

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# Acknowledgements

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1 https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/oas/sinologie/forschung/projekte/mapping_religion/1_Konferenz-Xin/index.html.

# Contributors

*Friederike Assandri*
is currently a researcher at Leipzig University, Germany. She is interested in the history of Daoism and the interaction of Daoism and Buddhism in early medieval China. In this context she works on questions pertaining to the fields of philosophy and religion. She has published widely, including the monographs *The Daode jing Commentary of Cheng Xuanying: Daoism, Buddhism, and the Laozi in the Tang Dynasty* (Oxford University Press, 2021), *Dispute zwischen Daoisten und Buddhisten im Fo Dao lunheng des Daoxuan (596–667)* (Ostasien Verlag, 2015), *Beyond the Daode jing: Tang Dynasty Daoist Philosophy* (Three Pines Press, 2009).

*Nikolas Broy*
is Assistant Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religion at Leipzig University. His research focuses on the social history of religion in Chinese societies, particularly popular religious sects, Buddhism, and vegetarian practices, but he also works on the globalization of Chinese religions and sociological approaches to understanding religion. His most recent publications include "Global Dao: The Making of Transnational Yiguandao" (2020), "The Filial Sectarian: Confucian Values and Popular Sects in Late Imperial China and Modern Taiwan" (2020), and "Moral Integration or Social Segregation? Vegetarianism and Vegetarian Religious Communities in Chinese Religious Life" (2019).

*Adam Yuet Chau*
is Professor of the Anthropology of China at the University of Cambridge. He is the author of *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford University Press, 2006) and *Religion in China: Ties That Bind* (Polity, 2019), editor of *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation* (Routledge, 2011), and co-editor of a 2019 special issue of *L'Homme* (Cumulus: Hoarding, Hosting and Hospitality). Currently editing *Chinese Religious Culture in 100 Objects* (group project), he is also working on book projects on hosting (做主), "spheres" (界), and "cherishing lettered paper" (惜字紙).

*Philip Clart*
is Professor of Chinese Culture and History at Leipzig University, Germany, and editor of the *Journal of Chinese Religions*. His main research areas are popular religion and new religious movements in Taiwan, as well as literature and

religions of the late imperial period. His monographs include *Han Xiangzi: The Alchemical Adventures of a Daoist Immortal* (University of Washington Press, 2007) and *Die Religionen Chinas* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009). He has edited or co-edited several volumes, including most recently *Text and Context in the Modern History of Chinese Religions: Redemptive Societies and Their Sacred Texts* (Brill, 2020).

*Max Deeg*
is Professor in Buddhist Studies at Cardiff University, UK. He holds a PhD in Classical Indology and a professorial degree (Habilitation) in Religious Studies. His main research interests are the history and spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and China. Among his publications are a German translation of the Lotus Sutra (2007), a (German) translation of the travelogue of the Chinese monk Faxian (2005), and an annotated translation of the Chinese Christian stele-inscription of Xi'an (2018). At the moment, he is preparing an annotated English translation of Xuanzang's travelogue (*Datang Xiyu ji*).

*Thomas Fröhlich*
is Professor of Sinology at the University of Hamburg. His research focuses on modern Chinese philosophy, political thought, and intellectual history. He has authored the monographs *Tang Junyi: Confucian Philosophy and the Challenge of Modernity* (Brill, 2017) and *Staatsdenken im China der Republikzeit (1912–1949)* (Campus, 2000). His edited volumes include, among others, *Chinese Visions of Progress, 1895 to 1949* (with Axel Schneider; Brill, 2020) and *Taiwans unvergänglicher Antikolonialismus: Jiang Weishui und der Widerstand gegen die japanische Kolonialherrschaft* (with Liu Yishan; Transcript, 2011). He is the editor, together with Kai Vogelsang, of the journal *Oriens Extremus*.

*Joachim Gentz*
is Chair of Chinese Philosophy and Religion at the University of Edinburgh; his research field is Chinese intellectual history with a focus on early history of thought. He has published on early Confucian commentarial traditions, Chinese ritual and divination, Chinese interreligious discourses, early Chinese forms of argumentation, Chinese visual traditions, modern Chinese religious policy, and Cultural Studies theory in both German and English. His English publications include *Keywords Re-Oriented* (Dunedin Academic Press, 2009), *Understanding Chinese Religions* (Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2012), *Religious Diversity in Chinese Thought* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, ed. with P. Schmidt-Leukel), *Literary Forms of Argument in Early China*, (Brill, 2015, 2016, ed. with D. Meyer), *China and the World, the World and China: Essays in Honor of Rudolf Wagner* (Ostasien Verlag, 2019, 4 vols., ed. with B. Mittler, N. Gentz and C. Yeh).

*Vincent Goossaert*
(PhD, EPHE, Paris, 1997) was a research fellow at CNRS (1998–2012) and is now Professor of Daoism and Chinese religions at EPHE, PSL; he has served as dean of its graduate school (2014–2018). His research deals with the social history of Chinese religion in late imperial and modern times. He is co-editor of *T'oung Pao*, a leading journal in sinology established in 1890. Recent publications include *Making the Gods Speak: The Ritual Production of Revelation in Chinese History* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2022), *Heavenly Masters: Two Thousand Years of the Daoist State* (University of Hawai'i Press & Chinese University Press, 2021); *Vies des saints exorcistes: Hagiographies taoïstes, 11e–16e siècles* (Les Belles Lettres, 2021); *The Fifty Years that Changed Chinese Religion, 1898–1948*, with Paul R. Katz (AAS, 2021) and *Daoism in Modern China: Clerics and Temples in Urban Transformations, 1860–Present*, Vincent Goossaert & Liu Xun (eds.) (Routledge, 2021).

*Esther-Maria Guggenmos*
is Professor for the History of Religions at Lund University. Educated in Religious Studies and Sinology in Münster, Bonn, and Taipeh, she concentrated on urban lay Buddhism in Taiwan (PhD Ghent University, 2010). She was research coordinator of the IKGF, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg, and held positions as visiting professor in Münster, Erlangen, and Fribourg. In her habilitation, she analyzed the relation between Chinese Buddhism and divinatory practices. Guggenmos specializes in Chinese Buddhism, aesthetics of religion, and processes of cultural exchange. Together with LI Wei, she is author of a selected translation of the *Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks* (*Wahrsagende Mönche im chinesischen Buddhismus*, Ostasien Verlag, 2019), on the basis of which she reflects in her article on how *xin* can be seen as a narrative marker intended to convince the readers of the power of Buddhism. Other monographs: *Im Netz des Indra* (with Annette Wilke, LIT Verlag, 2008), and *I Believe in Buddhism and Travelling* (Ergon, 2017).

*Huang Weishan*
is an Associate Professor in Sociology at the Hong Kong Shue Yan University. Dr. Huang received her PhD degree in Sociology at the New School University and was a research fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Religious and Ethnic Diversities. Her research interests are the sociology of religion, transnational sociology, and urban sociology. One of her research projects was to investigate how cultural and economic forces intertwined in urban re-structuring in New York and Shanghai, based on urban ethnography and census data. Her current research is to investigate the expansion of Chinese Buddhism in the Western cities.

*Thomas Jansen*
is Associate Professor in Chinese Studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter. He has published *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China: Debatten im Salon des Prinzen Xiao Ziliang* (Rombach, 2000) and several articles on early medieval China. He co-edited *Globalization and the Making of Religious Modernity in China Transnational Religions, Local Agents, and the Study of Religion, 1800–Present* (Brill, 2014). His current project is entitled *Religious Text Production in Late Imperial China: Social, Religious, and Performative Aspects of Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the 16th to 19th centuries* and will explore the manifold interactions between religious texts and their users.

*Jiang Manke*
is presently a guest researcher at the Institute for Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology of the Humboldt University of Berlin. Her research focuses on theology and philosophy of religion in the Late Enlightenment and early German Romanticism, especially Friedrich Schleiermacher, and on the theory of religion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a scholar with Chinese background she is also interested in the reception of Chinese religions in the European philosophy and theology as well as the history of Christianity in China. Her most recent publication is the monograph *Religion und Individualität bei Schleiermacher* (De Gruyter, 2020).

*Thoralf Klein*
is Senior Lecturer in Chinese and Global History at Loughborough University, United Kingdom. His research focuses on modern China and its interactions with the wider world, including the history of Christian missions and political religions. His monographs include *Die Basler Mission in Guangdong (Südchina) 1859–1931* (Iudicium, 2002) and *Geschichte des modernen China* (2nd ed. Schöningh, 2009). He has edited or co-edited several volumes, including *Globalisation and the Making of Religious Modernity in China* (Brill, 2014) and *The Boxer War: Media and Memory of an Imperialist Intervention* (Solivagus, 2020).

*Christoph Kleine*
is Professor for the History of Religion at Leipzig University, Germany and co-editor in chief of the *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft*. His main research areas are the religious history of Japan and East Asian Buddhism, especially Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. His monographs include *Der Buddhismus in Japan* (Mohr Siebeck, 2011), *Der Buddhismus des Reinen Landes* (Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2015), and (in collaboration with Oliver Freiberger)

*Buddhismus* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011). He has edited or co-edited several volumes, including most recently *Religionsbegegnung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019) and *Secularities in Japan* (Brill, 2019).

*Hans Martin Krämer*
is Professor of Japanese Studies at Heidelberg University, Germany. He has published on the cultural, social, and political history of early modern and modern Japan. His latest publications have focused on conceptual problems of the relationship between state and religion in modern Japan and include the monograph *Shimaji Mokurai and the Reconception of Religion and the Secular in Modern Japan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015) as well as the two co-edited volumes *Theosophy across Boundaries: Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Modern Esoteric Movement* (SUNY Press, 2020) and *Buddhism and Modernity: Sources from Nineteenth-Century Japan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2021).

*Johanna Lüdde*
is a researcher on Buddhism and Christianity in Germany and Mainland China, where she worked as a lecturer at Shaanxi Normal University in Xi'an from 2011 to 2015. Before her maternity leave in 2020, she was a research fellow in the Chinese Department of Freie University Berlin from 2016 to 2019, where she conducted a research project on Chinese Buddhist nuns in the PRC. Her first monograph was her PhD thesis on Chinese students in Germany converting to Protestant Christianity ("Die Funktionen der Konversion chinesischer Studierender in Deutschland zum Christentum protestantischer Prägung am Beispiel einer chinesischen christlichen Gemeinde in einer deutschen Großstadt").

*Barbara Meisterernst*
is presently Professor in the Linguistics Institute of National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. Her special research area is the study of the diachronic grammar of Chinese with particular respect to aspect and modality. Additionally, she is interested in Silk Road studies. She authored two monographs on the diachronic grammar of Chinese, the most recent is *Tense and Aspect in Han Period Chinese: A Linguistic Study of the Shǐjì* (De Gruyter, 2015). She edited and co-edited several volumes, including a work on Silk Road Studies (Routledge, 2016), and two collections of articles on pre-Modern Chinese Grammar (Harrassowitz, 2016; Springer, 2019).

*Christian Meyer*
is Professor for Culture and History of China with a Focus on Religions at Freie Universität Berlin. He has been a visiting fellow at various institutions such as the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), Academia Sinica (Taipei), and the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies (Hong Kong). His research focuses on discourses on religion in modern China, Confucianism, and Christianity in China. He authored the book *Ritendiskussionen am Hof der nördlichen Song-Dynastie (1034–1093)* (Steyler, 2008) and co-edited together with Thomas Jansen and Thoralf Klein the volume *Globalization and the Making of Religious Modernity in China: Transnational Religions, Local Agents, and the Study of Religion, 1800-Present* (Brill, 2014).

*Nicolas Standaert*
PhD (1984), Leiden University, is Professor of Sinology at the University of Leuven (Belgium). He has published widely on Sino-European cultural contacts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His recent monographs include *The Chinese Gazette in European Sources: Joining the Global Public in the Early and Mid-Qing Dynasty* (Brill, 2022), *The Intercultural Weaving of Historical Texts: Chinese and European Stories about Emperor Ku and His Concubines* (Brill, 2016), and *Chinese Voices in the Rites Controversy: Travelling Books, Community Networks, Intercultural Arguments* (Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2012).

*Chloë Starr*
is Professor of Asian Christianity and Theology at Yale Divinity School. She works on Chinese theology and literature. Monographs include *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (Yale University Press, 2016) and *Red-light Novels of the Late Qing* (Brill, 2007). She is currently editing a three-volume series on modern Chinese theologies and is about to publish an English-language Reader in Chinese Theology (Baylor University Press).

*Tam Wai Lun*
is a Professor of the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He obtained his PhD on Chinese Buddhism from the McMaster University. He received multiple competitive research grants from the University Grant Committee of the Hong Kong government and from the Taiwan Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation to conduct fieldwork research in southeast China. The findings were published in the form of ethnographical essays collected in the 30 volumes of the *Traditional Hakka Society* series edited by John Lagerwey.

*Stefania Travagnin*
is Lecturer in Chinese Buddhism at SOAS, UK. Her research areas are Buddhism in Republican and Contemporary China, and the history of Taiwanese Buddhism. She is currently co-directing the multi-year research project "Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan," funded by the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation; within this project she is analyzing local Buddhist networks, with focus on nuns' communities and systems of education. She has edited or co-edited a few volumes, including *Religion and Media in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong* (Routledge, 2016) and the three-volume publication *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions* (De Gruyter, 2019–2020). She is also co-editor of the journal *Contemporary Buddhism*.

*Dror Weil*
received his PhD from Princeton University. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. His research interests focus on textual exchanges between the Islamicate world and China and the socio-intellectual history of China's Muslims during the late medieval and early modern periods. Weil's publications include: the co-edited book *Premodern Experience of the Natural World in Translation* (Routledge, 2022); "Islamicated China—China's Participation in the Islamicate Book Culture During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 4/1–2 (2016); and "Unveiling Nature: Liu Zhi's Translation of Arabo-Persian Physiology in Early Modern China," *Osiris* 38 (2022).

*Gerda Wielander*
is Professor in Chinese Studies and Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Westminster, London. Her research interest lies in the link of the personal and spiritual to wider social and political developments in modern and contemporary China. She is the author of *Christian Values in Communist China* (Routledge, 2013), as well as several book chapters and articles in leading peer-reviewed journals. Her most recent work includes a volume on *Chinese Discourses on Happiness* (Hong Kong University Press, 2018) and *Cultural China 2020* (University of Westminster Press, 2021). Gerda Wielander is the director of the Contemporary China Centre at the University of Westminster and editor of the *British Journal of Chinese Studies*.

# INTRODUCTORY PART

## *Western, Chinese, and Global Genealogies of Faith and xin* 信

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CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

*Christian Meyer and Philip Clart*

## 1 Topic: Trust, Belief, the Chinese Concept of *xin* 信, and a Global Genealogy of Religion

Trust—a concept that can tentatively be translated into Chinese as *xin* 信—is one of the most basic human capacities: mutual trust is a necessity for the ability of individuals to live and work together in groups. Therefore trust can be regarded as one of the key elements of human sociality in general—and trustworthiness therefore as a basis of social capital.[1] The recent corona virus crisis that began in Mainland China in 2019 and has spread globally has revealed how trust in a government's ability to cope with the pandemic is a critical issue for any kind of political leadership, as it may be undermined if authorities prove to be not trustworthy. In China already in the 1990s public intellectuals had proclaimed a "triple crisis of *xin*," i.e., of confidence (*xinxin* 信心), trust (*xinren* 信任), and belief (*xinyang* 信仰) (*san xin weiji* 三信危機)[2] within society, thereby expressing criticism and doubt in the trustworthiness of the Chinese leaders (and at the same time playing with local semantics in a unique way). Especially in democracies trust in a government regularly leads to re-election. In times of crisis it can mobilize collective efforts by infusing confidence and motivation. Therefore trust and trustworthiness appear as highly political.[3]

Moreover, however—as the third element (*xinyang*, "belief") of the dictum of a "triple crisis of *xin*" reminds us—trust and trustworthiness also play an important part in religious affairs. From an outsider's standpoint, religion may in fact function to provide a basis for mutual trust to create social cohesion by means of shared belief and rituals.[4] This functional view may well be applicable to most religious phenomena such as ancient Mediterranean religions

1 Putnam 2000, 19.

2 He Guanghu 2003, 43; cf. Fällman 2010a, 21, or Fällman 2010b, 949–969. See also earlier Gan Tang 1983 and Chen Jie 1995.

3 See Luhmann 1979 (part 1 is the translation of Luhmann 1973).

4 Misztal 1992, 8–9, with relation to Durkheim, though Durkheim himself did not refer explicitly to the term of trust.

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and many others with their concern of shared worship of their gods,[5] but especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition the idea of collective and individual "trust" or "belief" (Greek *pistis*/πίστις) in the one God has been highlighted and become one of the most basic religious concepts of this tradition. The biblical god proves trustworthy in being the reliable god of his people who leads them through all challenges and disasters. In Christianity, "trusting" or "believing" (*pisteuein*/πιστεύειν) Jesus to be the Messiah (or Son) sent by God Father mediates the belief in the one God and is merged into the one belief in the triune God.[6] Belief (or faith, Latin *fides*) became hypostatized and appeared finally as the epitome of correct religious attitude or even of religion itself—and disbelief, or belief in false gods, as its contrary. While other traditions have less strong concepts of "belief," it is hard to find traditions where trust or trustworthiness does not play *any* role at all. However, we should also be cautious about conceptual universalisms and should not expect that related concepts and terminologies have exactly the same meanings as in Western traditions.[7]

Difference can certainly be found in China where "belief" in and "worship" of gods or spirits have not taken the same shape linguistically or in practice as in the Abrahamic monotheistic traditions. However, as we will see, the term *xin* shows at least *some* semantic overlapping and is used in modern translations of "trust" or "belief," so it *does* have a role to play in Chinese semantics of religion in past and present. This makes it not only possible to reconstruct its semantic history in Chinese local contexts, but also meaningful to ask and analyze in detail *how* it might be relatable to Western or other non-Western semantics of religion. At the same time Chinese traditions appear so diverse that only a broad survey will enable us to see more clearly where relatable semantics diverge from or converge with Western or other non-Chinese meanings.

This task has been taken up by the presenters of a conference that took place in June 2017 at Freie Universität Berlin,[8] organized by Christian Meyer,

5 Even though an explicit concept, for example, of Greek religion only developed late in competition with Christianity, and taking into account the priority of ritual worship of gods, Meert states that "[b]ased on these sources, we can only conclude that the ritual act in ancient Greek religion could not be detached from belief in the gods." Meert 2017, 120.

6 For an overview of Western, especially Judeo-Christian conceptual history of trust/belief, see our first contribution in this volume by Jiang Manke.

7 See also the article on belief as a "critical term" by Lopez (1998).

8 https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/oas/sinologie/forschung/projekte/mapping_religion/1_Konferenz-Xin/index.html. It was followed by a second meeting of the contributors in February 2018.

and constitutes the basis of this edited volume. In order to meet this challenge and provide a broad tableau of the Chinese long history, the conference chose a history of semantics approach focused on one Chinese term, *xin*, that in modern Chinese functions as the closest relatable lexical counterpart for the western terms of trust or belief. At the same time, as a pilot conference it constituted a first step of a larger project on similar phenomena under the title "Changing Semantics of Religion-Related Terminology from Traditional to Modern Chinese."[9] This project focuses more generally on the question how Chinese religious semantics evolved in its own long history in pre-modern times, but in particular how the encounter with the West especially since the nineteenth century has fundamentally influenced and "globalized" these semantics. Following this research program, this volume will therefore take a longue-durée view including pre-modern usages since antiquity, but a particular focus will lie on the more recent developments from the nineteenth century until today.

## 2 A Global Genealogy of Religious Terminology and a History of Semantics Approach

The basic idea behind the larger project can be described as taking up an earlier proposal of Roland Robertson (1988) of a "comparative" or "global genealogy of religion," and pursuing it consistently on a level of concepts or semantics.[10] While the Western genealogy of what is today addressed as "religion" in Western languages has already been analyzed in much detail in its multilayeredness and its complexity,[11] this project aims now to contribute to an often neglected part of the global genealogy, viz., its non-Western side, here concentrating on Chinese usage. Some earlier research has already focused on the narrower semantic history of lexical "counterparts" of local non-Western terms such as *zongjiao*, *shūkyō*, *dîn*, etc.,[12] but the broader semantic fields that would imply many more related terms were mostly not included—partly for the pragmatic reason that it would have burst the limits of any monograph, but

9 A second conference in the series took place in the meantime focusing on the Chinese term *ling* 靈, cf. https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/oas/sinologie/forschung/projekte/mapping_religion/2_Konferenz-Ling/index.html.

10 For an alternative attempt of taking up Robertson's idea, but applying a systems theory approach, see Beyer 2006; see also the criticism of this approach by Meyer 2014.

11 See for example Feil 1986–2007, Nongbri 2015.

12 For *zongjiao* esp. Tarocco 2008; see also Deeg, Freiberger, Kleine 2013. For the Japanese case see, for example, Pye 1994 and Krämer 2013.

also because in fact such a task could only be done as a collaborative effort in a larger project as it is planned here.

With the focus on *xin*, this volume now addresses a concept that is prominently related to the global genealogy of religion, the idea of "faith" or "belief"[13] and its modern Chinese counterpart, *xin* 信 (or *xinyang* 信仰). However, instead of taking *xin* simply as a modern lexical equivalent and assuming either a given lexical equivalency or an overwhelming Western influence that completely substituted newer semantic meanings for older ones (following a postcolonial view), this project aims at excavating its genealogies in detail and making transparent the multilayeredness, complexities, and ambiguities of local Chinese meanings of *xin*, which sometimes overlap with, but sometimes also clearly differ from Western meanings in pre-modern as well as modern contexts and also go beyond religious meanings. We hope to uncover both semantic connotations that facilitated adoptions of Western meanings, and local meanings that are ultimately incommensurable with Western meanings, thereby reconstructing important and neglected aspects of the Chinese part of the genealogy of *xin*(*yang*)/trust/faith/belief/etc. The focus therefore lies on its semantics in diachronic as well as synchronic perspectives, keeping in mind convergences with and divergences from Western semantics. In the following section, we will discuss this volume's methodological and conceptual perspectives.

13 The differentiation between belief and faith in English seems to be highly problematic and is irrelevant in most other languages (such as Latin, German, or Chinese) that do not differentiate between both.

Very prominent is Wilfred Cantwell Smith's contested attempt to differentiate between (personal) faith and (dogmatic or propositional) belief (Smith 1979). Suitable to his project of religious dialogue, Smith favored personal faith over propositional belief. For a criticism of his sharp separation of both, see, for example, William J. Wainwright (1984). In contrast to Smith, we regard both English terms (one derived from Germanic, one from Latin roots) as interchangeable, though sometimes one or the other aspect can be highlighted. For example, Christian faith may denote the Christian belief system (plus the act of believing), but to "have faith in" denotes a personal trust. "To believe" as a verb will always denote the very act, whether followed by a specified object or not. Their use in this book depends therefore on the decision of the individual authors and should be understood in their context.

## 3 Some Relevant Methodological and Conceptual Dimensions and Perspectives

Several issues need further consideration and clarification in order to sketch out a shared framework for this volume. This includes general methodological questions, some adaptations to the Chinese case, the important issue of translation, and finally the question of changing semantics in a translocal and global context. It will be followed by a list of guiding research questions for the whole volume.

### 3.1 *Global Genealogies, History of Semantics, and Discursive Analysis*

While the general theoretical angle of the project is inspired by Robertson's idea of a "global genealogy of religion" that takes its starting point from globally interconnected semantics, a more concrete methodological framework is provided by the idea that concepts on a semantic level are continually formed and reformed by their use in changing discursive situations. This approach therefore privileges a basic discursive and genealogical understanding (in the tradition of Foucault) with a focus on changing semantics.[14]

This approach is reminiscent of Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history[15] and indeed shares some concerns with it. In sinological research a conceptual history approach has been applied especially in a project led by Michael Lackner together with Iwo Amelung, Joachim Kurtz, Natascha Vittinghoff (Gentz), and others, beginning in the 1990s.[16] This project focused on the emergence of Chinese neologisms and of a modern Western-influenced academic language especially in the natural sciences and philosophy. This huge change of the Chinese lexicon starting in the late nineteenth century resembles the emergence of important modern concepts, which occurred between 1750 and 1850 in the West. Koselleck characterized this period as a "threshold" or "saddle time." For him it did not only provide the basic modern semantics of our language today, but it also reflects a huge change in social history and the history of mentalities. A comparable change took place in modern China beginning in the late nineteenth century.

14 For the combination of a discursive approach with a semantic or conceptual history, see, for example, Busse 1987 and 2003.

15 Brunner, Koselleck, Werner 1972–1997.

16 Lackner et al. 2001 and 2004, Kurtz 2011, building on earlier works by Liu 1995 and Masini 1993.

However, the approach of "conceptual history" (or German "Begriffsgeschichte") has also been subject to criticism. In particular, the German "Begriff" seems to be rather vague as it oscillates between the meaning of "term" (in a philological or linguistic sense) and a more abstract meaning of "notion"—thereby implying at least a partial identity between both meanings, even if a change of meaning in fact constitutes the focus of this historical approach. Methodologically its implementation therefore often resembles an old-fashioned history of ideas. This is probably due to the fact that the approach developed from the field of history, and so it does not have a strong connection to linguistic research. Our own project has therefore decided to take up the important issue of the correlation of change of linguistic and socio-political contexts (as emphasized by Koselleck), but concentrates in a first step on precisely describing changing semantics in different time periods. Each chapter therefore concentrates in a first step on certain periods or limited case studies and outlines a mapping of the semantic fields centered around the term *xin*, while also pointing to connections with other terms (if used together), fixed combinations, as well as antonyms or even the absence of certain terms (such as *xin* or combinations with it), substitution by other terms,[17] and usages in different linguistic contexts. In a second step (even if in practice this step cannot always be clearly divided from the first one), each study takes into consideration the pragmatic context of the linguistic use in order to analyze, understand, and interpret *xin*'s changing uses.

At this point a discursive approach comes into play that in our opinion can be linked well with the focus on semantics. It not only understands (with Foucault) terms as the "smallest units of discourses," but provides us with a more concrete methodology for interpreting semantic changes as part of changing discursive formations. In particular, it allows us to ask specific research questions. Within this framework, such a discursive methodology still allows a wide range of disciplines and methodological perspectives to be applied, such as linguistic, historical, sociological, and ethnological methods, related to past as well as contemporary contexts as long as they appear useful to reconstruct semantic changes in their contexts.

Applying the discursive toolkit of Jäger,[18] we can ask not only about conceptual and semantic changes, but also about changing discursive conditions

17 This may even imply its substitution by metaphors while avoiding the very term. The fact that concepts can often be expressed by metaphors instead of clearly defined terms has been discussed as a problem of the conceptual history approach, see, for example, Gumbrecht 2006.

18 Jäger 2006.

(entanglement with other relevant discourses, institutions, etc.), relevant agents (individual or groups), their motivations, strategies, but also specific discursive milieus or levels (inner-religious, academic, public, political, etc.),[19] and finally how they form and transform usages of *xin* as part of knowledge formations.

### 3.2 *Particularities of the Local Chinese Discursivities: Multiplicity of Levels, Religious Milieus, Interactions, and Semantic Ambiguities*

As the named approaches have been developed and tested mostly in European contexts, we found that the Chinese case needs some special considerations concerning adaptations or particular foci of our analysis. The main reason lies in the fact that in the Chinese context not only one or two traditions have been dominant (such as Judeo-Christian and Greek-Roman traditions in the West), but that China has a long history of plural coexisting traditions and multiple socio-religious milieus that have together formed its historical and present lexicons. Moreover, not only religious or philosophical traditions, but also different social and religious milieus as well as discursive levels (such as public, legal, political, philosophical ones) have to be taken into account. In modern times in particular, the role of the new academic field has to be analyzed as a channel of transfer, especially in its interdependencies and overlaps with the religious and political levels.

We will therefore, first, place particular emphasis on *interactions* between various milieus and levels that had important impacts on the semantic history, such as between Buddhism and Daoism, but also interactions between Christian missionaries and various indigenous traditions in different phases, to name just the most obvious examples. Interactions between modern academic and public debates as well as contemporary religious milieus or translocal

19 As the use of discursive level or milieu is not unified in the theoretical literature on discursive or semantic analysis, we follow here Jäger and understand the term "discursive level" as denoting "social places" of speaking such as academia or disciplines, politics, media, education, everyday life, business, administration, that can and will often be interconnected (Jäger 2001, 99). In other academic contexts such "levels" might also be named as fields (Bourdieu). In contrast, we understand "milieus" here as *social* formations that form their own styles of *intra-group communications* and are accordingly identifiable by specific use of language. We use the term here in particular to denote different inner-religious milieus (e.g., Buddhist clerics and laypeople or Christian missionaries and converts), who all produce their own semantics. Both terms are understood as analytical tools. Their usage depends highly on specific historical and social contexts of analysis. Different from these terms, "discursive field" should be understood as a field that is organized and constituted by a discourse itself and that may therefore go beyond single levels or milieus. Cf. Busse 1987, 230.

connections (e.g., between Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) are also relevant and their semantics are influencing each other.

Secondly, the plurality of traditions accounts for *a high degree of semantic variety and persistent ambiguities* within the Chinese linguistic field which should be taken seriously. The variety of meanings leads to semantic ambiguities that facilitate semantic changes. However, not every possible meaning is necessarily a valid one in a particular situation. In some milieus some meanings are preferred and become more stable over the time. Interactions led to ambiguities that were not always consciously reflected upon, but were tolerated or used strategically (e.g., in Christian missions). This situation challenges us to do a careful mapping of where, when, and how *xin* has been used (or not used), in which exact meaning, and where, when, how, and why meanings could change and thereby lead to significant semantic shifts.

Therefore these interactions and variations constitute a special concern of our volume. The chapter authors were asked to concentrate not only on their particular fields of interest, but refer to other chapters and look out for changes in diachronic perspective as well as for interactions between milieus (such as different religious milieus) or levels (such as political, academic, religious ones). Even if not all interconnections can be covered in detail, this volume hopes to provide some vistas and contribute to a more detailed picture of such linguistic interconnections between China's diverse traditions and socio-religious milieus.

### 3.3 *Some Observations and Reflections on Translation*

The important issue of translation needs special consideration. It is strongly interwoven with the question of different meanings of *xin* or its Western counterparts. These meanings can be categorized in order to provide some orientation for describing and "mapping" the "semantic fields."

The issue of translation has relevance on two levels: On the one hand translation is part of the local history of semantics, especially when Buddhist (or later, Western) vocabularies entered the Chinese lexicon in the form of translation. Translation as a historical process thereby is in fact the link to the global genealogy. On the other hand, the issue of translation always accompanies us as a hermeneutical problem: as this volume is written in English but mainly deals with things Chinese, it always involves translation as a necessary act of making things understandable in a quite different linguistic context. This hermeneutical issue must therefore always be kept in mind and be reflected upon by authors and readers.

In general, we follow here Lydia Liu's idea of translation as "translingual practice" in a discursive context. First of all she distances herself from any

simplistic understanding of translation as neutral linguistic transfer between seemingly synonymous "lexical equivalents" as suggested by dictionaries.[20] More importantly, however, she understands "translation" constantly as "a shorthand for adaptation, appropriation, and other related translingual practices."[21] In this sense translingual practice(s) can only be understood through analyzing discourses in the "host language."[22] With a focus on neologisms she suggests that this approach therefore ought to examine processes by which "new words, meanings, discourses, and modes of representation arise, circulate, and acquire legitimacy within the host language due to, or in spite of, the latter's contact/collision with the guest language."[23] Our approach basically follows Liu's understanding, but broadens its perspective by not only focusing on the modern transformation of Chinese language, but also on its longer history in order to grasp its longue-durée perspective more thoroughly. Moreover, though we share the basic concern, we still regard an understanding of the "guest language" in its (here the Western) context as eminently helpful for a better hermeneutical reflection and have decided to place one chapter on the Western genealogy at the beginning of our volume as a hermeneutical reference point before turning to Chinese language contexts.

### 3.4 *Globality and Semantics: Convergence and Divergence*

A final aspect to be constantly considered is that of semantic globality or globalization. It is in fact related to the very focus of this project: a local (Chinese) genealogy intertwined with other local (Indian and Western) ones, forming a part of a modern global genealogy (of religion and its semantics) and the issue of translation on a global scale. Often globalization is still seen as implying a trend to homogenization. However, as scholars like Robertson have made clear, even if homogenizing effects of globalization may be highly relevant in the field of economic and financial markets, in the field of culture the case is more complicated. Processes of globalizing ideas or practices appear inseparable from processes of adapting to local contexts where agents pursue local interests and even show resistance to global influences. This is especially the case when it comes to identity issues. Robertson refers to these complex and

20 Cf. Liu's quote of Borges: "The dictionary is based on the hypothesis—obviously an unproven one—that languages are made up of equivalent synonyms." Liu 1995, 3.

21 Liu 1995, 25. In particular Liu refers here to Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (1923) and its reception by George Steiner and Derrida. Cf. Liu 1995, 12–24, 33.

22 Liu 1995, 26f; cf. 60, 80. By this choice of words Liu distances herself from the usual "teleological" terminology of "source" and "target language" as common in translation studies. Liu 1995, 27.

23 Liu 1995, 26.

interrelated processes of globalization and localization as "glocalization." In fact, only adaptations to local socio-cultural contexts allow successful globalization. The phenomenon itself is well-known when it comes to, for instance, mission strategies such as the Jesuits' accommodation approach (see the chapter by Standaert) or issues of translation (such as discussed above). Such processes of "glocalization" have to be examined in detail to understand how and in which fields exactly they occur to which degree, and why some fields "globalize" more than others that might even show some degree of resilience. This is also the case for semantic changes that are in fact a basic integral part of such socio-cultural processes—since language as the primary tool of communication plays an important part in mediating changes.

While there are trends of convergence through "glocalizing" processes of translations and personal encounters, there are also differing degrees of glocalizing effects and even forms of resilience. Also, in different fields or milieus these degrees may be stronger or weaker. An example—as we would suggest here and will show in some chapters—is the difference of semantic changes in debates *within* a tradition (such as a church or the Buddhist sangha) or when representatives of these groups or traditions have to position themselves vis-à-vis the outside world, i.e., the changing society.

This implies that there are on the one hand convergences towards a global genealogy and the ability to communicate internationally about matters of "belief." This is surely the case not only in international political arenas, but also in academia. There are also communities (like Christian churches or Muslim communities)[24] that constitute translocal and translingual networks. On the other hand, there are also fields of resilience (and even strategies of resistance), e.g., in traditionalist groups. In general, however, we will see in most of our case studies that there cannot be found a clear "either/or," but only degrees of globalization/resilience and interpenetration of global and local aspects.

### 3.5 *Some Guiding Questions*

From these general theoretical and methodological considerations and the preliminary mapping of meanings, the following guiding questions can be derived that are pursued in the individual contributions.

The questions relate to the overall picture as well as to the case studies and apply the above-mentioned research perspectives:

24 See for example the chapters by Thomas Jansen, Chloë Starr (on Protestant Christianity), and Dror Weil (Islam).

- Our first question refers to the overall picture and longue-durée view of *major historical changes* in the semantics of *xin*: How has *xin* been employed in various Chinese-speaking contexts and with which specific meanings? This also involves a thorough mapping of the semantics in different time periods and fields. Each case study therefore has to ask: Which terms, including polysyllabic combinations or other related terms, form the connotational field at a certain time and place?
- With an emphasis on *interaction* we further ask: Through which *channels of transfer* (e.g., Buddhist influence, foreign missionaries, Japan, Christian and non-Christian Chinese overseas students) have new meanings—for example in modern times the new coinages of binominal terms such as *xinyang* 信仰 (Jap. *shinko*), *xinxin* 信心, *xintiao* 信條, etc.—entered the general Chinese lexicon? How did these various discursive *milieus* (religious, secular), *levels* (academic, public, etc.), and *processes* interact?
- To understand the pragmatic context, we focus on the discursive embedding of language change and ask: How, i.e., in which contexts and through which *discursive processes* and *discursive mechanisms* has this happened? Which discursive conditions were relevant, which debates have to be analyzed, who were relevant actors, and what were their motivations and strategies?
- Keeping the Western genealogy as our hermeneutical background and reference point as well as the question of convergences/divergences in mind, the following questions are relevant: How do these meanings *compare* to Western connotations? Do they exactly copy or mirror them, or are there specific Chinese usages that help(ed) to adapt (thereby "glocalizing") the new concept of faith/believing into a new, culturally and linguistically foreign context? Is there still a specific *resilience* in some fields (for example in an absence of *xin* as a translation of the Western concept of belief/faith)? Are there even *strategies of avoiding or substituting* this modern concept and local resistance to its global spread?
- How far have new understandings replaced traditional ones? Or have they created *hybrid* or ambiguous (thereby glocal) ways of speaking and of *"thinking religion"*—depending either on internal use of *xin* within their respective religious milieus or on its external use directed, for example, to a secular public? How much or in which fields has modern vocabulary then in fact permeated religious thinking (or thinking about religion)?
- What does this mean for understanding modern religion(s), ideologies, and religious policies in China and for assessing their presumed aspects of *transformation* as well as of *persistence*?

– Finally, in a global and translingual/transcultural perspective: What does this possibly imply for a "global genealogy" and understanding of a *"modern* (*global*) *concept of religion"*? How might local linguistic ambiguities of multi-layered and multi-facetted terms help us to encompass the *global discourse on the modern concept of faith* (and thereby of religion)?

## 4 Structure of This Volume

The outline of this volume basically follows a chronological order. It starts from antiquity and ends in the present time. The length of the chapters varies according to the breadth of the topic and the presented material. In the first chapter—attached to the Introduction as part of the introductory section—**Jiang Manke**, a Chinese theologian and religious studies scholar based in Germany, provides an overview of Western genealogies of *pistis*, *fides*, faith, belief, *Glaube*, etc., with a focus on philosophical and theological aspects. This chapter serves as an important background for reading the following articles in several ways: First, it summarizes relevant aspects of the Western conceptual history that became relevant when Chinese and Western ideas encountered each other first in Tang times and later in modernity. Secondly, it provides a handy resource and update for readers who are not much acquainted with research on Western conceptual history, and in particular with Western theologies. Moreover, it will also allow contributors as well as readers to reflect hermeneutically on translational choices on the basis of this genealogy as we are here unavoidably using Western (English) language to talk about Chinese terminologies. Finally, it shows how so-called Western genealogies of faith/belief already appear as results of rather complicated interactions between different geographic and ideological traditions. It can therefore also serve as role model for us when looking at China.

In particular, Jiang fills some lacunae concerning the early history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and revises some classical stereotypes about Christian concepts of faith/belief. The account starts from biblical sources and extends to modern thinkers such as Schleiermacher and Hegel and finally to critics of religion such as Feuerbach, Marx, and Strauß. Her starting point is the Greek word *pistis* that had already been used in antiquity. Her first point is here to make clear that the term was rarely used in religious contexts in pre-Christian times. However, its meaning as the human virtue of loyalty, or fidelity, is reminiscent of usages in Chinese ancient contexts (see Gentz's chapter). In her next section she revises older views on the Hebrew

bible and presents recent exegetical results stating that there was already "a rich understanding of faith connected with the root אמן in its original form *Hiphil*, both in profane language use and in religious or theological usage." In theological use it developed into a concept of personal trusting relationship to God, Moses, or the prophets, also involving aspects such as hope, waiting (for God), acknowledging (God as God), obedience, and faithfulness. With the New Testament—mediated through the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX)—older Greek and Hebrew genealogies intertwined when Hebrew semantics entered the Greek lexicon via the translational term *pistis/pisteuein* (πίστις/πιστεύειν). Related to Jesus's teachings and his person, the term continued old and gained new aspects such as acceptance of the Christian message (gospel), acknowledgement of God as God, and, most notably, describing the personal relationship to Jesus (believing him to be God's Messiah or the Christ). In the Western Latin church—as a fruit of the interaction between Greek philosophy and Jewish-Christian roots—reflections on the relationship between faith (*fides*) and rationality (*ratio*; *intellectus*) became a prominent topic that evolved into the program of scholastic philosophy integrating rational thought into theology (e.g., Anselm's "*credo ut intelligam*," "I believe in order to understand"). This should be kept in mind when it comes to the intellectual background of the Jesuits in China, but even more concerning nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses on religion when proponents of scientistic worldviews attacked religions as being irrational *per se*. The Reformation adds a new chapter, focusing all theological facts in faith through Luther's re-reading of Paul's teaching of justification by faith alone and an emphasis on subjectivity that paved the way for modern uses. The chapter finally highlights the contribution of Schleiermacher for a modern liberal understanding of faith as a human capacity (feeling of piety; religious experience) beyond and apart from dogmatic beliefs. This also influenced later usages in the new discipline of religious studies as well as secular uses of a "new" (non-religious) faith that included not only secular belief systems (such as Marxism), but also aspects such as strong convictions concerning an ideology. The whole chapter is closed by considerations of the Mainland Chinese author concerning the presence of Western-Christian terminologies in modern China via translations.

**Part I ("Setting the Stage: Traditional Uses in Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist Contexts")** includes perspectives on pre-modern Chinese usages of *xin* from antiquity to imperial times before or aside from the encounters with Western monotheistic traditions.

In the first chapter, **Joachim Gentz** describes and analyzes the semantic field of *xin* in early Chinese texts. For the purposes of a chapter-length presentation, he limits himself to textual examples from the *Zuo zhuan*, though the analysis is based also on research into *Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, *Xunzi*, *Shangjun shu*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Mozi*. He distinguishes three different conceptual registers of terms in these texts. First, single conceptual terms that are explicitly discussed and for which explanative definitions are provided. Discussions of such terms often take the literary form of dialogues in which someone asks about the meaning of a term and some master provides comments and definitions of the term. *Xin* does not occur as such a single conceptual term in the literature under purview. When it is used as an individual term it does not have a conceptual meaning, when it is used as a conceptual term it is always used together with other terms as a component term. "Component term" refers to the second register employed by Gentz, i.e., terms that are used in compounds or wider sets of terms which can be presented in different literary forms such as catalogues, chain arguments, word pairs, or parallelisms. Gentz draws three conclusions for the term *xin* as component term. First, *xin* is frequently used as component term. Second, *xin* is only used as component term in its meaning of trustworthiness, not in its meaning of belief. The notion of belief thus never has a conceptual meaning when expressed by the term *xin* in early Chinese texts. Third, in contrast to terms such as *ren* 仁, *li* 禮 etc., it has no independent ethical value of its own, because its ethical value is always relational and can only be explained in a wider conceptual context. When used conceptually, *xin* operates always as a companion, not as a solo performer. When used alone, it is usually not used conceptually but in a colloquial meaning. Colloquial meaning also coincides with Gentz's third register, i.e., the colloquial usage of terms as part of everyday language with no indication that terms carry much conceptual weight as analytical terms. Only on this level of practical language use is *xin* used in all its meanings (to trust, believe, etc.) in the early texts. At the more abstract conceptual level, it merely accompanies other, more central ethical concepts and derives its meanings from its relation to them; its semantic range stays close to "trustworthiness."

**Barbara Meisterernst**'s chapter broadens the range of Gentz's semantic analysis to include a wider range from Early Archaic Chinese to Early Middle texts, including early Buddhist texts, which she submits to rigorous linguistic analysis. She shows that *xin* appears in three different functions from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese, including the early non-secular (Buddhist) literature. These functions are:

a) As an unaccusative transitive verb; unaccusative verbs are characterized by theme subjects: "believable >> reliable, trustworthy" ("X is believed >> can be believed, is reliable, trustworthy")

b) As a transitive or intransitive mental attitude verb; mental attitude verbs characteristically have a cognitive agent (experiencer) subject; the transitive variant has a theme, or an underlying or overt clausal complement ("X believes [that] (Y)") (to a certain extent comparable to psych verbs such as "fear").
c) As a noun: the nominal functions can be derived from both verbal functions.

In terms of linear development, Meisterernst shows that in contrast to Archaic usage (as also shown by Gentz) in the Early Middle Chinese period, and particularly (but not exclusively) in the Buddhist literature, *xin*'s semantic range widens and comes to be predominantly employed with the basic verbal meaning "believe" and taking non-human entities and abstract concepts as objects. The basic nominal meaning is "faith," the derivation from the transitive variant of *xin* "believe." This may imply that the usage of *xin* extends from a more colloquial reference to trust and belief in human behaviors in different social (mostly Confucian) contexts to a reference to beliefs in abstract spiritual concepts, while the informal sense of believing still prevails. She surmises that the fact that *xin* did not appear as a singular conceptual term predefined in the philosophical Confucian tradition, but—as a singular term—rather occurs in a colloquial way in all its basic meanings, may have facilitated its new usage as referring to all kinds of beliefs, including belief in spiritual concepts.

**Friederike Assandri**'s chapter presents an inquiry into the concept of *xin* in early medieval Daoism, focusing on two narrow complexes of the semantic usage of the term *xin*: the V+O compound *xin dao* 信道, and the nominal use of the term *xin*, in parallel or in combination with the terms *shi* 誓, *meng* 盟, and *yue* 約, which refer to covenants. The chapter employs a combination of quantitative database research ("distant reading") and close reading strategies, showing that out of the many ways for humans to relate to Dao expressed in V+O compounds, *xin*, as V+O *xin dao*, is used much less than others. However, *xin dao* appears in clusters in two early medieval Heavenly Masters' texts, the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary and the *Dadao jialingjie* 大道家令戒, from the second and third centuries CE, as well as in the *Taishang lingbao dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上靈寶洞淵神咒經, originating in a sectarian environment in the Jiangnan region in the late fourth or early fifth century CE. Taking her cue from the nominal use of *xin* in early medieval Daoist texts to refer to "pledges," material objects that the disciple had to give to the master in the rituals of scriptural transmission as part of a contractual agreement, Assandri argues that the key to a coherent reading of the usages of *xin* in this corpus of texts might be the conception of a contractual nature of the relations of humans with the divine. If the verb *xin* is interpreted as entering a contract, or covenant, with divine beings, and the nominal use of *xin* as a pledge, given to

sustain the contract, such a coherence of understanding can be achieved, and warrant the translation "to believe" for the term *xin*, but with a strong emphasis on the term's contractual nature. While *xin* rarely takes "Dao" as its object in mainstream Daoist texts such as the *Baopuzi* 抱朴子, where the emphasis is laid on "obtaining" (*de* 得), rather than believing or trusting in, the Dao, it is in Daoist texts produced by communal, sectarian movements that we find the largest semantic overlap with the Western notions of "belief" and "believe-in," in as much as *xin* is here the primary way for human beings to relate to Dao, which is conceived as both ultimate reality and personified deity. We could speculate that it was the aspect of personified savior deity that brought the abstract reality of Dao close enough to the "human plane" (because as personified deity it shared some features with humans or gods) to allow human beings to "*xin*" Dao—to "believe in Dao" in the sense of entering into a contractual relation with Dao.

**Tam Wai Lun**'s chapter provides a *tour de force* of contextual occurrences of *xin* in the Chinese Buddhist Canon, of which the most influential is probably the sequence that begins with "faith" (*xin*), proceeds to "understanding" (*jie* 解) and "cultivation" (*xing* 行), and finally arrives at "attainment" (*zheng* 證). The doctrinal formula describes both the structure of the *Flower Garland Sutra* (*Huayanjing* 華嚴經) and that of the Buddhist path taught by this highly influential *sūtra*. This formula would seem to grant a foundational position to faith in Buddhist practice, but its relative importance differs from text to text and school to school, with the Pure Land school presenting a special case, but Tam stresses that, different possibly from certain Japanese versions of the Pure Land tradition, Chinese Pure Land Buddhism never let faith displace practice in its soteriology. Tam concludes his chapter by discussing the notion of the "Buddha-nature" as a uniquely Chinese elaboration of the Tathāgata-garbha doctrine. It is the Buddha-nature that comes to serve as the combined ultimate object and subject of *xin*: "the strong conviction of Buddha nature must be followed by dedicated practice before the essence of suchness, the Buddha nature, can manifest."

**Christoph Kleine**'s chapter on "Japanese Buddhist Concepts of Faith (*shin* 信)" picks up from Tam's disquisition on Chinese Pure Land Buddhism and addresses the specific development *xin/shin* has taken in Japanese Pure Land schools (Jōdoshū and Jōdo shinshū). He argues forcefully that *shin* in the sense of "faith" is in fact a central concept in Buddhism in general and in East Asian (and Japanese) Pure Land Buddhism in particular. No Western or Christian influence was needed to interpret the Chinese *xin* as "faith" rather than "trustworthiness." A Buddhist believes in what is transmitted in the *sūtras* because he believes that these represent the words of the Buddha, a charismatic

authority who is perfectly trustworthy. In Kleine's view, there is no relevant difference between the Christian notion of *fides* and the Buddhist notion of *xin*, at least in Shinran's 親鸞 (1173–1263) radical Jōdo shinshū formulation.

In her chapter, **Esther-Maria Guggenmos** provides a narratological analysis of miracle tales that served an outstanding role in spreading Buddhist belief. The analysis is based upon a fifteenth-century biographical collection, the *Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks* (*Shenseng zhuan* 神僧傳, T. 2064). These biographies offer condensed hagiographies focusing on thaumaturge activities. Guggenmos traces the function and role of *xin* in these hagiographical accounts. In her conclusion, she finds the central function of miracle accounts to be to effect amazement that in turn engenders "belief" (*xin*), understood as trust in the power of Buddhism, in the reader. Witnessing the pervasive workings of karma, the subtle complexity of cosmic connectivity, and a sincerity that combines with supernormal powers revealed in daily life, the imagined reader is amazed and finally convinced to trust in the Buddhist teaching.

Part I is concluded by **Vincent Goossaert**'s chapter on the notion of *xin* in morality books (*shanshu* 善書). Goossaert shows that when this genre developed from the twelfth century onward, its use of the notion of *xin* inherited all of the meanings of the terms that existed at the time. It thus referred simultaneously to *xin* as based on reciprocal trust (credit, faithfulness to one's word), but early on also aggregated the idea of asymmetrical trust in an abstract principle. In morality books, one must be *xin* to both one's friends and one's moral principles (based on conviction of the reality of moral retribution). In that respect, *xin* bears comparison to concepts that in other cultures have also been translated as "faith" but cover much more ground, like Latin *credo* and Sanskrit *śrāddha*, the latter being a direct conceptual source for the Chinese Buddhist use of *xin*. The genre of morality books further elaborated the notion and by late imperial times, *xin*, while always keeping its sense of trustworthiness, had expanded to become a general virtue informing all mental and physical actions, which Goossaert proposes to translate as "commitment to natural moral values." This commitment is the result of a rational decision, because natural moral values are knowable by observation and reasoning, but at the same time it is exalted as the foundation of all of one's religious life and eventual salvation. The morality book genre largely reflected a moral-religious consensus of the late Imperial period.

**Part II ("Early Channels of Transfer: Monotheistic Uses of the Term *xin* from the Seventh to the Seventeenth Century")** deals with early monotheistic uses of *xin* from the seventh to the nineteenth centuries, resulting from the encounters between various Western (Christian, Manichaean, and Islamic) with

Chinese traditions. After some introductory general reflections, **Max Deeg**'s contribution on the Jingjiao and Manichaean sources from the second to ninth centuries makes clear that the ground for a religious conceptual meaning of *xin*—based on its meaning of trust—was laid already by Buddhist use of *xin* as a translation especially for *śraddhā* ("belief, trust") or for *adhimukti* ("strong inclination, attachment") (cf. also Tam's contribution). In the following passages he exemplifies how (and how far) Jingjiao ("Nestorian") and Manichaean uses built on this. As a first observation it is noteworthy that no loanword (transcription) was used to express these foreign concepts. He further states that instances of *xin* as translation of faith or believing are not as numerous even for the "Church of the East" (*Jingjiao* 景教) as one might expect for a Christian tradition. However, there are examples of nominal or verbal usage, such "orthodox belief" (*zhengxin* 正信), "believing in this teaching" (*xin ci jiao* 信此教), or even believing in the (sacred) Dao (*xin dao* 信道 or *xin shengdao* 信聖道), which show not only that from the first encounter between Christianity and Chinese semantics *xin* was used in order to translate faith/believe, but also how the concept was negotiated by relating it semantically to indigenous concepts (such as *dao*). The case of Manichaeism is interesting as "due to the more cosmological nature of Mani's teaching" the concept of faith was actually less important or positively connotated compared to Christianity, but interestingly the term was also present and used in rather affirmative ways. Summarizing his results, Deeg puts his findings from the extant sources in context and posits that ("Nestorian") Christianity may "have 'downplayed' the role of belief/faith in one god in the Chinese context, while in the Manichaean texts the concept of *xin* in the sense of 'trust, belief' may have occupied a more prominent role than in other cultural environments to which the religion had spread."

**Nicolas Standaert**'s chapter on early modern Catholic usages is the first in our volume that prominently relates a Western-European (Latin-Catholic) genealogy to its Chinese counterpart and interprets the different meanings of *xin* 信 in the early seventeenth-century Christian community as results of an interaction between different agents. It needs to be highlighted here that from the very beginning Jesuit missionaries used the term *xin* for their translation of faith or believing (even though this was not a central theme of their writings). However, it is not clear if there is any continuity with earlier Christian (Nestorian) or other monotheistic (e.g., Muslim) precursors. In general, we find a wide variety of usages from everyday to theological ones, whereby "the more explicit Christian meaning" appears as "grafted on the existing Chinese meanings." In particular, Standaert makes clear that for Jesuit missionaries or converts in China faith was *not* in contradiction with reason.

In their Chinese texts this is reflected in a semantics that relates contents of belief to the Chinese concept of *li* 理, here understood as reason or (reasonable) "principles."

**Dror Weil**'s contribution on Chinese Islamic uses from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries shows again how an Abrahamic concept of faith obviously appeared as semantically close enough to Chinese semantics of *xin*—based again on the basic meaning of "trust"—for the term to serve as a translation. Using the example of the erudite Chinese Muslim Liu Zhi 劉智 (1660–1730) and others, Weil discovers at least three main aspects: Focusing on the interaction with the dominant Confucian environment, he demonstrates how *xin* could imply Confucian ethical values such as loyalty (to the Chinese state or to other people) on the one hand, but function as translation of Islamic concepts such as *īmān* ("faith") or *ʿaqīda* (creed) on the other hand—though generally "references to 'Faith' in Chinese Islamic literature" seem to be rather "infrequent." A very different, third level of meanings was added by *xin*'s use in the Islamic textual scholarship (that paralleled the contemporary trend of evidential or *kaozheng* 考證 scholarship) in which it denoted the authenticity of sources (*kexin* 可信, "trustworthy," or "authentic").

**Part III ("From the Christian Milieu to the Entry into the General Lexicon of Modern Chinese: Late-Qing to Republican Religious and Secular Uses and the Role of Japan")** deals with the strong influences from the West from the nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century when Western knowledge categories entered the Chinese lexicon. Its altogether eight chapters deal with the complex channels of transfer in different phases as well as different fields or milieus of reception as case studies. The section starts with two chapters on the Christian missionary influence in China (Jansen taking Timothy Richard as an example) and a focus on early twentieth-century Chinese Christian usages (Starr), and turns then to Buddhist receptions first in Japan (Krämer) and in Republican China (and Taiwan) (Travagnin). The following three chapters address usages beyond the religious field: Fröhlich's paper investigates Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 prominent role in negotiating the complex semantics of faith that also influenced the next generations of intellectuals such as Hu Shi 胡適 and others. Meyer's chapter deals with the role of faith/*xin* as a universal concept in the newly introduced discipline of religious studies, while Klein offers an example of secular adaptations in the political field by the National Party (Guomindang 國民黨). Broy's chapter takes Yiguandao as an example for the milieu of popular religious movements and functions as an important complement to the other chapters showing that Western influences could also encounter resilience in inner-religious discourses.

**Thomas Jansen**'s chapter deals with the Welsh missionary Timothy Richard (1845–1919) who was an important bridge-builder between the different "worlds of Christianity and lived Chinese religiosity." Among other things he is known for his translation of the Buddhist scripture *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 under the English title "The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana Doctrine." Jansen shows here how the concept of faith and its Chinese translational counterpart *xin* played for Richard in fact a key role in linking the two conceptual worlds in his later lifetime. In order to understand this, he first traces Richard's biographical development back to his roots and upbringing during the Welsh spiritual revival of 1858–60 where he received a concept of faith that emphasized personal commitment. His later ideas on faith built on these earlier roots in Welsh non-conformist Protestant religiosity and developed into a concept of a universal human capacity of religious experience, that was closely connected to his ideas of a "common genealogical heritage of all religions" and even a common future religion.

**Chloë Starr** carries on the topic of Christian-Chinese interactions: The chapter starts with a brief survey of the use of *xin* in late Qing publications by Protestant missionaries such as the leading secular-oriented newspaper *Wanguo gongbao*, or church periodicals like *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao*. In general, these texts usually did not debate the meaning or philosophical basis of *xin*, but aimed at transmitting doctrine using language as a vehicle. Though "the scope of use of *xin* in Christian publications in the late nineteenth century was driven by western mission sources, it was also informed by prior Chinese-language usage." In the second half of her contribution, Starr proceeds to the usage of *xin* in Chinese theological writings in early Republican China, taking Zhao Zichen's 趙紫宸 1920 essay on the Apostles' Creed and his creation of a new creed for the Chinese church as examples to investigate how interpretations of *xin* developed among Chinese theological educators and church leaders in the Republican period. Zhao's example shows how Chinese liberal theologians—very different from the late nineteenth century—could not just propagate faith, but had to actively develop a modern, yet still Chinese understanding of faith/*xin*, negotiating meanings from the Western Christian tradition with those of Confucian heritage, and at the same time replying to modern challenges in order "to develop a mature Chinese faith."

The next two chapters deal with the Buddhist reception of new meanings of *xin* in Japan and China: **Hans Martin Krämer**'s chapter on "*Shin* 信 as a Marker of Identity in Modern Japanese Buddhism" deals with the changes the new influences from the West brought to East Asian Buddhist concepts of *xin*. In this he clearly proceeds differently from Kleine who in his chapter emphasizes independently developed similarities of meanings in pre-modern Pure Land

Buddhism with Christian ones. Though Kleine in his chapter surely identifies important general overlaps that could also have functioned as starting points for the reception of new meanings later, there were naturally still differences left in the relevance and exact semantic functions between both Buddhist and Christian usages. While Kleine therefore points to Jesuits' perception of the—for them—highly surprising similarity between the Lutheran "heresy" and Pure Land Buddhism's teaching two centuries earlier, Krämer now focuses on the changed conditions of encounter in the late nineteenth century when in the conceptual framework of "modernity" *all* religions around the world had to redefine themselves vis-à-vis the modern nation state or the new concept of science. Another difference lies in the communicative situation of speaking either within an inner-religious discourse (Kleine's focus in his sources) or to an outer audience in a public sphere, which will naturally lead to different semantic chains and shift meanings contextually. In particular, Krämer argues for nineteenth-century Japan that the new political challenges privileged an emphasis on inner forms of worship, and thereby also added new nuances in the semantics of *xin*/*shin*. Already in the 1870s a variety of terms including the character *xin*/*shin* was instrumental in defining the "essence of religion" (or of *shūkyō*) which later influenced the wording of the relevant article in the Meiji Constitution of 1889 ("Japanese subjects shall … enjoy freedom of religious belief" [*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由]). Analyzing his main example of the scholar-priest Shimaji Mokurai, Krämer discusses how the semantics of the Pure Land sect in fact helped to construct a modern identity for Japanese, and how *shin*—without dropping older "dogmatic" meanings—was used as a marker of Buddhism in public as well as also partly in inner-Buddhist texts. Hereby especially the pre-modern term "faithful mind" (*shinjin* 信心) played an important role in introducing new meanings.

**Stefania Travagnin** takes up the issue in her chapter "The (New) Buddhist Semantics of *xin* 信 in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Arguments from China and Taiwan." Here we recognize how Chinese-speaking Buddhists were facing partly the same topics and challenges as Japanese Buddhists—whose earlier semantic decisions often influenced them—such as a positioning themselves towards the new nation-state, nationalism, and science. Based on an analysis mainly of Buddhist journals of the time, Travagnin unfolds the whole variety of contextual usages of *xin* or *xinyang* that reaches from ones more based in traditional practice and doctrine (such as unconditional confidence as a preliminary step in spiritual cultivation, semantically related to the character *xiu* 修) via involvement with Christian notions of faith to political connotations concerning "rescuing the nation" and building a new China. Semantically Travagnin observes a strong emphasis on *zhengxin* 正信 (correct

belief) vis-à-vis *mixin* 迷信 (superstitious belief). Travagnin further coins the term "*xin*'s institutionalization" when speaking about the use of the term to label lay Buddhist associations in China and Taiwan. A particular emphasis of this chapter lies also in translocal entanglements and interactions between Mainland China, Japan, and Taiwan. Thus, Buddhist Chinese (and Taiwanese) uses of *xin*(*yang*) in the early twentieth century show both continuities and ruptures that relate to inner-Buddhist matters (doctrine and practice, largely showing continuity) on the one hand and to its repositioning in the public sphere and towards society and state on the other hand.

**Thomas Fröhlich** analyzes in his chapter the changing usages of *xin*(*yang*) in the works of Liang Qichao. Liang stands out as a key figure in the process of adopting Western knowledge and terminologies in the first two decades of the twentieth century, including the temporal concept of evolution that was received by him via Japan and propagated as early as around 1900. Liang's interest in all his writings and thinking was the creation of a future nation state, building on his concept of new citizens (*xinmin* 新民). This motivation also guided his interest in religion (*zongjiao*). Within his adopted framework of evolutionary progress, faith played an important role as a root of citizens' "knowledge" and "ability" and thereby as one of the mental foundations of the state. At the same time, however, Liang continuously struggled to come to terms with the exact role of religion (in his case preferentially Buddhism) and so also of "faith." In a later phase Liang dissociated *xinyang* partly from religion as he did not want to reduce *xinyang* to religion (*zongjiao*) and superstition (*mixin* 迷信) in particular. "Religion" was therefore sidelined in favor of alternative concepts and terms like "religious thought," "religious spirit"—or "faith." Finally, he again dropped this use and instead adopted "view of death and life" as his favorite terminology. These semantic changes reflect a typical problem of struggling with the multilayeredness of *xin*(*yang*): while faith appears as an almost unavoidable term as part of modern language, its multiple potential meanings, semantic breadth and ambiguity as well as religious connotations make it apparently difficult to grasp its exact meaning, clearly define its content, and give it a clear place in systematic thought. Ideas on faith by Liang—who generally exerted such a high influence on the next generation of new intellectuals—were, interestingly, only partially received by others: while his early use of *xinyang* generally helped to introduce this Japanese-coined binominal version to Chinese speakers, his rather positive evaluation of religions' role was not adopted by many secular proponents. Thinkers such as Hu Shi (in his 1919 article "Immortality—My Religion" [Bu xiu—wo de zongjiao 不朽—我的宗教]) took up his parlance of a "new belief" (*xin xinyang* 新信仰)

in the immortal (collective) Great Self (*dawo*), but understood it completely in secular ways.[25]

**Christian Meyer**'s chapter is dedicated to the specific field and discipline of *zongjiaoxue* 宗教學 ("Religious Studies" or "Academic Study of Religion"). Nowadays the use of *xinyang* within Chinese academia is generally widespread. However, its use also appears somewhat vague. The use in Religious Studies—and also its vagueness—goes all the way back to its adoption in the first wave of interest in the discipline in the early twentieth century when Western academic disciplines were massively introduced to China in introductory works and curricula. As Meyer shows for Religious Studies, it was especially the universalist idea of faith/belief as a general human capacity that was of interest. Main proponents in the field were Christian, mostly Western-educated, academics. In their use, older missionary concepts of (true) faith vs. superstition (*mi-xin*) were replaced by a liberal and open concept of faith that would include all religious faiths of the globe and be found in the whole of history of religions. During the early 1920s, this concept played an important strategical role of bridge-building to other non-Christian proponents or sympathizers of religion when Christianity in particular and religion in general was harshly attacked by radical secularists. His analysis of introductory works on religion in the 1920s confirms this inclusivist understanding of *xin*(*yang*). However, it also shows that the semantic multilayeredness and complexity of the term caused some problems to define the role of *xinyang* in a clear way and ascribe an exact meaning to it. It is therefore indicative that a religious thinker like Xie Fuya 謝扶雅 (1892–1991) in the end rather preferred specific terms such as religious experiences (*zongjiao jingyan* 宗教經驗), religious consciousness (*zongjiao yishi* 宗教意識), or religiosity (*zongjiaoxin* 宗教心) instead of *xinyang* to denote this human capacity as a commonly shared universal characteristic of religion.

**Thoralf Klein's** chapter focuses on secularized, political uses of *xin*(*yang*) by the National Party (Guomindang) in the late 1920s within the theoretical framework of "political religion" (Voegelin and others). Based on the writings of Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山) and a number of religious figures, as well as Party documents and publications mostly related to the Weekly Remembrance (*Zongli jinianzhou* 總理紀念週), he analyzes the language of Guomindang texts and demonstrates how the GMD understood *xin* 信 or *xinyang* 信仰 as central elements in propagating its ideology (Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles) as a creedal system to be believed in. This rhetoric

25 Hu Shi 1986 [1919].

drew heavily on Christian, but also Buddhist and even Confucian concepts and terminologies, while at the same time secularizing them for political purposes. In particular, belief (as a set of ideological propositions held to be true, an emotional attachment to the Nationalist cause, and as a translation of knowledge into activities by the party members, and by extension by all citizens) was regarded as a source of strength and unity for both party and nation. This adoption of terminology—and related practices such as the ritual of the Weekly Remembrance—might be attributed to the membership of Christians such as Sun Yat-sen himself, but fits also with general trends of a broadened, de-religionized, and functional understanding of faith or belief, as also the chapters by Fröhlich on Liang Qichao or Wielander's chapter on Communist language later in this volume show.

Finally, popular religious movements like the Way of Pervading Unity (Yiguandao 一貫道) are the chief subject of **Nikolas Broy**'s chapter. It drew on the moral-religious consensus of the late Imperial period, as described by Vincent Goossaert's chapter above, but added and developed their own doctrines and practices. An overview of texts by different religious movements of the late Imperial period allows Nikolas Broy to conclude that both "belief" and *xin* were not primary topics in them, but became more visible in the twentieth century. While on the conceptual level *xin* was never discussed as a central value in sectarian ethical or theological discourses, he argues that belief did and does play a major role in terms of assenting to the teachings of the movement (and thus identifying with it) and structuring one's spiritual and quotidian life accordingly. A fixation on religious terminology might thus run the danger of hiding from us the practical importance of belief and believing in religious life, especially in religious movements that maintain a certain degree of tension with the surrounding society. In this section, Broy's chapter plays an important role in showing how semantics in traditional milieus—in spite of encounters with the Christian presence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—could largely adhere to older usages and appear to a high degree as resilient towards new meanings.

The final **Part IV ("Contemporary Usages in Special and Everyday Language Discourses in Mainland China and Taiwan")** gathers four chapters on various aspects of early twenty-first-century uses of *xin* in selected religious and ideological contexts.

**Huang Weishan** and **Johanna Lüdde** carry the Buddhist story forward into the twenty-first century by exploring dimensions of *xin* in the religious lives of Buddhist practitioners. In Huang's case, these are Shanghai-based lay activists of the Taiwanese "Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation." Huang provides a

statistical breakdown of occurrences of *xin* in her interview data, both singly and in word combinations. Similar to (yet also significantly different from) the four-part formula derived by Tam Wai Lun from the *Flower Garland Sutra* (cf. above), Tzu Chi's leader, Ven. Cheng Yen 證嚴法師 (*1937), propagates a three-part sequence of religious life that begins with *xin*, then proceeds to *yuan* ("vows"), and culminates in practice (faith, vow, and practice 信願行). While once again *xin* is the basis of the path, it is also essentially just its precondition, not its core or aim. In the eminently practical world of Tzu Chi, practice (*xing*) ultimately trumps all, a Buddhism very congenial to the Taiwanese expatriate business community from which Tzu Chi activists are primarily drawn. Johanna Lüdde's case-study of a Buddhist convent presents a quite different social world in which *xin*'s semantic dimension of "confidence" moves to the foreground. *Xinxin* 信心, meaning confidence and/or faith depending on the respective context, has a particular significance for Buddhist nuns, since it is connected with the Buddhist notion of a masculine hero (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫) and therefore implies a gender transition. The idea of *xinxin* involves determination, will-power, and steadfastness as prerequisites for attaining enlightenment that nuns in particular need to cultivate (especially in the strict observance of monastic discipline) to overcome supposed "feminine weaknesses" and develop the masculine qualities needed to reach their goal.

**Adam Yuet Chau** stresses that even where *xin* does not loom large on the conceptual level, belief may still play an important role in religious practices. His case examples are drawn from the Shaanbei 陝北 region (northern Shaanxi Province) in north-central China. Arguing that many religious practices there are motivated by the psychological state that we might recognize as "belief" but do not necessarily or explicitly invoke this word, Chau proceeds to analyze ideas concerning divine efficacy and ritual expressions of thanksgiving to deities as presupposing some form(s) of beliefs in the sense of accepted knowledge about the nature and powers of gods and the resulting obligations for humans entering into a relationship with them. Conversely, notions of belief also shine through in ideas concerning divine punishment for unbelief manifested in blasphemous acts.

**Gerda Wielander**, in her chapter "What China is Missing—Faith in Political Discourse," focuses on the use of the word *xinyang* 信仰 in recent Chinese political discourse. She analyzes the renewed attempts to create a belief system and hagiography around socialist core values and the history of the Communist party, with particular emphasis on strengthening the faith of party members and university students. The chapter argues that the current emphasis on *xinyang* is a direct response to the—from the Party's perspective—worrying appeal of religion (in particular Christianity) to the country's elite, as well as to

"credible moral alternatives" and counter-hegemonic discourses by influential intellectuals such as Liu Xiaobo and Xu Zhiyong. Methodologically the chapter applies an understanding of *xinyang* "as a 'floating signifier' whose precise definition is contested, but which is connected to questions over China's future 'salvation'."

An Epilogue summarizes the general insights reached in this volume.

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CHAPTER 2

# An Overview: a Short Genealogy of Faith in the Western History of Philosophy and Theology and a Chinese Perspective

*Jiang Manke*

## 1 Introduction

In the history of Western philosophy and theology, almost no other concept is quite as central a topic as faith, both from religious and non-religious perspectives—nor has such a complex set of meanings. There are many reasons for this, two factors of which can be mentioned here. First and foremost, faith was of essential importance both for religion as well as for human beings in Western perceptions. This is reflected by the religious scholar and Islamicist Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916–2000), who notes in his famous work *Faith and Belief* (1979): "Faith, the historian reports, is the fundamental religious category; even, the fundamental human category. The theologian—Christian, Islamic, or other—may hardly dissent."[1] This reason is also directly linked to the second factor, namely, that the conceptual genesis of "faith" in the Judeo-Christian tradition is closely connected with the inner intertwining and fusion of theology and philosophy in the history of concepts.

In the following, an overview of the complex significance of the concept of faith in the European history of ideas is given. This conceptual history begins with pre-Christian ancient philosophy and the Greek word *pistis* (πίστις) and then moves on to the biblical terminology of the Old and New Testaments. Against the background of the specifically Christian use of language in the New Testament, it continues by analyzing the use of the concept of faith in the Early Church and in scholasticism. It then briefly describes how the concept of faith experienced a change in Martin Luther's Reformation and how this change brought about a further contribution to the Enlightenment. Subsequently it will be demonstrated how Christian dogmatics develops into the doctrine of faith in Neo-Protestantism. This description ends with the destruction of the Christian faith through the radical criticism of religion and the discovery of this worldview as a new faith in the second half of the nineteenth century.

1 Smith 1979, 7.

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For the Chinese context, a historical account of the concept of faith in the history of European philosophy and theology is relevant. Two questions arise here: 1) What are the similarities between the conceptual-historical genesis of "faith" in the European cultural context and that of its Chinese counterpart *xin* 信? 2) What aspects of the meaning of "faith" in the Judeo-Christian tradition have been taken over or transferred into the Chinese term *xin* in the past four centuries through cultural exchange in the form of missionary activity, knowledge transformation, translation, etc.? This chapter shall make a first step in providing starting points from a Western conceptual history perspective.

## 2 In Ancient Philosophy

Discussions about faith have a long tradition in Western intellectual history—this is true in profane language, not just in religious life.[2] This double usage can already be observed in ancient Greece, although the word πίστις is there mainly used in a non-religious context and only became a technical term in the philosophical language. Among Pre-Socratic philosophers, the concept of faith has two meanings: on the one hand, faith (πίστις) is loyalty, one of the human virtues; on the other hand, in the epistemological-metaphysical context, faith means evident certainty in contrast to doubt.[3]

This changes with Plato and Aristotle. Plato also uses the term faith (πίστις) in the epistemological-metaphysical context. However, for Plato faith (πίστις) is in no way related to certainty. Instead, he uses it to refer to a kind of knowledge that is superior to probability. According to Aristotle, πίστις is primarily a rhetorical means of persuasion that leads beyond mere opinion. This is then surpassed by logos, which serves as a reasoned definition of an object. This is why Aristoteles—like Plato—also conceives of it as a lesser form of cognition. Apart from this epistemological-metaphysical meaning of faith, in Aristotle's ethics, faith also comes into consideration as personal reliability—as fidelity, a virtue—and is regarded as a precondition for firm friendship. The profane use of faith in antiquity also includes this term in legal language. In this legal sense, the word gains the meaning of guarantee and security and can therefore refer to the oath of allegiance, legal evidence, and surety.[4]

2 The profane use of faith is later also characterized as secular or secularized language use.

3 Cf. Jüngel 2000, 954.

4 For the legal use of the concept of faith in antiquity, cf. Jüngel 2000, 955, und Bultmann 1959, 174–179. Cf. similarly Assandri's chapter in this volume on uses of *xin* in the context of entering a contractual relationship between (minor) divine beings and humans.

Apart from these considerations of the expression "faith" in its profane use—in the context of philosophical language (in the epistemological-metaphysical context and in the ethical context) and in the language of the law—the word πίστις already plays a role in religious life in antiquity. In this linguistic area not yet influenced by Jewish or Christian religion, the expression πίστις or πιστεύειν is connected to the speech of gods or goddesses, but not yet in religious language. Theognis of Megara (570 BC–485 BC), for example, understands the personified πίστις as a "great goddess." Plato also describes the verb πιστεύειν as "being convinced of the existence of the gods," but he does so in his discussion about the probability of the existence of the gods. It does not refer to a religious or personal relationship between humans and God as we find it later in Christianity. The same is the case for the Stoics.[5]

Compared to its profane use—first and foremost in the language of philosophy—discussion of faith in the religious life of antiquity was not prominent. Correspondingly, during that period, word formations with πίστις or πιστεύειν did not become terms of religious language. With the advance of Christianity into the world of late antiquity, the Greek term πίστις ("faith") was increasingly understood in the sense of biblical language. However, questions regarding the term "faith" in pre-Christian philosophy played a formative role throughout the history of theology.

## 3 In the Biblical Tradition

The terminological use of "faith" in the biblical tradition is a highly complex issue. For a long time, most researchers believed that "it is not possible to fall back on an understanding of faith that is already available in the Bible, but rather that the biblical testimonies are to be seen as stages in the formation of faith."[6] Rudolf Bultmann (1959) also views the statement in the Old Testament about faith in its theological use as "not first and foremost."[7] The most recent research shows, however, that the Old Testament already comprised a rich understanding of faith connected with the root אמן in its original form Hiphil, both in profane language use and in religious or theological usage.[8]

5 Jüngel 2000, 954.
6 Vorster 1974, 628. Cf. Fuchs 1965, 136–173, esp. 169.
7 Bultmann 1959, 182.
8 Cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015.

As an Old Testament concept of faith, the word אמן (Hiphil) occurs in its profane usage almost as often as in its theological usage.[9] In the Old Testament, the profane language use of אמן (Hiphil) is older than the theological use, with the former also strongly influencing the latter. In its profane use, the word אמן (Hiphil) is often used in response to statements made by the subject. Here, the subject is at the center and his or her statements are judged. This results in trust or distrust. This use can already be seen in Genesis: "So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him 'Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.' Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them." (Gen 45:25–26) In this context, the intertwining of trust and judgment plays a central role. אמן (Hiphil) is considered to be trust in the judgments. Since trust in judgment is based, to be more precise, on positive judgment, plausibility is decisive for faith or unbelief. In this usage, אמן (Hiphil) as a concept of faith is characterized by the close connection between holding true (positive judging) and trust. The reaction to empirical experience also belongs to this use of the word אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament, where appearance serves as a method of persuasion.[10]

Apart from its profane usage as a reaction to a statement or empirical experience, the word אמן (Hiphil) is also used in the Old Testament as an evaluation of human beings as well as all other creatures and abstractions. This is the second frequent profane use of this word. Judgment plays a central role here as well: Trusting in a human being presupposes a judgment about his situation, behavior or capacity for insight. What fundamentally distinguishes the profane use of אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament from its theological use is the legitimacy of skepticism in faith. This is connected with the fact that the word אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament in its profane use often appears in a negated form. Non-belief—including skepticism, mistrust, or doubt—is thus permitted in the inner-worldly context in the Old Testament.

The theological use of אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament likely appeared later than the profane use of language and has developed from it. However, this religious or theological use has its own characteristics in linguistic usage. These characteristics are outlined below. In the theological use, אמן (Hiphil) as an Old Testament concept of faith is firstly characterized by the fact that the word describes man's relationship to God, to Moses as God's mediator, or to the prophets. The person as subject is thus no longer central: Instead,

9 Cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015, 85. In her discussion about the profane and the theological usage of אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament, she also defines the profane as secular or as used in the connections between humans or in the world.

10 Cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015, 91.

the focus in this use is God, or Moses and the prophets. Thus it is also said in Genesis: "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Gen 15:6) Secondly, the theological use of אמן (Hiphil) probably has a similar structure to its profane use: Faith and judgment belong together. However, in this context the word אמן (Hiphil) often serves to judge statements about faith in God, in Moses, or in the prophets. Profane use often involves a concrete judgment of a concrete statement, often in a negated use of the word. Non-belief—including skepticism, mistrust or doubt—is legitimate in this use. On the other hand, the theological use of אמן (Hiphil) in the Old Testament is usually about a basic attitude towards God: either a deep connection to God (and to Moses or to the prophets) or a fundamental refusal, in the case of unbelief.[11] This is connected with a third point. In the context of the descriptions of the basic attitude towards God, the use of אמן (Hiphil) as an Old Testament concept of faith is characterized by the contrast of openness to God or closedness. Faith means a basic attitude of openness to God; being closed towards God results in unbelief. The role of Moses in this context is interesting. In many places in the Old Testament, where there is no sign of being closed to God, the miraculous signs that God provides Moses as a mediator immediately lead to faith.[12] Through Moses, too, closedness to God can become openness.[13] Fourthly, as a further character of the theological use of faith in the Old Testament, it can be pointed out here that the basic meaning of the term אמן (Hiphil) can be interpreted with two opposing groups of meaning—fear and trust. Rudolf Bultmann (1959) points out that fear and trust in this context are "two fundamentally different, indeed opposite groups of meaning."[14] With the meaning of fear of God, the transcendence of God is emphasized in the concept of faith. Through fear of God, the theological use of the concept of faith is again different from its profane use, whereby no meaning of fear is contained in the concept of faith. According to Bultmann, these two groups of meaning are balanced in the Old Testament. In addition to the basic meanings of trust and fear, the concept of faith in the Old Testament in its religious use through the related terms of אמן (Hiphil) still contains the following meanings: hope (hoping for God's salvation or for God's word), waiting (waiting for God), acknowledging (acknowledging God as God), obeying (obeying God), and faithfulness (remaining faithful to God).[15]

11 Cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015, 84.
12 An example for this is Ex 4:1–9:31.
13 Cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015, 104–106.
14 Bultmann 1959, 182.
15 Cf. Bultmann 1959, 191–197.

So far, we have sketched out the profane and theological language use of אמן (Hiphil) as an Old Testament concept of faith in view of the latest research. This brief presentation shows that with the root אמן (in the base form Hiphil) a versatile concept of faith had already been developed in the Old Testament. However, we should point out here that it is difficult to make such a distinction between the profane and theological use of אמן (Hiphil) in some Old Testament texts. The Old Testament use of אמן (Hiphil) in the profane and theological sense has a profound influence on the understanding of faith in Christian theology.[16]

The Old Testament heritage of the understanding of faith in its theological use, both its structure characterized by the intertwining of trust and judgment and the various facets of the meaning, was adopted in later Judaism.[17] However, the use of the concept of faith in Judaism also has its own emphasis. An important difference from the Old Testament is that in the later Jewish tradition, the unity of faithfulness and obedience stands at the forefront of the understanding of faith. In Judaism, to be faithful to God and to obey God means that man is in obedient faithfulness to God's command. Through the canonization of tradition in "Scripture," obedient faithfulness furthermore gains "the character of obedience to the law." Thus, in Judaism, faith in God means at the same time remaining in obedient fidelity to the law. For this reason, the term "faith" is often used in parallel to the term "keeping commandments." Moreover, the meaning of "hope" in the Old Testament understanding of faith is directed here at the supernatural eschatological events of the Jewish people.

Regarding its meaning, the New Testament concept of faith (as noun: πίστις; as verb: πιστεύειν) differed only slightly from the Old Testament concept of faith (אמן/Hiphil) in its profane linguistic usage. The noteworthy difference lies in its theological use, although the Old Testament heritage of the understanding of faith in religious use can also be seen in the New Testament. Thus, the theological concept of faith in the New Testament could be regarded on the one hand as a continuation of the Old Testament and Jewish tradition in Early Christianity, and on the other hand as determined by its specifically

16 Here the main thesis of Susanne Rudnig-Zelt is noteworthy, namely, that the post-Old Testament usage of Hiphil as a concept of faith is strongly influenced by the Old Testament usage, cf. Rudnig-Zelt 2015, 86.

17 Judaism is understood here as the tradition that builds upon the texts of the so-called Hebrew Bible and differs from the Christian interpretation that refers more or less to the same texts (in Christian tradition known as Old Testament). By the term "Old Testament and Jewish tradition" we mean the Old Testamentarian tradition as continued and interpreted by later Jewish tradition up to the time of the New Testament (first century AD) and beyond (however, not exclusively the rabbinic tradition).

Christian use. The Old Testament and Jewish tradition of the concept of faith continues in the New Testament, in that both the structure of the understanding of faith in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition (the intertwining of trust and judgment) and its various moments of meaning are asserted in common Christian usage.

Therefore, with the New Testament, the concept of faith experiences a considerable development in its theological use following the emergence of a new religion. This development has resulted in a specifically Christian use of the concept of faith. In the following, this specifically Christian use will be clarified on the basis of six points.

1) In its specifically Christian use, the Greek word πίστις is the first to acquire the primary meaning of acceptance of the Christian message (kerygma), namely, acceptance of the proclamation of the Gospel (cf. Rom 10:14–17). In the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament, faith is regarded as monotheistic faith or as faith in God, but through the acceptance of the Christian kerygma, the "faith in Jesus Christ" (πίστις εις Χριστόν Ιησούν) in the New Testament context has been used almost in the same sense as "faith in God."[18]
2) Directly connected with this, faith as recognition in a specifically Christian usage also receives a new meaning. While faith as recognition in the Old Testament and Jewish tradition means "to recognize or acknowledge God as God," there are two recognitions in the New Testament that are fundamental for the Christian faith: The first recognition is that Jesus is recognized as Lord; but the second, of equal value, is that the miracle of his resurrection is also recognized as "true"—"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). The use of the concept of faith in this second recognition as "believing to be true" is already common in the profane use of the Old Testament concept of faith, but the object of believing has changed to a new or broadened content.
3) The concept of faith or πίστις, which in the New Testament is indicated primarily by πίστις εις (belief in), signifies a personal relationship with Christ. In this personal relationship, the relationship to God is originally contained. While in the Old Testament context the relationship to God comes about through "faith in God," the New Testament relationship to God is only possible through faith in Christ or through the acceptance of the Christian kerygma, respectively. Thus, the relationship to Christ

18 Cf. Bultmann 1959, 209.

in the New Testament has the same factual meaning as the relationship to God.

4) By the primary meaning of acceptance of the Christian kerygma, faith in the New Testament context is neither a religious virtue nor a religious merit. While in the Old Testament-Jewish tradition faith can only be regarded as an appropriate attitude towards God, faith in the New Testament is a gift of God's grace. Faith, therefore, is neither to be won by faithfulness nor to be earned by keeping commandments, but it is the event of God's coming. Just as Paul writes in the Epistle to the Romans: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (Rom 10:17) Faith can therefore only be created through the word from God or through the Gospel from Jesus Christ. The works of the law, as in Judaism, are thus superseded. Thus, the beginning of the Letter to the Romans already states: "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4).

5) In this context, a central theme in Paul's theology comes to light: the relationship between faith and salvation. Paul believes that eschatological salvation, like faith, is not a reward for religious virtue, but a gift from God. Salvation can only be received in faith or through the acceptance of the Christian kerygma. If one believes in Jesus Christ, one is saved (cf. Rom 10:9). If accepting the Christian kerygma in the New Testament context also means the access to salvation, then faith (πίστις) is also understood as faith in salvation. Thus, the Pauline concept of faith stands in clear contrast to that of Judaism.[19]

6) The understanding of faith in the Johannine theology of the New Testament is characterized by two central themes. The first theme is the presence of eternal life in faith: Through faith, one emerges from death into true life and is therefore reborn. The difference between life and death is canceled for believers. The second central theme in John's understanding of faith is the relationship between faith and cognition. According to Johannine theology, cognition—the recognition of the truth—does not surpass faith; rather, faith is completed through cognition. It is the purpose of faith that there should be no qualitative difference between faith and cognition. With Johannine theology, the relationship between faith and cognition has become an important topic in Christian theology. Whether this aspect of the New Testament understanding of faith is influenced by ancient philosophy remains a controversial scholarly question.

19 Cf. Bultmann 1959, 220–222 ("D. Die Begriffsgruppe πιστις im NT").

These elements of meaning of the concept of faith in its specifically Christian usage in the New Testament remain fundamental to Christian doctrine, even though it has developed in various and continuing ways throughout the history of Christianity. Many discussions about the concept of faith in Christian theology can be traced back to these elements of meaning in the New Testament.

## 4 In the Early Church

In the Early Church, the Christian doctrine of biblical theology enters the phase of dogma formation. The background is the advance of Christianity into the world of late antiquity. In order to confront the challenge in the new environment, the Christian understanding of faith has also developed. The Old Church faces criticism in the encounter of Early Christianity with the Greek philosophy of antiquity, whereby the concept of faith (πίστις) in its profane use of language has an epistemological-metaphysical meaning, e.g., as an evidential certainty in contrast to doubt. The critics accuse Christians of irrational faith. In reaction to this, almost every Church Father and every writer of the Old Church has considered the relationship between faith and cognition. The relationship of faith and cognition has become a fundamental theme of theology in the early churches, so that the concept of faith in the Early Church can only be understood by determining its relationship with cognition.

With the recognition of Christianity as *religio licita* (permitted religion) in 311, the agreement of Milan in 313, and finally the recognition of Christianity as a state religion in 380, Christianity became Latinized during its expansion in the Roman Empire. The concept of faith of Latin Christianity is therefore strongly influenced by the meanings "trust" and "trustworthiness" of the Latin words *credere* and *fides*, but it also has many elements in common with the Greek concept of faith.[20] The Early Church father Tertullian (150–220) used the word *fides* to describe the entire Christian way of life. For Tertullian, faith and knowledge are in conflict: faith does not lead to knowledge, but is itself the truth in contrast to false claims to knowledge. When using *fides*/*credere*, Novatian (200–258) and Cyprian of Carthage (210–258) mean Christianity as specifically the true faith in which the Church is united. Ever since the recognition of Christianity as the state religion by Theodosius I. (347–395) in 380, πίστις/*fides* always clearly equates it with the creed of Christianity. Deviations from the confession of faith are heresies. According to this, the conflict between faith in God and worldly knowledge comes to a head: Faith in God

20 Cf. Hall 1984, 306.

begins where the knowledge (gnosis, γνῶσῐς) of this world ends. Gnosis represents this dualistic understanding of the world. With Clement of Alexandria (150–215) the relationship between faith and knowledge is redefined in the Early Church. In contrast to the dualistic understanding of the world of Gnosis, Clement does not see faith and knowledge as opposites: "There is neither knowledge without faith, nor faith without knowledge … because from faith one comes to knowledge."[21] On the one hand, Clement does not consider faith and cognition in one world to be contradictory; on the other hand, faith remains the fundamental precondition for knowledge. For from faith comes knowledge (γνῶσῐς) and right action (πρᾶξις).[22]

As one of the greatest scholars of the Church in late antiquity and an important philosopher, Augustine (Augustine of Hippo, 354–630) summarizes the previous discussions about the relationship between faith and cognition in the Western tradition—both pre-Christian philosophy and Christian theology—and develops a systematic understanding of faith. For Augustine, faith (*credere*) is primarily a way of perceiving invisible things like love and will. If we trust other people in this respect, we should also trust God—that is, believe in God.[23] Under the influence of Neo-Platonism, Augustine sees God as "absolutely simple and therefore perfect Being."[24] From this point of view the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of God are identical for him. In connection with the recognition of Christianity as the universal way of salvation the Christian faith is for him the basis of knowledge. Thus with him it means: "crede, ut intelligas" (believe so that you may understand). With this statement the movement from faith to knowledge has become the main motif of Augustine's theology.

The problem of authority plays a central role in his discussion about the movement from faith to knowledge. Augustine distinguishes two opposing authorities: divine authority and human authority. The divine authority, which distinguishes faith from mere credulity or subjective opinion, is the true, only certain, and highest authority. Human authority, on the other hand, is a low authority and is usually deceptive. The right and only path to divine authority is faith. Faith transcends worldly reason and human capacity and enables insight with true reason (*ratio, intellegere*). For Augustine, therefore, only Christian faith makes true knowledge or truth possible; faith is the starting point for true

21 Clement von Alexandria, Strom. Vol. 1, 11, quoted from Vorster 1974, 632. On Clement's discussion of the relationship between faith and knowledge, cf. Vorster 1974, 632, Hall 1984, 307.

22 Cf. Vorster 1974, 634; Hall 1984, 307.

23 Cf. Hall 1984, 307.

24 Cf. Vorster 1974, 634. Cf. Augustinus 2001, Book 15 (15.25), 318.

knowledge. However, not everyone is able to ascend to true knowledge via simple faith. For the faith of ordinary Christians, therefore, the authority of the Early Latin Church speaks above all. Based on divine authority, Christianity is the philosophy and the universal way of salvation for everyone who believes.[25]

To sum up: Against the historical background of the recognition and privileging of Christianity as state religion in the Roman Empire, with the identification of the Christian faith as the right and only way to divine authority and finally with the determination of the Christian faith as starting point for true recognition, Augustine de facto dismissed the actual differences between the profane and theological language and the concept of faith in the Early Church. His understanding of faith has a profound meaning in Christian theology as well as in Western philosophy.

## 5 In the Middle Ages

After Christianity had conquered the Roman Empire, the religion continued to spread in Europe. The rest of Europe was already Christianized in the Early Middle Ages. During the long period of the Middle Ages, the Latin Church experienced the further development of Christian doctrine since the time of the Gospel and the Church Fathers. Christian doctrine in the Middle Ages is above all influenced by the way of thinking and method of scholasticism that has the examination of Aristotle's philosophy as its starting point. Faith and its relationship with cognition are the fundamental themes of medieval theology. On the one hand, the previous understanding of faith in Christian doctrine was deepened and developed further in the Middle Ages; on the other hand, it gained its own development in the process: The Christian faith of the medieval church is not only described and substantiated as a path to true knowledge of God, but also as a path to a fulfilled, meaningful life. Numerous scholastic theologians and philosophers made further contributions to this development of the understanding of faith in the Middle Ages. In the following, the medieval understanding of faith is briefly described through its representatives in three historical phases of the period (Early Middle Ages, High Middle Ages, and Late Middle Ages).

As the founder of scholasticism and as the main representative of the Early Middle Ages, Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) primarily continues the discussion on the relationship between faith and cognition in the Early Church. He revises the Augustinian motif "crede, ut intelligas" (believe so that you may

25 Cf. Schindler 1979, 664.

understand) to "credo, ut intelligam" (I believe in order to understand) and then turns it into a programmatic theological method: "fides quaerens intellectum"—faith seeking understanding. With this method, Anselm strives for a rationally transparent content of faith. Man can only come to faith by gaining a kind of preliminary understanding of it through the proclamation of faith.[26] The absence of contradiction between reason and faith is the basic principle in Anselm's theology. Because reason reaches the content of faith by itself, for Anselm un-belief means un-reason. This basic principle is later intensified by his well-known proof and conclusion in the argumentation about the existence of God. Belief in God presupposes the understanding of faith (intellectus fidei) and therefore does not contradict human understanding.

With Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the main representative of high scholastic theology and philosophy, the understanding of faith was further developed in the Middle Ages. Aristotle's thoughts spread in the High Middle Ages. Against this background, his reception plays an important role in the theology of Thomas Aquinas. In his understanding of faith, Aquinas tried above all to achieve a harmonious combination of ancient philosophy with Christian theology. For Thomas, faith is "a speculative-intellectual agreement to the truths of faith, which is effected by the will."[27] God is seen as "guarantor of the truths of faith."[28] The natural reason of man—especially Aristotelian philosophical thought—plays a decisive part in clarifying the secrets of faith. Therefore, there is no contradiction between ancient philosophy and Christian dogmatics, but rather a harmonious synthesis. In this context, Thomas distinguishes two sources of knowledge: reason and revelation. There is also no contradiction between the knowledge of reason and that of revelation. He now distinguishes two paths in faith: *maiores* and *simplices*. One elite group of people can develop their natural reason in such a way as to reach the truths of faith or to discover God (*maiores*); the other group can only reach this step by faith in God and the revelation of God (*simplices*)—the most people belong to this group. The two paths to truths of faith complement each other. However, Thomas clearly points out that the second path for ordinary people is a shortened but secure path in faith. With his discussion about the synthesis of reason and revelation, Thomas Aquinas makes a groundbreaking contribution to Christian theology.

In the Late Middle Ages, the Scottish theologian John Duns Scotus (1266–1308) took the previous discussion of scholasticism about faith and its

26 Cf. Gössmann 1984, 308.

27 Gössmann 1984, 314.

28 Ibid.

relation with cognition one step further. Duns Scotus combines the teachings of Aristotle, Augustine, and the Franciscans and differentiates the two paths in faith more precisely than Thomas Aquinas. He distinguishes between infused faith (fides infusa) and acquired faith (fides acquisita): Infused faith, which is also called the revealed faith, can only be attained by God's will and grace and therefore cannot be experienced, it is supernatural and possesses an immediate certainty; in contrast, acquired faith can be experienced because this faith can be acquired through natural reason. However, the acquired faith must come together with the infused faith, because only through this does the will of God come into being. Every act of faith is therefore a combination of the infused and acquired faith. With Duns Scotus, doubt becomes an important topic in the theological discussion about faith. Since doubt about the acquired faith is possible, faith and doubt cannot be absolutely mutually exclusive.[29]

## 6 In the Reformation

With Martin Luther (1483–1546), Christianity in the sixteenth century not only experienced a reformation of the church as an institutional organization, but also a radical change in its theology. Reformation theology is shaped by the fact that faith is a key concern of the Reformation, because Reformation focuses all theological facts on faith. For this reason, Martin Luther's theology is also called the "Theology of Faith." However, the focus on the theological facts in faith does not mean that the Reformation further develops and specifies the definitions of the concept of faith in the Early Church and in the Middle Ages, but that the Reformation actually leads to a radical change in the understanding of Christian belief.

The starting point of Martin Luther's theology consists in the fact that the Gospel as encouragement and as promise is the *sole* foundation of faith and remains its counterpart. For Luther the source of Christian faith is thus not doctrine or dogma, but the oral proclamation of the Gospel. In this starting point, Luther already sharply distances himself from the scholastic concept of faith by attaching special importance to the question how it had been used in in the New Testament. According to his opinion, faith has two organs: hearing and conscience (*fides ex auditu*, "faith comes from hearing"). Hearing and conscience are thus the prerequisites for faith: While Luther's hearing is the external organ of human beings for receiving the oral proclamation, conscience—the inner organ for faith—serves on the one hand as a place of

29 Regarding Duns Scotus's remarks on the concept of faith, cf. Walter 1968.

inner receptivity for the proclamation of the Gospel, and on the other hand as a place where every person can and must agree to God's verdict of guilt. With the determination of hearing and conscience as organs of faith, the importance of the role of the subject in faith preference is revealed. This is a decisive step in the history of theology: The close connection between faith and subjectivity has been a fundamental topic of philosophical and theological discourse on religion since the early modern period in Europa, and the course for this focus was already set in the Reformation period.

The relationship to God is a central theme in Luther's understanding of faith. Unlike some scholastic theologians, who believe faith to be acquired through the natural reason of human beings, Luther considers faith only as "the work and power of God."[30] For faith alone determines the relationship to God: "If you believe, you have [sc. the relationship to God]."[31] Against all belief in authority in the Early Church and in the Middle Ages, Luther rests faith only on the mere word of God, namely on the proclamation of the Gospel. In this context, it also redefines humanity's relationship with Christ. The union of man with Christ does not take place in the sacrament, but only verbally: Salvation depends on the Word through faith, which is only possible through hearing and conscience.

At this point, it is important to know that Reformation Lutheranism and Calvinism differed in their understandings of faith. While Martin Luther understood only the Gospel as the Word of God and determined the oral proclamation as the only source of faith, John Calvin (1509–1564) equated law and the Gospel in their revelatory value. For him, both are the Word of God and therefore the source of the Christian faith.

By turning away from the scholastic determinations of the concept of faith, by his rehabilitation of the Christian use of the concept of faith in the New Testament, and finally by his discovery of the role of the subject in the execution of faith, Martin Luther became a decisive figure in the history of theology and made his radical contribution to the Christian understanding of faith.[32] With the discovery of the role of the subject in the preference for

30 Cf. Jüngel 2000, 962.

31 Ibid.

32 The fundamental element of the reformatory doctrine of "justification by faith alone" (*iustificatio sola fide*) plays an important role in the reception of the Reformation in China. The name of the Lutheran Church in China is derived directly from the Chinese translation of this essential element (*yin xin cheng yi* 因信称义)—it is called *xin yi zong* 信义宗.

faith, the Reformation also marked a dividing line in the history of ideas: it marked the end of medieval philosophy and the beginning of the modern age.[33]

## 7 In Post-Reformation Philosophy and Theology

In post-Reformation theology and philosophy, the concept of faith can be characterized by two features. First, after the Reformation the discussion of faith is characterized by the fact that the secularization of Western society leads to a separation from the theological and profane language of the concept of faith. The second characteristic of the new development of the understanding of faith after the Reformation consists in the fact that the postulate of subjectivity in the preference for faith emphasized by Martin Luther on the path from modern times to the Enlightenment has not only found its conceptual-systematic form but has also reached a climax.

In Enlightenment theology, faith is detached from its relation to the Word of God and understood as assurance of truth analogous to reason. This turn is above all due to the modern discussion in philosophy about the relationship between faith and reason. While Francis Bacon (1561–1626) still sees the contradiction between faith, which is based on authority, and reason, which makes philosophical thinking possible, René Descartes (1596–1650) understands faith and philosophy as different paths to the same result, namely to the truth. With his epistemology, John Locke (1632–1704) has, in the formation of the modern concept of faith, above all contributed to clarifying the relationship between doubt and faith and to discovering the importance of experience of certainty in faith. Although Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) distinguishes between truth revealed by God and truth made accessible by philosophy, he claims the agreement between faith and reason.

Against the background of the modern discussion on the relationship between faith and reason, Christian Wolff (1679–1754), the representative of school philosophy in the eighteenth century and the opponent of Halle's pietism in the early Enlightenment, defines faith in its secularized language as the agreement of a probable sentence. For the Enlightenment philosopher, the independence of human reason is of great importance for faith. With Christian Wolff, reason is opposed to faith in God and science to theology, so that the Enlightenment is seen as a "conflict of authority between reason and faith."[34] In the debate with the philosophy of Enlightenment the main problem

33 Cf. Barth 2004 [1992], 27–51.

34 Slenczka 1984, 336.

of Enlightenment theology is finally that "faith is asserted as something reasonable and theology as natural."[35]

The postulate of subjectivity in the preference for faith, as emphasized by Martin Luther, reached a climax in the Enlightenment, which culminated in Kantian transcendental epistemology. In the context of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in his religious treatise *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793/94), distinguished between the historical church faith and the bare rational faith. The historical church faith, which is also called the revelation faith, is based on a holy scripture; the rational faith as "pure moral faith" arises from the need of pure reason for morality and is what religion actually is. Thus, Kant identifies rational faith with true religious faith. He argues that historical church faith is to pass over into the pure religious faith, because only by this the randomness of the historical church faith can be abolished and the true church be made possible. As Kant says: "Church faith has pure religious faith as its highest interpreter."[36] With Kant's philosophy of religion, the subjectivity of the believer moves even further into the foreground of the theological discussion on faith.

## 8 The Understanding of Faith in Neo-Protestantism

In the transition from Enlightenment theology to Neo-Protestantism, Christian dogmatics becomes doctrine of faith (Glaubenslehre). This new development in theology can be understood as a reaction of Protestantism to the challenge of Enlightenment philosophy. Theology was no longer concerned with a knowledge about God. Theological conflicts are ultimately about faith. However, theological discussions do not only revolve around the question of how the Christian faith can be reinterpreted, but also of how it can be correctly appropriated, communicated and lived.[37] Since then, faith has not only received its systematic place in theology, but also become the main topic of theology. Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706–1757) was the first German theologian to call his Christian dogmatics the *Evangelische Glaubenslehre* (3 volumes, Halle 1759–1760). After Baumgarten, numerous theologians and philosophers have contributed to the reinterpretation of the faith. Friedrich Schleiermacher made the most important contribution to this topic since the Enlightenment,

35 Slenczka 1984, 337.

36 Kant 2009 [1793/94], 120. Cf. the original text in German: "Der Kirchenglaube hat zu seinem höchsten Ausleger den reinen Religionsglauben." Kant 2003 [1793/94], 147.

37 Slenczka 1984, 336.

so that today no discussion of the concept of faith in Christian theology and religion theory is possible without him.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the most important theoretician of religion in the Protestant cultural context, interpreted the essence of religion in a revolutionary new manner with his early Romantic religious treatise *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799).[38] In order to save religion from its demise at the end of the eighteenth century, Schleiermacher's new version of the understanding of religion in his *Speeches* aimed primarily at differentiating religion from other capabilities in human intellectual life or from other areas of culture. In a critical distance to rationalism and orthodoxy, he redefines the essence of religion: It is neither thinking nor acting, but the intuition and feeling of the universe.[39] Through this differentiation, Schleiermacher by no means views religion as an epiphenomenon of metaphysics and morality, but rather as an irreplaceable and unmistakable counterweight in the culture to these two. Religion has its own psychological and empirical place in human intellectual life. With this redefinition of the concept of religion, Schleiermacher makes it clear that without reference to the subjectivity of human beings, religion as an act of faith cannot be understood.

Against the background of this new understanding of religion and by critically revising his own thoughts, Schleiermacher in his so-called Glaubenslehre (The Christian Faith)—published under the title *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der Evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt* (1821/22; 1830/31)[40]—presents a new understanding of faith. In this work, his systematic presentation of Christian dogmatics, Schleiermacher understands religious faith as a feeling of piety. In its demarcation between knowledge and action, piety is a "modification of Feeling or of immediate self-consciousness."[41] In his closer discussion, he then identifies the feeling of piety with the feeling of absolute dependency. Upon this basis, Schleiermacher understands the Christian religion as a particular form of communal piety, inwardly as a developed way of faith. As a special way of faith, Christianity or the Christian faith is one of the teleological directions of piety, and this monotheistic way of faith is essentially distinguished from the others by the fact that "in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth."[42]

38 Schleiermacher 1996 [1799].
39 Cf. Schleiermacher 1996 [1799], 22.
40 Cf. Schleiermacher 1989 [1830/31].
41 Schleiermacher 1989 [1830/31], §3, 5.
42 Cf. Schleiermacher 1989 [1830/31], §11, 52.

With his *The Christian Faith*, the accent on the subjectivity of human beings is even more clearly expressed in religious faith. However, locating the concept of subjectivity in the understanding of faith does not mean that Schleiermacher overlooks the role of the church in religious faith. On the contrary, the social-philosophical dimension belongs to his religious understanding of faith. For Schleiermacher, the intersubjective communication between believers plays an important role in religious faith. The church is "a communion or association relating to religion or piety."[43] As a free religious community, the church serves as a place for individuals to mutually communicate their religious faith.

As already mentioned, the discussion of faith after the Reformation is also characterized by the fact that the secularization of Western society leads to a separation between the theological and profane use of the concept of faith. Since the Enlightenment, many philosophers and theologians have interpreted the concept of faith more closely in its profane language, e.g., Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) in his well-known writing *Faith and Knowledge* (*Glauben und Wissen*) (first published in 1802).[44] Here knowledge and faith are synonymous in the sense of certainty of faith, when reason is "faith" in light of the truth of immediate knowledge. Thus, Hegel attempts not only to transfer faith into knowledge, but also to philosophically generalize Christian faith in the Augustinian-Reformatory tradition. The situation is similar with Schleiermacher. Beyond his influential understanding of faith in the theory of religion and in Neo-Protestantism, he discussed this concept also in his lectures on Philosophical Ethics, which scholars today read as a philosophy of culture, in a secularized linguistic usage. In this philosophy of culture, Schleiermacher interprets the spectrum of human culture as an organization structured by four spheres of action. In each of these spheres of action, people have different relationships to one another. In this scheme, language and knowledge belong to the sphere of action of identical symbolization. Schleiermacher understands the relationship of individual human beings among themselves in this sphere of action as the relationship of faith (*das Verhältnis des Glaubens*). This relationship of faith is mutually dependent because it is based on mutual understanding structured by pronouncing and reproducing or by teaching and learning the language.[45]

43 Schleiermacher 1989 [1830/31], §3, 5.

44 Hegel 1986 [1802].

45 Cf. Schleiermacher 1927 [1913], 592–594.

## 9 The Old and New Faith: Farewell to Religious Belief

In the context of the secularization of Western society since the Enlightenment, the theological and the profane usage of the concept of faith were separated and the concept of faith in its profane usage defined in greater detail in German idealism, as with Hegel and Schleiermacher. However, this new development did not lead to an elimination of religious faith. In the course of the nineteenth century, it became a subject of philosophy and theology. The reason for this is not only the shaping of the new forms of radical criticism of religion, especially by Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, but also the development of the natural sciences (e.g., Darwinism) and the historical sciences. The discussion in theology about faith in this phase is characterized by the clear contrast of the Christian faith and the modern worldview.

With his famous work *The Essence of Christianity* (1841),[46] Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) presents a radical criticism of religion based on German idealism whereby religious faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition is anthropologically destroyed. Based on the Hegelian theory of consciousness and the concept of the absolute spirit, Feuerbach understands religion as the unconscious "self-consciousness which man has of his nature."[47] Religion is indeed the consciousness of the infinite, but it is not different from man's consciousness of his infinite nature as a generic species—as human being.[48] Accordingly, for Feuerbach theology is only anthropology: "The beginning, middle and end of Religion is MAN."[49] Thus, religion, especially the Christian religion, is only the behavior of a person toward himself or herself, or more precisely, toward his or her own nature as human being.[50] Religion results in the disuniting of man from himself. In this anthropological criticism of religion, Feuerbach identifies man's own infinite being as the content of faith with the absolutely infinite or God. Thus, the belief in God means merely the belief in the infinite essential nature of human being. This leads finally to the fact that the faith content of the Christian religion and the monotheism is secularized, in the other words: The absoluteness of the religious faith content is negated. Feuerbach's anthropological destruction of religious faith has a profound significance, because all relevant criticism of religion after Feuerbach has built on its basic ideas.

46 Feuerbach 1973 [1841].
47 Feuerbach 1973 [1841], 29.
48 Cf. Feuerbach 1973 [1841], 29.
49 Feuerbach 1973 [1841], 315.
50 Cf. Feuerbach 1973 [1841], 48.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) also regarded Feuerbach's criticism of religion as a prerequisite and starting point. Nevertheless, Marx distances himself from Feuerbach and sets his own accents on the basis of his materialistic philosophy of history. While Feuerbach understands religion anthropologically as the self-consciousness of the infinite human nature, Marx finds the genesis of religion primarily in the political-economic reality of society.[51] For the human being is absolutely a social being—in the family or in the state. For Marx, religion is none other than "the expression of real suffering" and "a protest against real suffering" in society:[52] religion, from its genesis, is the critique of society. Thanks to its stabilizing function in society, religion is only a kind of "self-anaesthetization"—"the opium of the people."[53] Against this backdrop, Marx—along with Friedrich Engels (1820–1895)—later presents a conviction in the ideal of a classless society.[54] In doing so, he not only made it clear again that religious faith must be overcome and brought to an end through revolutionary societal change. At the same time, he presented also socialism, the ideal of a classless and just society, as an alternative to capitalism. In contrast to religious faith, the belief in socialism acts as a form of secular belief during the labor movement since the late nineteenth century in Europe. Socialism, the ideal of the classless and just society on "this side," serves as the concrete content of the secular belief. Together with Karl Marx's criticism of religion and his concept of socialism, this belief in socialism has been widely received, contextualized, and instrumentalized in the use of language in China since the beginning of the twentieth century.[55]

Moreover, the concept of "worldview" became central in the discussion on faith in the nineteenth century, with the destruction of Christian faith by the radical criticism of religion, so that the theological debate on it at this stage is characterized by the contraposition of the Christian faith and the worldview. The concept of worldview is not a new word in the philosophical and theological history of Europe.[56] However, the fact that "worldview" was emphasized as a subject of theology and then still explicitly as a competitor and alternative to Christian faith is the case only in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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51 On Karl Marx' criticism of religion, cf. Marx 1983 [1843/44] and Marx 1973 [1845].

52 Marx 1983 [1843/44], 378.

53 Marx 1983 [1843/44], 378.

54 Cf. Engels 1975 [1884].

55 Today in the People's Republic of China, faith in Socialism and Marxism is considered an officially legitimate worldview (世界观) that is not only an alternative to the worldview of capitalism, but is also opposed to religious faith (宗教信仰) as a kind of profane faith and even supersedes it. Cf. Klein's and Wielander's contributions in this volume.

56 Cf. Moxter 2010, 544–549.

First and foremost, this can be attributed to the German theologian and philosopher David Friedrich Strauß.

Like Feuerbach, David Friedrich Strauß (1808–1874) initially developed his interpretation of Christian faith on the basis of German idealism, especially Hegelian. Different from Feuerbach, the progress of the natural sciences and materialism in the nineteenth century played a decisive role in the further development of Strauß's thoughts. Already in his early work, *The Christian Doctrine of Faith* (1840/41),[57] Strauß states that ecclesiastical doctrine should be ultimately dissolved by rationalism and that Christian faith can only be understood by a speculative-philosophical interpretation in the sense of Hegel, since according to Strauß, Christian religion cannot be reconciled with modern science.

While Strauß remained cautious in this early work and did not dare to bring the Christian faith to the end, he takes a decisive step with his last work, *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (The old faith and the new) (1872),[58] programmatically replacing the old Christian faith with a new faith, a contemporary worldview. In doing so, he not only abandons his Hegelianism and abolishes Christian faith bound to Scripture and church dogma, but he also constitutes knowledge, a modern worldview shaped by Darwinism and materialism, as a new faith. This "new faith" is based on the results of scientific research as well as on the materialism brought about by industrialization in the nineteenth century. In this new faith, the world is no longer understood as God's creation—"the work of a reasonable and good creator,"[59] but as a place of production of human beings for a good purpose—"the laboratory of the reasonable and good."[60] Strauß describes the modern worldview as "the result painfully educed from continued scientific and historic research, as contrasted with that from Christian theology."[61] He understands this worldview, the "new faith," now as an alternative and antithesis to the "old" Christian faith. Therefore, according to Strauß's conviction, the old Christian faith stands in indissoluble contraposition to the worldview, a new faith with the profane content of faith in natural sciences and materialism. Strauß personally bids farewell to the old faith and professes the new faith. With his programmatic work, he resolves the vigorous debate about a substitution of the Christian faith identified with an ancient worldview by the contemporary worldview. Theology and religious studies

57 Strauß 1840/41.
58 Strauß 1872.
59 Strauß 1872, 140.
60 Strauß 1872, 140.
61 Strauß 1872, 10.

worldwide have been forced to continue to deal intensively with this debate in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Though we have no proof for a direct reception of Strauß's writings, the rhetorics of "new faith" is found also in the 1920s in China.[62]

## 10 Conclusion

Through an overview of the history of ideas, we have explored the range of meanings of the term "faith" in the history of European philosophy and theology—both in its religious and theological as well as its non-religious use up to the nineteenth century. An overview is too short to show the full complexity of the meaning of the concept of faith. However, it allows at least a glimpse of how multilayered the concept of faith is in Western traditions. This complexity turns up in multiple fields, such as religious-historical, biblical, theological, and philosophical ones. This brief historical account shows how the concept is not only a historical product of influences from different geographic or linguistic traditions, but even more the product of interactions between different religious ideologies and philosophical schools.

From antiquity to the history of Early Christianity, the history of ideas characterizes the concept of faith through three traditions: ancient Greek philosophy (πίστις), the Old Testament Jewish tradition (אמן/Hiphil) and the New Testament innovation of "faith in Jesus Christ" (πίστις εις Χριστόν Ιησούν). Although the theological concept of faith in the New Testament is considered to be a continuation of the Old Testament Jewish tradition in Early Christianity, it is defined by its specifically Christian use. The ancient Greek concept of faith has a strong non-religious language use—in epistemological-metaphysical, ethical, and juridical contexts—and does not entail terms of religious language. The influence of the ancient Greek concept of faith on the use of this term in the biblical tradition is not yet evident in Early Christianity. Within the history of theology, the formative role of the ancient concept of faith has only been evident since the Early Church. With the advance of Christianity into the world of late antiquity, not only the Greek concept of faith (πίστις), but also the Roman one (*fides/credere*) were understood within the linguistic world of the Bible. As Early Christianity encountered Greek antiquity, the epistemological-metaphysical meaning of the ancient concept of faith has provided for criticism of the biblical concept of faith, so that the relationship between faith and cognition has become a fundamental theological topic in

62 See also Meyer's contribution in this volume.

the ancient church. A characteristic of the concept of faith in the Early Church is that through the recognition and privileging of Christianity as a state religion in the Roman Empire, the actual difference between the profane and theological use of language in the concept of faith was ultimately de facto dismissed by Augustine. The influence of ancient philosophy is even more evident in the Middle Ages. Thanks to the spread of Aristotle's ideas, faith and knowledge remain the central theme in scholastic theology and philosophy, and the discussion about the relationship between faith and reason, between reason and revelation, and between faith and doubt also moved to the center of the debate.

The concept of faith in modern times is not only connected with the church renewal or Martin Luther's Reformation or with the progress of modern philosophy, but also with the development of society. By turning away from scholastic determinations, Martin Luther rehabilitated the specifically Christian use of the concept of faith in the New Testament. Luther's contribution also consists in his discovery of the role of the subject in the execution of faith. Accordingly, faith and subjectivity become a central theme in the understanding of faith. The secularization of Western society in modern times leads to a separation between the theological and profane language in the concept of faith. In the Enlightenment, the debates over the interrelation between faith and reason are marked by the conflict of authority over truth. As a result, the believer's subjectivity moves even further into the foreground of the discussion. As a continuation of this development, Christian theology in Neo-Protestantism becomes the doctrine of faith (Glaubenslehre).

The genesis of the concept of faith in the European cultural context is in fact a dynamic process: The term continually appropriates new accents and new facets of meaning in different phases and is finally expanded in Neo-Protestantism in a theologically and philosophically developed system. This development in the history of the concept is seen as a constant appropriation of new facets on the one hand and as intellectual continuity on the other. These characteristics of the Western concept of faith—its complexity of meaning and as the historical product of a dynamic process—not only occur in the history of European philosophy and theology—this is also the case for its Chinese counterpart *xin* 信.

This history of Western semantics also becomes relevant when we will look at its later receptions in China in different stages. Not in all stages all possible Western aspects of meaning were received—since there is no *one* Western meaning of the term faith, as this chapter has clearly demonstrated. Instead, it will be important to see how different facets were received through specific channels of transfer in specific times under specific conditions. This overview

therefore marks different starting points for such receptions. In particular, we will see—and should be aware of—that the first reception of Christianity in form of Jingjiao 景教 (Church of the East, or so-called Nestorian Church) in the period around 635–846 (in the Tang Dynasty) would, of course, have brought with it neither connotations of *fides* of the Western Latin church (contemporary or later) nor ideas of the Lutheran Reformation, with its central focus on *Glaube*. Even linguistically, it is instead rooted in Syriac (semitic) church language traditions not touched upon here. For later periods it is, however, obvious how the Jesuits brought ideas to China that were based on their Catholic scholastic orthodoxies (harmonizing faith and reason). Protestantism finally made a contribution to this reception rather later through pietist and liberal interpretations of faith. These concepts were not only bound to the monotheistic Christian God, but also emphasized faith as a faculty of personal religious experience. Secular interpretations since the nineteenth century have again built on these interpretations and secularized them.

Finally, we would like to hint at the history of reception through translations of the named Western classics which made Western ideas available for readers in modern China (and probably better known to Western readers than ideas of *xin*). This history begins with the Jesuits in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Thanks to the extensive translation of European philosophical and theological literature into Chinese since the beginning of the twentieth century—and continuing to the present day with book series such as the Hong Kong-based Institute of Sino-Christian Studies' translation series as a prominent example[63]—the majority of the ideas and authors presented here are already known in China. From Plato's theory of ideas to Aristotle's ethics, from the thoughts of the Early Church fathers to Augustine's works, from the early scholastic Anselm of Canterbury to the representative of the High Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, from the reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin to numerous philosophers in modern times, from Kant's Enlightenment religious writings to Schleiermacher's early Romantic work *On Religion*, from Karl Barth's *The Epistle to the Romans* (1919) to Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope—in Chinese-language literature we could find translations and ideas for almost every phase of European history of philosophy and theology and for every important author, not to mention numerous translations of the Bible. The radical criticism of religion in Europe has also long found its adherents in China. In comparison to the academic discourse (in the field of philosophy,

63 Cf. the list of publications on their website (including an Ancient Series and a Modern Series). http://www.iscs.org.hk/Common/Reader/Channel/ShowPage.jsp?Cid=158&Pid=9&Version=0&page=0 (accessed 06 June 2022).

religious studies and theology), the idea of radical criticism of religion (e.g., Feuerbach and Marx) plays a particularly weighty role in the political discourse of the People's Republic of China, because it is embedded in the state ideology.

However, such knowledge has been so far largely one-sided. The omission of a comprehensive mutual exchange from today is particularly surprising when one notes that already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the first intellectual encounter of European-Christian and Chinese traditions through the missionary activity of the Catholic Church resulted in a profound impact on the history of ideas in Europe, and that the transcultural aspect is a central part of the current discussion on faith and religion. Now it is the time for a more systematic introduction of the Chinese genesis of *xin* as an approximate counterpart for the term "faith" for the Western audience. As a beginning of this exchange, this volume could serve as an open platform for interactive discussion—a kind of transcultural hermeneutics.

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# PART 1

## *Setting the Stage: Traditional Uses in Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist Contexts*

∴

CHAPTER 3

# A Trustworthy Companion: *xin* 信 as Component Term in Early Chinese Texts

*Joachim Gentz*

## 1 Introduction

My analysis of the term *xin* 信 in this chapter starts from an observation of the ways it is used in combination with other terms in early Chinese texts. Looking at the usage of *xin* 信, mainly in argumentative texts, I noticed that *xin* almost never occurs as a single independent term carrying a specific meaning ascribed to it alone. It appears mostly in close relationships with other terms and its meaning is defined by its specific interdependence with these. This tempted me to formulate an enthusiastic hypothesis about two kinds of conceptual terms in early Chinese texts, one kind consisting of single independent terms that represent specific semantic values ascribed to them alone in early texts. Terms such as *de* 德 (virtue), *li* 禮 (ritual), *zheng* 政 (governance), *fa* 法 (law), *xin* 心 (heart), *dao* 道 (way), and others belong to this first kind. Although they can also be used as members of catalogues of terms and can thus contribute to a broader meaning of which they represent one aspect, their occasional role in these catalogues does not determinate their main use in early texts which is the individual representation of their own semantic value (often determined by the context but not by other conjugated terms). They might thus be defined as *individual terms*.

The second kind of conceptual key terms, which might be defined as *component terms*, rarely stand alone and occur mostly as a component in particular relationships with other terms in compounds, parallel constructions, chain arguments, clusters, or catalogues of terms. Operating as an ensemble, these terms mostly contribute either to a broader composite meaning or to a general and abstract notion that is formed by means of antithetic compositions or binary polar oppositions.[1] *Yin* 陰, *yang* 陽, *ti* 悌 (respect towards an elder brother), *chun* 春 (spring), *qiu* 秋 (autumn), *shang* 上 (above), *xia* 下 (below), *buxiao* 不肖 (unworthy), *xiaoren* 小人 (petty man), etc. belong to this kind, also *zhong* 忠 (loyalty), *lü* 律 (regulation), etc. A number of philosophical key

1 Erkes 1950; Geaney 2016.

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concepts that can be listed among the individual terms such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *yi* 義 (righteousness), *li* 禮 (ritual), *zhi* 智 (wisdom), *dao* 道 (Tao), *de* 德 (virtue), *fa* 法 (law), *li* 利 (profit), *xiao* 孝 (filial piety), *xing* 刑 (punishment), *xian* 賢 (worthy), *jun* 君 (ruler), *chen* 臣 (subject) etc. are used in both ways.

*Xin* 信 in early Chinese texts—apart from a number of derived minor meanings (such as "evidently," "truly," "indeed")—basically has two meanings: "trustworthiness/trustworthy" and "to believe." The former's verbal use is mostly intransitive and the latter is always transitive.[2] Some frequent examples of this usage in different word-classes are:

- *You xin* 有信/*wu xin* 無信: have trustworthiness or have no trustworthiness
- *Bu xin* 不信 belongs to the first meaning if it is used as an intransitive verb. It then means: to not be trustworthy. Or, used as an adjective, it describes an act of being not trustworthy.
- *Xin x* 信 *x*: have trust in x
- *Xin yu x* 信於 *x*: be trustworthy in regard to x
- *Xin* 信 *x*: to believe (in) x

A semantic relationship between the two basic meanings of *xin* can be constructed when we look at formulations like 信之 which can mean both to believe it or someone, and also to trust someone or to regard someone as trustworthy, credible, or reliable.

Yet, it appears that these two different meanings of *xin* are clearly distinguished by the way they are expressed in different literary forms of early Chinese texts. When *xin* is used in its meaning of "trustworthiness," then it is mostly used as a *component term* together with other terms, mostly in parallel constructions. When it is used in its meaning as "to believe x" then it always appears as an *individual* term.

Since *xin* in early Chinese texts is mostly used as a component term, I would like to start my analysis with examples of this component use of *xin* to demonstrate the numerous variants of literary forms which allow a range of component constructions of the term.

The character 信 with its components 亻 (*ren*: man) and 言 (*yan*: word) appears late in Chinese texts and not frequently until the Warring States period (from the fifth century BCE). Although the concept of trust is important in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, it is mainly expressed by other characters (such as *yun* 畯/允).[3] Early texts such as *Shangshu* 尚書 and *Shijing* 詩經 are thus no suitable sources to illustrate my case. Among the eleven examples of

2 For a grammatical and historical analysis of these two basic meanings see the chapter by Meisterernst in this volume.

3 Shen 2019, 311ff.; Chen 2014.

*xin* in the *Shangshu* we find a number of component usages of the term *xin*, but due to the density of this often rather elliptic text literary forms have quite different functions in different *Shangshu* chapters. The *Shijing* in turn operates so thoroughly with parallelisms that it is impossible to distinguish parallelisms that embed component terms from parallelisms using terms that primarily serve a poetic function (the relationship between poetics and argumentation in early Chinese texts still needs further exploration). It only uses the term *xin* in thirteen of its 305 odes.

After having analyzed over 130 passages from the *Zuozhuan, Lunyu, Mengzi, Xunzi, Shangjun shu, Laozi, Zhuangzi*, and *Mozi*, I have decided to present my analysis with selected examples from the *Zuozhuan* because of the great variety of its linguistic forms, including *xin* standing alone in the historical narrative in cases that will be discussed further below. I will make use of the trustworthy translation of Durrant, Li and Schaberg to avoid twisting my own translation to serve my argument and to prove my argument against an independent nuanced and reliable contextual interpretation of the term *xin* 信 in the text.

## 2 *Xin* 信 as a Member of Catalogues

*Xin* is often used as a member of catalogues that present sets of terms appearing like powerful terminological troops in a battle of arguments. In early Chinese texts, catalogues define a specific field of discourse and represent a systematic, often didactic, attempt at formulating something like a doctrine. They are self-sufficient,[4] not systematically deducted, and might therefore appear randomly chosen but nevertheless function as a closed set[5] which in each particular explanation claims to cover everything that relates to the theme. This claim of completeness is sometimes supported by adding **numbers** to the terms (which I will **bold** in the translations). Some of these

4 Jullien 1990, 8–9. For a general introduction into the variety of forms and functions of catalogues in Western literature, see Mainberger 2003; for the original Greek sense of the verb καταλέγειν which implies completeness, classification, correct sequence and truth, see Mainberger 2003, 5 and 178–179, fn 8.

5 Similar to sets that are in use today from internationally propagated Five Taekwon-Do Tenets: Courtesy-Integrity-Perseverance-Self Control-Indomitable Spirit down to the local five School values of James Gillespie's High School in Edinburgh: Respect-Equality-Inclusion-Honesty-High aspirations.

catalogues, especially the numbered ones, require further explanations in the texts. Although many of these terminological sets do not appear anywhere else in the received literature, they assemble terms that obviously belong to a common discourse that is also echoed in other early texts.[6] Many of the terms seem to belong to a repertoire of conceptual terms which are combined in different constellations in various argumentative contexts. *Xin* belongs to such a repertoire.[7] It is combined with a range of different terms as we will see and is used to support a broad spectrum of arguments of the various schools of thought in early China. Accordingly, its meaning moves through a panoply of subtle nuances.

### 2.1 *Catalogues of Two:*
春秋左傳: 桓公六年 Lord Huan 6.2b

| | |
|---|---|
| 所謂道， | What is meant by being 'in accord with the Way' is |
| a 忠於民而 | being *devoted* to the people and |
| b 信於神也， | being *faithful* to the spirits. |
| a 上思利民，忠也 | When the superiors deliberate how to benefit the people, this is *devotion*, |
| b 祝史正辭，信也 | when the invocators and scribes make their wording upright, this is *faithfulness*. |
| 今 | As to the situation here and now, |
| a 民餒而君逞欲， | the people are starving while you, my lord, indulge your desires; |
| b 祝史矯舉以祭， | the invocators and scribes feign support in sacrifices. |
| 臣不知其可也。 | I, your servant, don't know how this can be acceptable.[8] |

6 For further details on catalogues in early Chinese texts, see my analysis of a set of catalogues in the Tsinghua manuscript "Tang zai Chi Men 湯在啻門," in Gentz 2019.

7 My usage of the term "repertoire" here has been inspired by its use in Seiwert and Ma (2003, 489–494) in their model for Chinese sectarian religions. For "repertoire" as a broader cultural studies term, see Hannerz (1969, 186–188), quoted by Swidler (1986, 277) who famously has interpreted it as a cultural "tool kit." See also the critical reflection on that concept in Silber 2003.

8 Here and in the following passages I follow in my translations the excellent translation by Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016 (here p. 97) with my own amendments as appropriate, especially when translating *xin*.

春秋左傳: 僖公七年 Lord Xi 7.3

| | |
|---|---|
| 管仲曰， | Guan Zhong said, |
| 君以禮與信屬諸侯， | "For you, my lord, to have assembled the regional lords through *ritual propriety* and *reliability* |
| 而以姦終之， | and then to end this with treachery, |
| 無乃不可乎？ | would this not be wrong? |
| 子父不奸之謂禮， | We call it *ritual propriety* when a father and son do not betray each other. |
| 守命共時之謂信， | We call it *reliability* when the commands are kept and when seasonal tributes are furnished. |
| 違此二者，姦莫大焉。 | There is no greater treachery than violating these **two** principles."[9] |

## 2.2 *Catalogues of Three:*

春秋左傳: 僖公二十八年 Lord Xi 28.12

| | |
|---|---|
| 且合諸侯而滅兄弟， | 非禮也， |
| 與衛偕命，而不與偕復， | 非信也， |
| 同罪異罰， | 非刑也， |
| 禮以行義， | |
| 信以守禮， | |
| 刑以正邪， | |
| 舍此三者，君將若之何? | |

Moreover, you assembled the regional lords and extinguished a fraternal domain;
this was not in accordance with *ritual propriety*.
[Cao] shared the same orders as Wei, but [Cao] did not share in the same fate of being restored;
this runs contrary to the *principles of dependability*.
The same crime had different penalties;
this runs contrary to *proper punishment*.
With *ritual propriety* we carry on duty,
with *dependability* we preserve ritual propriety,
with *proper punishment* we correct depravity.
Having let these **three** things go, what will you, my lord, do?[10]

9 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 287.
10 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 429.

春秋左傳：僖公二十七年 Lord Xi 27.4c

子犯曰，民未知義，未安其居，於是乎出定襄王，入務利民，民懷生矣。將用之，
子犯曰，民未知信，未宣其用，於是乎伐原以示之信，民易資者，不求豐焉，明徵其辭，公曰，可矣乎，
子犯曰，民未知禮，未生其共，於是乎大蒐以示之禮，作執秩以正其官，民聽不惑，而後用之。

Zi Fan said: "The people do not yet understand their *duty*, and they are not yet peacefully settled in their abodes." So it was that he left Jin to stabilize the position of King Xiang, then came back to the domain and strove to benefit the people, and the people cherished their livelihood. When the lord was about to put them to use as soldiers,

Zi Fan said: "The people do not yet understand *trustworthiness*, and they have not yet demonstrated that they can be put to use." So it was that he attacked Yuan to show them an example of trustworthiness. The people who traded goods did not seek undue profits from this and openly stood by their words. The lord said, "Can we act yet?"

Zi Fan said: "The people do not yet know *ritual propriety*, and they have not yet developed respect." So it was that he organized the great spring hunt to show them an example of ritual and established the keeper of ranks to put in order his officials. The people could then heed his commands and not be deluded, and it was only then that he put them to use.[11]

春秋左傳：桓公十三年 Lord Huan 13.1

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 其謂君 | He said that you, my lord, | |
| 撫小民以信， | should soothe the common people | with *trustworthiness* |
| 訓諸司以德 而 | provide a model for the overseers | with *exemplary virtue* and |
| 威莫敖以刑 也 | overawe the maréchal | with *punishments*.[12] |

11 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 405.

12 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 119.

春秋左傳: 莊公十年 Lord Zhuang 10.1

公曰，衣食所安，弗敢專也，必以分人。對曰，小惠未遍，民弗從也，
公曰，犧牲玉帛，弗敢加也，必以信。　對曰，小信未孚，神弗福也，
公曰，小大之獄，雖不能察，必以情。　對曰，忠之屬也，可以一戰。

Our lord said, "Of the things I take comfort in wearing and eating, I do not venture to keep all for myself but
am sure to *share* with others."
[Gui] responded, "Such small *kindnesses* do not yet reach all. The people will not follow you for this."
Our lord said, "In regard to sacrificial animals and ceremonial jades and silks, I do not venture to exaggerate and
am sure to rely on *credibility*."
[Gui] responded, "Such small *credibility* does not yet cover all. The spirits will not bless you for this."
Our lord said, "In both small and large legal cases, even when I am unable to investigate thoroughly, I
am sure to rely on the *actual circumstances*."
[Gui] responded, "This counts as a kind of *integrity*—with it you may indeed engage in battle."[13]

### 2.3 *Catalogues of Four:*

春秋左傳: 僖公二十四年 Lord Xi 24.2b

A 庸勳，　B 親親，　C 暱，　D 近尊賢，　德之大者也。
a 即聾，　b 從昧，　c 與頑，　d 用鬲，　姦之大者也，
棄德崇姦，　禍之大者也。

A 鄭有平惠之勳，B 又有厲宣之親，C 棄嬖寵而用三良，D 於諸姬為近，
四德具矣，

a 耳不聽五聲之和為聾，
b 目不別五色之章為昧，
c 心不則德義之經為頑，
d 口不道忠信之言為鬲，
狄皆則之，　四姦具矣。

13 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 161.

A To assist meritoriously, B to draw close to kinsmen, C to trust close advisers, and D to be close to the worthy,
these are great acts of virtue.
a To ally oneself with the deaf, b to follow the blind, c to associate with the wayward, and d to employ the perfidious,
these are great acts of iniquity.
To reject virtue and esteem iniquity, this is the greatest of disasters.
A Zheng has the merit of having assisted Kings Ping and Hui.
B They also had a close relationship with Kings Li and Xuan.
C They rejected toadies and favorites and employed the three talented men.
D Among the various domains of the Ji clan, they have been the closest to Zhou.
These **four** virtuous qualities are all present in them!
a When the ear does not hear the harmony of the *five sounds*, it is deafness.
b When the eye does not distinguish the resplendence of the *five colors*, it is blindness.
c When the heart does not take as model the principles of *virtue and duty*, it is waywardness.
d When the mouth does not speak words of *loyalty and trustworthiness*, it is perfidy.
In all cases the Di take these as models. These **four** iniquities are all present in them.[14]

### 2.4 *Catalogues of Five:*
春秋左傳: 桓公六年 Lord Huan 6.6

名有五， Names are of **five** types:
有信， *tokens of trust*
有義， *meanings*,
有象， *resemblances*,
有假， *borrowings*,
有類， *analogous kinds*.
以名生為信， Being born with a name is a *token of trust*.
以德名為義， Being named according to some personal virtue is *meaning*.

14 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 383.

以類命為象， Being named according to some similarity is *resemblance*.
取於物為假， When a name is taken from a thing, it is a *borrowing*.
取於父為類 When a name is taken from the father, it is of an *analogous kind*.[15]

### 2.5 *Catalogues of Six:* 春秋左傳：成公十六年 Lord Cheng 16.5b

德，刑，詳，義，禮，信，戰之器也，
*Virtue*, *punishment*, *circumspection*, *righteousness*, *ritual*, *trustworthiness*: these are the instruments of battle.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 德以施惠， | *Virtue* is | for | extending beneficence; |
| 刑以正邪， | *punishment*, | for | correcting deviance; |
| 詳以事神， | *circumspection*, | for | serving the spirits; |
| 義以建利， | *righteousness*, | for | establishing advantage; |
| 禮以順時， | *ritual*, | for | according with the times; |
| 信以守物。 | *trustworthiness*, | for | guarding all things.[16] |

These examples show that the typical *Zuozhuan* repertoire of terms that are combined in different constellations with *xin* 信 as members of catalogues are *loyalty* 忠, *ritual* 禮, *righteousness* 義, *punishment* 刑, and *virtue* 德. The meaning of the term *xin* is determined by its relationship to these other terms (and in turn determines the other terms' meanings). It covers the semantic field of reliability, faithfulness, dependability, token of trust, trustworthiness, and credibility, and while these notions are semantically close their discursive contexts vary strongly and ascribe different functions to them.

## 3 *Xin* 信 in Argumentative Chains

Argumentative chains claim causal relationships between concepts and thus structure a discursive field in a slightly different way than catalogues which have a more authoritative encyclopedic and hierarchical approach. Many of the terms used in argumentative chains belong to the same repertoire as the terms used in catalogues. Again, *xin* is one of these terms which we find often as a member of such argumentative chains.

15 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 101.
16 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 829.

春秋左傳：成公二年 Lord Cheng 2.2

名以出信，
　信以守器，
　　器以藏禮，
　　禮以行義，
　　義以生利，
　　利以平民，政之大節也。

*Designations* are for bringing forth *confidence*;
　*confidence* is for guarding *ritual* ob*jects*;
　　*ritual objects* are for embodying *ritual propriety*;
　　*ritual propriety* is for carrying out *righteousness*;
　　*righteousness* is for producing *benefit*;
　　*benefit* is for appeasing the people.
These are the great principles of government.[17]

春秋左傳：成公十五年 Lord Cheng 15.3

信以守禮。
　禮以庇身。

*Trustworthiness* serves to protect *ritual propriety*,
　*ritual propriety* serves to protect *one's person*.[18]

春秋左傳：襄公二十七年 Lord Xiang 27.4c

志以發言。
　言以出信。
　　信以立志。

參以定之。信亡何以及三。

*Ambition* is to be expressed through *words*,
　*words* are for bringing forth *credibility*,
　　and *credibility* is for establishing *ambition*.
These **three** things are intertwined, sustaining and stabilizing each other. If *credibility* is lost, how can he last three years?[19]

17 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 713.
18 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 819.
19 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 1197.

The different functions of *xin* in different sets of terms is even more evident in argumentative contexts in which *xin* operates as cause and effect in causal chains like in the examples above. The exact meaning in these lines of reasoning is often difficult to determine because the exact relevant discursive contexts in response to which these terminological connections are constructed are mostly missing.

## 4 Relational Meaning

*Xin* might also appear as a component in a relationship constructed between two concepts when it forms an implicit part of another concept and thus defines the meaning of this other concept, for example in a conditional way as in the following examples.

春秋左傳: 桓公十二年/隱公三年 Lord Yin 3.3/Huan 12.2

君子曰，信不由中，質無益也。
君子曰，苟信不繼，盟無益也。

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The noble man said: | "If *trustworthiness* does not spring from within, then | *hostages* are of no benefit."[20] |
| The noble man said: | "When *trustworthiness* is not sustained, then | *covenants* are of no benefit."[21] |

## 5 Singular Usages of *xin* 信

In early Chinese texts there are two basic ways to use terms individually. Terms are either used in a colloquial way or they are exposed as conceptual terms, discussed, commented, and defined.

In the *Lunyu* we can find a set of key terms that are discussed and defined as singular conceptual terms. In numerous instances, disciples ask Confucius about the meaning of these specific terms such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence)[22] (but never *yi* 義!), *xiao* 孝 (filial piety), *zheng* 政 (governance), *li* 禮 (ritual), etc.[23] *Xin* is marginal in these discussions and only appears as a component term in

20 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 25.

21 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 117.

22 A critical analysis of the many meanings of *ren* 仁 in the *Lunyu* can be found in Gentz 2018, 118–122.

23 *Lunyu* 孝: 2.5–8, 2.13; 仁: 6.22, 12.1–3, 12.22, 13.19, 17.6; 政: 12.7, 12.11, 12.14, 12.17, 12.19, 13.1, 13.2, 13.16, 13.17; 君子: 2.13, 12.4, 14.42; 禮: 3.4; 知: 6.22; 明: 12.6; 友: 12.23 etc.

the *Lunyu*. This low conceptual profile of *xin* is also reflected in the absence of this term in dictionaries of Chinese philosophical terms starting with the *Beixi ziyi* 北溪字義, written by Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159–1223),[24] where it only appears as a component term in the compound *zhongxin* 忠信 (loyalty and fidelity). We do not find it among the 64 terms in Zhang Dainian's 張岱年 (1909–2004) *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*.[25] Cua's *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* does not even include the term in its index,[26] and Wu Yi also decided not to include it in his book on fifty *Chinese Philosophical Terms*.[27] If it is discussed at all then it is mainly discussed together with other terms, always as a component term, like in the first *History of Chinese Philosophy* (1916) by Xie Wuliang 謝无量 (1884–1964), where it is only discussed in passing as a compound term to *zhong* 忠,[28] and up to Hall and Ames's *Thinking Through Confucius* and other texts.[29] Even in the recently published *History of Chinese Philosophy Through Its Key Terms*, in which *xin* 信 is included as one of thirty-eight terms (fourteen single terms and twenty-four combined terms), it is mostly discussed in relation to other terms. The authors, who mainly list different meanings of the term in different textual contexts, claim that it was "extensively employed as a stand-alone concept" during the Chunqiu period (770–476 BCE), but do not provide any evidence for this.[30] Historical research into the origin of the character also does not support this claim.[31] For the *Zuozhuan*, for which the authors provide references, they write that it served a supplementary role to other moral concepts.[32] It is very difficult to imagine a text titled *The Classic of Fidelity, Xinjing* 信經, in early China, but one text among the Guodian manuscripts which in a strictly symmetric manner deals with the two concepts *zhong* 忠 (loyalty) and *xin* 信 (trustworthiness) has been titled *Zhongxin zhi dao* 忠信之道 (The Way of Loyalty and Fidelity) by its modern editors.

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24 Chan 1986.

25 Zhang 1989. This work was first written as *Zhongguo zhexue dagang: Zhongguo zhexue wenti shi* 中國哲學大綱: 中國哲學問題史 in 1936, and published in censored form in 1958 with Shanghai Shangwu yinshuguan. It was published in its original form by Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1982, repr. as *Zhongguo gudian zhexue gainian fanchou yaolun* 中国古典哲学概念范畴要论 (Beijing: Academy of Social Sciences, 1989). English translation by Edmund Ryden (Zhang, Ryden 2002).

26 Cua 2003.

27 Wu 1986.

28 Xie 1916, 71–72.

29 Hall and Ames 1987, 56–62.

30 Wang et al. 2020, 117.

31 Shen 2019.

32 Wang et al 2020, 117–118.

In early Chinese texts, *xin* is almost never used as a singular conceptual term. When used as an individual term we only find it in colloquial usages in all of its basic meanings.

春秋左傳: 莊公八年 Lord Zhuang 8.3

> 費曰，我奚御哉，袒而示之背，信之。
>
> Bi said: "Why should I stop you?" When he pulled down his robe and showed them his back, they *trusted* him.[33]

春秋左傳: 僖公三十三年 Lord Xi 33.10

> 子上欲涉。大孫伯曰。不可。晉人無信。半涉而薄我。
>
> Zi Shang (Dou Bo) wanted to cross the river but Da Sun Bo (Cheng Daxin) said: "This is not possible. The people of Jin have no *trustworthiness*, once we would have halfway crossed the river they would attack us."[34]

## 6 Conclusion

Analyzing the usage of *xin* 信 in early Chinese texts, I have distinguished three different conceptual registers of terms in these texts. First, single conceptual terms that are explicitly discussed and for which explanative definitions are provided. Discussions of such terms often take the literary form of dialogues in which someone asks about the meaning of a term and some master provides comments and definitions of the term, like in the *Lunyu*, the *Mengzi*, and other texts. In these instances, we have to distinguish definitions of concepts from commentarial explanations of contextual usages of terms as we find them in the *Gongyang* and *Guliang Commentaries* and other texts that comprise

33 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 155.

34 See Durrant, Li, Schaberg 2016, 455. Here 半涉而薄我 (once we would have halfway crossed the river they would attack us) is an explanation of 無信 (have no *trustworthiness*); it specifies that the people of Jin cannot be trusted to respect the ritual rules of warfare which do not allow to attack an enemy while crossing a river. See the famous discussion on this in the commentaries to *Chunqiu* Xi 22.4, which discuss the battle at the Hong river when Duke Xiang of Song against the advice of his military leaders refuses to attack the Chu army before they completed crossing the Hong river, forming their ranks and being properly marshalled; the result of this ritually correct behaviour is a complete defeat. In the later part of the *Zuozhuan*, the term *xin* is used more often with similar formulations *wuxin* 無信 or *bu xin* 不信 to describe states' or persons' trustworthiness or rather untrustworthiness, often in the context of keeping covenants (*meng* 盟).

"hidden" commentarial passages such as the *Guanzi*, the *Liji*, etc.[35] Such conceptual terms can be regarded as central keywords in early Chinese philosophical and political discourses and they play a central role and carry much weight in the analytical language of their systematic doctrinal discussions. I have not found any instance where *xin* is used on this conceptual level. When it is used as an individual term, it does not have a conceptual meaning; when it is used as a conceptual term, it is always used together with other terms as a component term.

Second, terms that are used as component terms in compounds or wider sets of terms which can be presented in different literary forms such as catalogues, chain arguments, word pairs, or parallelisms, etc. These terms often belong to an analytical repertoire that is semantically flexible and can be used in varying argumentative contexts. They function as building blocks in particular kinds of arguments that often use the catalogue form to claim systematic completeness and didactic guidance and to provide mnemonic support. These catalogues are often further formalized and marked as discursive units by adding numbers to them.

Three conclusions have been drawn for the term *xin* in this second register. First, *xin* is frequently used as component term. Second, *xin* is only used as component term in its meaning of trustworthiness, not in its meaning of belief. The notion of belief thus never has a conceptual meaning when expressed by the term *xin* in early Chinese texts. Third, in contrast to terms such as *ren* 仁 (benevolence), *li* 禮 (ritual), etc., it has no independent ethical value of its own, because when it is used as an individual term it is always used in a colloquial mode. Its ethical value is always relational and can only be explained within a wider conceptual context. When used conceptually, *xin* operates always as a companion, not as a solo performer. When used alone, it is usually not used conceptually but in a colloquial meaning. Here lies another important difference between *xin* and other terms of its companion repertoire which have an independent ethical value of their own (such as *li* 禮, *ren* 仁, or *de* 德). Some of these terms do not have this other layer of a colloquial meaning.[36] So when it comes to *xin*, the usage of this term as a component term has to be taken as a linguistic marker of its semantic value. Early Chinese texts do not use the term *xin* alone when they discuss trustworthiness or fidelity outside of a pragmatic descriptive context in a more abstract conceptual ethical

35 Röllicke 1995.

36 In this respect, early Chinese is not different from modern English: we can't use the term "benevolent" in the same colloquial way as the term "to believe." It is uncommon to say: "he is a real benevolent guy" or "she's so filial," etc. The same applies to *ren* 仁 in early Chinese texts, it is typically not used in a colloquial register.

discourse. In its abstract conceptual application, the term is always paired with some other term or terms which indicate the ethical register and form either binominal compounds like *zhongxin* 忠信 (loyalty and fidelity) or *chengxin* 誠信 (uprightness and fidelity), or it is embedded in parallelisms, catalogues, or chains in which the other terms indicate the particular semantic connotation of *xin*.

In contrast to many other component terms, *xin*'s related counterparts vary and are not fixed. The term is thus neither fully independent nor part of an independent binary unit of a fixed compound. *Xin* appears as a term that gains its meaning in its relationship to particular contexts, it functions as a term that creates semantic connotations rather than fully independent semantic fields. It might be described as a semantically light term that rarely carries the whole weight of its semantic value, but is used as a component term that shares its semantic value with others and mostly contributes to a meaning that lies beyond itself.

The third register is the colloquial usage of terms as part of everyday language with no indication that terms carry much conceptual weight as analytical terms. On this level, *xin* is used in all its meanings.

One of the relevant conclusions for this volume on *xin* is obviously that we do not find any evidence that the term *xin* was used as a conceptual term in its meaning of "belief" in early Chinese texts up to, and probably including, Early Han times. A component usage of this meaning as we find it in European reformational three or five *solae*, such as "sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide" ("by Scripture alone, by Grace alone, through Faith alone") would thus be very unlikely to have ever been conceptualized for *xin* in the meaning of belief/faith at that early stage. Like in Ancient Rome, conceptual *xin* in the religious realm is always related to the correct and reliable performance of rituals and prayers, not to true faith, in early Chinese texts.

I have only found one example so far which might indicate some kind of a more conceptual reflection on belief in spirits and ghosts, and it comes, of course, from the rather unique "Ming gui xia 明鬼下" (Providing Evidence for Ghosts II) chapter 31 of the *Mozi* 墨子 and is interesting for various reasons:

> 墨子: 明鬼下
> ...由此始，是以天下亂．此其故何以然也？
> 則
> 皆以疑惑鬼神之有與無之別，
> 不明乎鬼神之能賞賢而罰暴也．
> 今若使天下之人，
> 偕若信鬼神之能賞賢而罰暴也，
> 則夫天下豈亂哉！

> … starting from this, therefore, the world was in disorder. What was the reason for this being so? It was in all cases that there was *doubt* about the existence or non-existence of spirits and ghosts and no *understanding* of the spirits' and ghosts' ability to reward worthies and punish brutes. Now if the people in the world could be brought to completely comply with *believing* in the spirits' and ghosts' ability to reward worthies and punish brutes, then how could the world be in disorder!

Here, we might see some conceptualization of the term *xin* (believing) through the loose parallel composition which contrasts it with *yihuo* 疑惑 (doubt). But it is not a strong conceptual discussion of the term or the concept of belief in sprits and ghosts. Since the parallel is not strict in a formal sense (the formal parallel to *xin* 信 [believing] here is *ming* 明 [understanding], not *yihuo* 疑惑 [doubt]),[37] we should probably regard *xin* here more in its isolated form and thus belonging to the colloquial usage. Believing in gods, ghosts, and spirits (or more exactly here: their ability to reward and punish) is dealt with linguistically like believing any other things: it is not regarded as a concept and it does not carry any ethical connotations, so *xin guishen* 信鬼神 belongs to the personal choice of believing something or not; it is nothing that you ought to do; it is not a necessary trait of a good person; it is not part of a normative discourse or any more systematic or doctrinal discussion. This reading is thus also in line with the conclusions from my linguistic analysis of the term *xin* above.

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37 That the concept of *ming* 明 (understanding based on evidence) in the discussion on ghosts and spirits was probably more central than *xin* might be inferred from another similar texts from the Shanghai Museum manuscript collection titled *Guishen zhi ming* 鬼神之明 (Evidence of Ghosts and Demons). See a discussion in Gentz 2018, 127–128.

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CHAPTER 4

# A Linguistic Analysis of the Different Functions of *xin* 信 and Their Historical Development from Late Archaic to Middle Chinese

*Barbara Meisterernst*

## 1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the different linguistic functions of *xìn* 信 and their diachronic development from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese. The diachronic analysis of *xìn* reveals that it is not confined to the expression of trustworthiness between persons of equal social standings in the archaic literature (represented by Ex. (1)), which is its predominant meaning within the Confucian concepts of human relations.

(1) 不信於友，弗獲於上矣； *Mengzi* 4.1.12
*bù xìn yú yǒu, fú huò yú shàng yǐ*
NEG trustworthy PREP friend, $\text{NEG}_{\text{tr}}$ gain PREP superior SFP
"If he is not trusted by his friends, then he cannot gain [confidence] from his superior."

According to Xu Shen's 許慎 *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Discussing Writing and Explaining Characters) (1519 言部), the meaning of *xìn* is *chéng* 誠 "sincere, really, actually": *xìn, chéng yě. Cóng rén cóng yán. Huìyì.* 信，誠也。从人从言。會意. It consists of the character writing *rén* "human being" and the character writing *yán* "word, speak"; it belongs to the category of *huìyì* "joining sense" of the *liù shū*.[1] Bottéro[2] has described these characters as ideograms because of their function of "associating ideas." According to Bottéro and Harbsmeier,[3] Xu Shen's dictionary is interested in the structure of graphs, i.e., in the *graphemic* characteristics of the respective characters and not in their occurrence in context, the main interest of the commentarial tradition Xu

1 For another reading of this passage, see Max Deeg's chapter in the present volume.
2 Bottéro 1996, 22.
3 Harbsmeier 2008.

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Shen built on. Thus, the character 信 consists of two *graphemes* representing the ideas of "human being" and of "word, speak," respectively.[4]

Schuessler[5] gives a *qùshēng* 去聲 reading for Late Han Chinese, *sin*$^{C}$, but reconstructs an Old Chinese reading (OCM) in the *píngshēng* 平聲 **sin*, because of *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Songs) rhymes that indicate OC tone A. Baxter reconstructs the Old Chinese reading with an **-s* suffix **snins*, a reading which would result in a *qùshēng* (cf. Schuessler). The readings provided in Schuessler and Baxter point to the possibility of two cognates written with the character 信, one in the *píngshēng* reading, and a derived one with an **-s* suffix that resulted in the *qùshēng* reading.[6] Different functions have been attributed to this reconstructed **-s* suffix; these were consolidated into two different basic functions in recent research,[7] i.e., a causative function and an aspectual function. Schuessler gives the following meanings of *xìn*: "to believe, trust, faithfulness, truth" [Shi] > "something written entrusted to an envoy" 書信 "letter" (Six Dynasties).[8] The glosses provided by Schuessler indicate the employment of *xìn* as a transitive verb "to believe," and as a noun; Schuessler does not seem to imply a distinction by affixation between verb and noun. Additionally, Example (1) represents *xìn*'s function as a stative verb, an adjective. In Late Archaic Chinese *xìn* is also attested as the modal adverb "indeed, truly," syntactically and semantically comparable to *chéng* 誠 "sincerely, really."

In order to trace the linguistic origins of the different meanings *xìn* could assume within its history, I will lay particular focus in the ensuing discussion on the kinds of arguments, e.g., [+/– HUMAN], *xìn* selects. The features of *xìn*'s arguments are of particular interest when it comes to the range of beliefs *xìn* can express from Archaic Chinese up to Modern times. In the context of this

4 However, this does not imply that the label *ideogram* (or *ideograph*) applies to Chinese characters in general. Boltz (1999) argues strongly against a classification of the Chinese writing system as ideographic, a classification based on the early conception of the Chinese writing system by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: "[A]n ideograph ought to mean a graph that writes an idea. But such a graph, whatever it may be, cannot be a kind of writing, Chinese or otherwise …" (Boltz 1999, 112). Bottéro and Harbsmeier support Boltz's analysis in noting: "The fact that the Chinese writing system was very far from being a conceptually based writing system in Leibniz's sense comes out very clearly in Shuowen." Bottéro and Harbsmeier 2008, 262.

5 Schuessler 2007, 539.

6 This was first proposed by Haudricourt (1954) on the basis of Chinese loanwords in Vietnamese.

7 Jin Lixin 2006.

8 *Xìn* is also attested as a loan writing for a different word, *shēn* 伸, cognate of *yǐn* 引, OCM *lhin "stretch, prolongue, continue, repeat" [Shi], "extend" [Li] > "straighten"; a third meaning is "be staying one more night, staying two nights" [Shi] Karlgren *GSR* 384 (Schuessler 2007). This is unrelated to the present discussion.

volume, both everyday usages and usages in religious contexts are of interest. Accordingly, I have included a wide range of texts in the data research, including texts from early Buddhist literature. In Buddhist Chinese, *xìn* is employed to express Buddhist faith, and—in different coordinative structures—terms such as "confidence," but also "strength of faith." The only texts chosen to represent the Early Archaic period are the *Shijing* 詩經 and the early parts of the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of Documents). Late Archaic Chinese is defined as the period from the fifth to the third c. BCE. Due to numerous grammatical changes in texts such as the *Shiji* 史記 (The Grand Scribe's Records), I consider the Western Han period as the starting point of the Early Middle Chinese period. The Buddhist texts included in this study range from the Eastern Han period (second c. CE) up to the sixth c. CE. Additionally, *xìn* is discussed briefly in an Early Medieval Daoist text. I have adopted my translations for the Early Archaic and Late Archaic examples from those made available in the Thesaurus Linguae Sericae (https://hxwd.org/index.html, henceforth TLS) when they seemed to adequately represent my analysis. All unmarked translations are my own.

## 2 The Different Grammatical Functions of *xìn* 信 from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese

The nominal and verbal functions (transitive or intransitive) of *xìn* expressing belief are already attested in Early Archaic literature. The function as a stative verb in the meaning "trustworthy, reliable," which became the predominant meaning in Confucian ethics, is also attested with a small number of examples in the *Shijing*. In the early literature, *xìn* is not attested as an adverb; the earliest instances date from the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo's Commentary).

### 2.1 *Verbal xìn* 信 *from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese*

The earliest instances of verbal *xìn* in the transmitted literature are attested in the *Shijing*, where it appears as an unaccusative intransitive and as a transitive mental attitude verb;[9] these two functions are contrasted in Example (2).

(2) 終鮮兄弟，維予二人。無信人之言，人實不信。 *Shi* 92.2
*Zhōng xiǎn xiōngdì, wéi yǔ èr rén. Wú xìn rén zhī*
Indeed few brothers, only I two man. $\text{NEG}_{\text{mod}}$ believe man GEN
*yán, rén shí bù xìn*
word, man certainly NEG believable

9 This term is an adaption of the term "Emotional Attitude Verb" proposed in Cheung and Larson (2015: 184) for verbs such as "think," "believe," and "fear."

> "Few indeed are we brothers, there are only we two; do not believe people's talk, people are truly not to be believed." (translation TLS)

An unaccusative verb is characterized by a theme subject, i.e., the internal argument (direct object) appears in the subject position: "X is believed >> can be believed, is reliable, trustworthy." A transitive mental attitude verb is generally characterized by a non-theme subject and a theme object: X believes Y. Mental attitude verbs are to a great extent similar to psych verbs, such as "fear." The semantic role of the subject of these verbs is frequently classified as "experiencer."[10] Cheung and Larson[11] have proposed the term "cognitive agent," "someone holding a certain stance or an attitude toward a proposition," for psych and mental attitude verbs including the Modern Mandarin equivalent of *xìn*, *xiāngxìn* 相信, because "individuals do not, as normally described, 'experience' thought and belief."[12] They have classified the Mandarin equivalent of *xìn*, *xiāngxìn*, as an Experiencer Subject Psych verb. Such verbs are characterized by the fact that they can be constructed with clausal complements. Cheung and Larson[13] argue that the objects of these verbs are actually not theme arguments: "[R]ather they are arguments of a separate thematic domain within a concealed complement clause." Cheung and Larson claim that even simple nominal complements of these verbs have an underlying clausal structure. An example of this would be:

(3) a. Zhangsan pa/danxin [Lisi hui da ta]
"Zhangsan fears/is worried that Lisi will hit him."
b. Zhangsan pa/danxin Lisi.
"Zhangsan fears/is worried about Lisi."[14]

Another feature of these verbs is that they are intensional, meaning that the proposition is true even if the object is non-denoting. This would imply that the sentence "I believe in vampires" is true, although vampires do not exist in the real world. Additionally, these verbs do not allow passivization.[15] They provide the following example for *xiāngxìn*, in which passivization is infelicitous:

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10 Cheung and Larson (2015, 181f) distinguish between Experiencer Subject Psych verbs, such as "fear," and Experiencer Object Psych verbs, such as "frighten." *Xìn* evidently belongs to the former class of Subject Experiencer Psych verbs.

11 Cheung and Larson 2015, 184,

12 Ibid.

13 Cheung and Larson 2015, 148.

14 Cf. Cheung and Larson 2015, 133.

15 Cheung and Larson 2015, 138.

(4) a. Lisi xiangxin Zhangsan [yiding hui chenggong]
"Lisi[16] believes Zhangsan will definitely succeed."
b. *Zhangsan bei Lisi xiangxin [yiding hui chenggong.]
"Zhangsan is believed by Lisi that he will definitely succeed."

The mental attitude verb *xìn* in Archaic and Early Middle Chinese seems to belong to the same category as the modern Chinese *xiāngxìn*, despite some obvious differences. The most conspicuous difference is that *xìn*, unlike *xiāngxìn*, allows passivization. The features *xìn* shares with the verbs discussed as Experiencer Subject Psych verbs in Cheung and Larson are that it also seems to be intensional, and that the underlying structure of the complement of *xìn* may very well be clausal: "believe that NP predicate." However, overt clausal complements first seem to occur to the end of the Late Archaic period.

In the following section, I will discuss some instances of *xìn* with particular regard to its argument structure. In Example (2), repeated as (5) from the *Shijing*, the internal argument of *xìn* appears in the object position in the first clause; in the second clause, it appears in the subject position in an intransitive unaccusative construction. Both subjects are [+HUMAN]; in the first instance the object is [–HUMAN], but related to humaneness. A [+HUMAN] experiencer or cognitive agent is the default case for mental attitude verbs. The unaccusative verb phrase is negated by *bù* 不; this is the typical negative marker for intransitive, unaccusative verbs and adjectives in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions[17] and Early Archaic Chinese. Although *bù* regularly appears with intransitive verbs, it is not confined to them. In Example (6), which is of the same structure as the unaccusative verb phrase in (5), the internal argument in subject position is [–HUMAN]. In Example (7), the subject is a non-theme [+HUMAN] second-person subject, i.e., a cognitive agent (or experiencer) typical for mental attitude and psych verbs in a deontic context, i.e., in a demand. The term "cognitive agent" is certainly more appropriate for verbs of belief, because they might be higher on an agentivity spine than a typical psych verb such as "fear." This implies that a cognitive agent is more agentive and more in control of the situation than the subject of a verb such as "fear." Karlgren translates *xìn* in (7) as a transitive verb; *bù* probably functions as a variant of *fú* 弗 in this case, which marks the verb as transitive. In Example (8), *xìn* is explicitly

16 I have changed the original citation because the names were confused in the translation.
17 Zhang Yujin 2002, 42f.

marked as transitive by *fú*, the negative marker for transitive verbs in OBI and in EAC;[18] both the experiencer subject and the theme are [+HUMAN].[19] In Example (9), *xìn* appears as a transitive verb with an overt object in a rather informal non-normative reading; the object is [–HUMAN].

(5=2) 終鮮兄弟，維予二人。無信人之言，人實不信。 *Shi* 92.2
*Zhōng xiǎn xiōngdì, wéi yǔ èr rén. Wú xìn rén*
Indeed few brothers, only I two man. $\text{NEG}_{\text{mod}}$ believe man
*zhī yán, rén shí bù xìn*
GEN word, man certainly NEG believable
"Few indeed are we brothers, there are only we two; do not believe people's talk, people are truly not to be believed." (translation TLS)

(6) 如何昊天，辟言不信？ *Shi* 194.3
*Rú hé hào tiān, bì yán bù xìn*
Be.like what brilliant heaven, ruler word NEG believable
"How is it, great Heaven, the words of the rulers are not reliable?" (translation TLS)

(7) 予其大賚汝。爾無不信。 *Shu* 10.4
*Yǔ qí dà lài rǔ, ěr wú bù xìn*
I MOD great bestow.gift you, you $\text{NEG}_{\text{mod}}$ NEG believe
"I will then greatly reward you. May there be none of you who do not believe me." (Karlgren, cf. TLS)

(8) 弗躬弗親，庶民弗信； *Shi* 191.4
*Fú gōng fú qīn, shù mín*
NEG make.person NEG intimately.approach, numerous people
*fú xìn*
NEG believe, …
"You do not appear in person, you do not act yourself, the people do not trust (you);" (translation TLS)

18 Djamouri 1991; Zhang Yujin 2002.

19 Traditional translations have been added when they reflect the meaning indicated by the glosses. All unmarked translations are mine.

(9) 秦貪我賂，而信我辭，則一劍之任，可當百萬之師；*Yan Danzi* (Prince Dan von Yan, late LAC)
*Qín tān wǒ lù, ér xìn wǒ cí, zé yī jiàn*
Qin crave I present CON believe I word, then one sword
*zhī rèn, kě dāng bǎi wàn*
GEN employment, can correspond hundred ten-thousand
*zhī shī*
GEN army
"If Qin craves our presents and believes my words, then the employment of one single sword can correspond to an army of a million soldiers."

In the examples in (10), the complement of *xìn* is [–HUMAN]. Since *zuì* "guilt" usually appears as the complement of the existential verbs *yǒu* 有 "have" and *wú* 無 "not have," an analysis of the complement as a nominalized verb phrase is not possible. The case is different in (10b), where the complement of *xìn* can be analyzed as an embedded complement clause, marked for nominalization by *zhī* 之. In both examples in (11), the complement is clausal; in (a) the unexpressed subject of the clausal complement is [+HUMAN], and in (b) the overt subject of the clausal complement is [–HUMAN]. (11b) is also a good example for the intensional reading of the mental attitude verb *xìn*, meaning that the proposition can be true, although the internal argument does not denote anything in the real world.

(10) a. 信罪之有無，繾綣從公，無通外內！ *Zuozhuan, Zhao* 25
*Xìn zuì zhī yǒu wú, qiǎnquǎn cóng gōng,*
Trust guilt GEN have not.have, inseparably follow duke,
*wú tōng wài nèi*
$\text{NEG}_{\text{mod}}$ communicate outside inside
"We clarify (cause to be believable), where there is guilt and where is not; inseparably we follow the duke and we will not have communications between outside and inside."

b. 自是之後，民信吳起之賞罰。 *Lüshi chunqiu* (Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals) 25.6.5
*Zì shì zhī hòu, mín xìn Wú Qǐ zhī shǎng fá*
From this GEN after, people believe Wu Qi GEN reward punish
"From here on, the people believed that Wu Qi would issue rewards and punishments/believed in Wu Qi's rewards and punishments."

(11) a. 且張登之為人也，善以微計薦中山之君久矣，難信以為利。
*Zhanguo ce* (The Strategies of the Warring States) 33.2.6
*Qiě Zhāng Dēng zhī wéi rén yě, shàn yǐ wēi*
And Zhang Deng GEN be man SFP/NOM good YI minute
*jì jiàn Zhōngshān zhī jūn jiǔ yǐ, nán xìn*
plan present Zhongshan GEN prince long SFP difficult believe
*yǐwéi lì*
make profit
"Furthermore, Zhang Deng is a man who is good at making minute plans, and it is for a long time now that he promotes the ruler of Zhongshan; it is difficult to believe that one can make this profitable."

b. 若董仲舒信土龍之能致雲雨， *Lunheng* (The Balanced Inquiries) 27.80
*Ruò Dǒng Zhòngshū xìn tǔ lóng zhī néng*
If Dong Zhongshu believe earth dragon GEN able
*zhì yún yǔ, ...*
bring.about cloud rain
"If Dong Zhongshu believed that the earth dragon could bring about clouds and rain, ..."

In the examples in (12), *xìn* is passivized; this distinguishes it from its Modern Chinese successor *xiāngxìn*. In (12a) it appears in the *jiàn* 見 passive, one of the passive constructions typical of Late Archaic Chinese; in (12b) it occurs in its passivized (unaccusative) form following the modal verb *kě* 可; the object of trust, "heaven," the inner argument of the verb, appears in the subject position; this is also the case in Example (13). In the early example in (12b), the object of the negated verb "trust" *tiān* 天 is [–HUMAN] and [+SUPERNATURAL/SPIRITUAL]. The same theme subject appears in Ex. (13), but it is here employed metaphorically for a person with heaven-like attitudes.

(12) a. 行義修則見信，見信則受事； *Han Fei zi* (Master Han Fei) 49.10.02
*xíng yì xiū zé jiàn xìn, jiàn*
Practice righteousness refinement then JIAN believe JIAN
*xìn zé shòu shì*
believe then receive business
"When he works on refining his righteousness, then he will be trusted; when he is trusted, then he will be put in charge of the [public] affairs."

b. 天不可信。我道惟寧王德延。 *Shu* 20.6
*Tiān bù kě xìn. Wǒ dào wéi níng wáng dé yán*
Heaven NEG can believe. I way COP serene king virtue prolong
"Heaven cannot be trusted. My (walk=) conduct (is only that=) only means that the serene kings' virtue is (prolonged=) continued (i.e., I have no merit myself, being only a transmitter)." (translation: Karlgren, cf. TLS)

(13) 天則不言而信，神則不怒而威 *Liji* (Book of Rites) 19.3
*Tiān zé bù yán ér xìn, shén zé bù nǔ ér wēi*
Heaven TOP NEG speak CON believed, spirit TOP NEG rage CON awe
"Heaven-like, he is believed without the use of words, Spirit-like, he is regarded with awe, without any display of rage." (transl. Legge, cf. TLS).

In Ex. (14) *xìn* appears in connection with DAO and with *zhōng* 忠 "loyal, loyalty." The theme of *xìn* is [+HUMAN], but the goal to which faithfulness is directed, *shén* 神, is [–HUMAN] and [+SUPERNATURAL/SPIRITUAL]; the subject in (14) is the complement of *xìn*, raised to subject position: "trustworthy, reliable >> the one one can believe in." In the Early Middle Chinese example in (15), *xìn*'s complement is the abstract term *fǎ* 法 "law"; in Example (16) it is [+HUMAN].

(14) 所謂道，忠於民而信於神也。 *Zuozhuan, Huan 6*
*Suǒ wèi dào, zhōng yú mín ér xìn yú shén yě*
REL mean way, loyal PREP people CON believable PREP spirit SFP
"What I mean by being ruled according to reason, is showing a loyal love for the people, and a faithful worship of the Spirits." (transl. Legge, cf. TLS)

(15) 今法如是，更重之，是法不信於民也。 *Hanshu* (The History of Han): 50, 2310
*Jīn fǎ rú shì, gèng chóng zhī, shì fǎ bù xìn yú mín yě*
Now law be.like this, furthermore increase 3OBJ, this law NEG believable PREP people SFP
"Now the law is like this, if we increase it (the sentence), this would mean that it is not believable for the people."

(16) 仁而威，惠而信，脩身而天下服。 *Da Dai Liji* (Ritual Records of Dai, the Elder) 62; *Shiji*: 1, 13
*Rén ér wēi, huì ér xìn,*
Benevolent CON awe-inspiring, gracious CON trustworthy,
*xiū shēn ér tiānxià fú*
improve body CON heaven-below follow
"He was awe-inspiring while benevolent, trustworthy while gracious, he improved himself and everyone under heaven followed him."

At the end of the Late Archaic period and in Early Middle Chinese the range of complements of verbal *xìn* seems to increase from [+HUMAN], or from the utterances of a [+HUMAN], to more abstract and general theme subjects or objects, which can be believed in an informal and a formal manner. It can also select clausal complements, and we can certainly claim that clausal complements underlie the nominal complements of *xìn* on a regular basis. Example (9), partly repeated here as (17), may serve as an example: The underlying structure of "If Qin believes my words is" << "if Qin believes the words [I am saying are true]."

(17=9) 而信我辭， *Yan Danzi* (late LAC)
*ér xìn wǒ cí,*
CON believe I word,
"If Qin … believes my words, …"

The verb *xìn* 信 is evidently an atelic verb; depending on its argument structure, it refers either to the state of "believing in sth." or to the state of "being trustworthy, believable, reliable." This analysis is supported by the fact that in Late Archaic Chinese it is not modified by one of the perfective adverbs *jì* 既 and *yǐ* 已 "already," which by default modify telic verbs.[20] However, as the combination with the final sentence particle *yǐ* 矣, expressing perfectivity, perfect, and change of state, demonstrates, it refers to a changeable state, i.e., it is a stage level and not an individual level predicate.

20 Meisterernst 2015. There is one instance of *jì xìn* 既信 in the *Huainan zi*, and one in the *Hanshu*. *Yǐ xìn* 已信 is not attested in the Shanggu corpus of Academia Sinica (http://hanji.sinica.edu.tw/), which includes numerous Early Middle Chinese texts.

(18) 告潘崇曰:「信矣。」 *Zuozhuan, Wen 1*
*Gào Pān Chóng yuē xìn yǐ*
Tell Pan Chong say believable SFP
"Shang-shin told this to his tutor, saying, 'The report is true.'" (transl. Legge, cf. TLS)

### 2.2 *Nominal xìn* 信 *from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese*

Similar to the verbal usage, nominal *xìn* is already attested in EAC. It occurs relatively frequently as a complement of the existential verbs *yǒu* 有 and *wú* 無.[21] Whereas *wú xìn* is already attested in *Shijing*, *yǒu xìn* does not appear before LAC with the earliest instances in the *Zuozhuan*. In Example (20) from *Zuozhuan*, it first appears in the complement of *wú* and then of *yǒu*. The nominal *xìn* has two possible readings: faith, confidence <> good faith, trustworthiness. These two readings are derived from the two different verbal sources: transitive/causative (intransitive) "believe (something, in something)" >> "faith, confidence;" unaccusative/adjective: "be reliable (can be believed, trusted), trustworthy" >> "good faith, trustworthiness." In both examples the subjects are [+HUMAN].

(19) 懷昏姻也。大無信也，不知命也。 *Shi* 51.3
*Huái hūnyīn yě. Dà wú xìn yě, bù zhī*
concern marriage SFP. Great not.have trustworthy SFP, NEG know
*mìng yě*
mandate SFP
"She was eagerly thinking of marriage; she was (greatly:) very unreliable, she did not understand the will of Heaven." (transl. TLS)

(20) 晉、楚無信，我焉得有信？ *Zuozhuan, Xuan 7*
*Jìn, Chǔ wú xìn, wǒ yān dé yǒu xìn?*
Jin, Chu not.have reliability, I why manage.to have reliability
"Jin and Chu do not have trustworthiness, why should we have trustworthiness?"

21 *Yǒu xìn* yields 43 hits in the Shanggu corpus of the AS database including those with attributive *xìn*; *wú xìn* yields 55 hits, most of them can be analyzed as VO. The total number of instances is slightly higher, because one hit may include more than one attested instance.

The following examples provide more instances of *xìn* as the complement of *yǒu* 有. In most cases, it is employed as a derivation of the adjective "trustworthy, reliable." The theme of *xìn* is always [+HUMAN] as in examples (21) and (22). In Example (23) from the *Shiji* (Early Middle Chinese), the nominal *xìn* is derived from the transitive verb "believe." The subject is [+HUMAN], the theme of *xìn* is not mentioned. In Example (24) the noun is derived from the unaccusative/adjective verb "trustworthy," the theme subject is [+HUMAN].

(21) 君子有信，其有以知之矣。 *Zuozhuan, Zhao 2*
*Jūnzǐ yǒu xìn, qí yǒu yǐ zhī zhī yǐ*
Gentleman have trustworthiness, MOD have YI know OBJ SFP
"A superior man has trustworthiness; he has ways to acquire knowledge."

(22) 與朋友交言而有信。 *Lunyu* (Confucian Analects) 1,7
*Yǔ péngyǒu jiāo yán ér yǒu xìn*
With friends together talk CON have trustworthiness
"and if in his dealings with friends he shows good faith in everything he promises," (translation: TLS)

(23) 民是以能有信，神是以能有明德。 *Shiji:* 26, 1237
*Mín shìyǐ néng yǒu xìn, shén shìyǐ néng yǒu míng dé*
People therefore able have trust, spirits therefore able have bright virtue
"The people are therefore able to have confidence and the spirits are able to have bright virtue."

(24)「齊景公無信，不如早之晉。」 *Shiji*: 33, 1636
*Qí Jǐng gōng wú xìn, bù rú zǎo zhī Jìn*
Qi Jing duke not.have trustworthiness, NEG be.like early go Jin
"Duke Jing of Qi is not trustworthy; would it not be better to go early to Jin?"

*Xìn* is also attested as the object of other verbs. In the two following instances it appears in its transitive nominal function as object of *qǐ* 起 "raise," and in its intransitive nominal function as the object of the 彰 *zhāng* "display." Both subjects are [+HUMAN] and function as themes of the "belief" caused and induced by the verb. In Example (27), *xìn* appears in coordination with *zhōng* 忠 as object of the verb *huái* 懷 "worry, be concerned about."

(25) 今汝聒聒。起信險膚。予弗知乃所訟。 *Shu* 16.7
*jīn rǔ guōguō, qǐ xìn xiǎn fū, yǔ fú*
now you noisy, raise confidence endanger skin, I $\text{NEG}_{\text{tr}}$
*zhī nǎi suǒ sòng*
know 2ndGEN REL complain
"Now, (however), you keep clamouring, and get the confidence (of the people) by alarming and shallow speeches;—I do not know what you are wrangling about."[22]

(26) 克寬克仁。彰信兆民。 *Shu* 11.2.3 (late)
*Kè kuān kè rén, zhāng xìn zhào*
Capable indulgent capable benevolent, display reliability million
*mín*
people
"Capable of indulgence and of benevolence he displays reliability to the millions of peoples."

(27) 上含淳德以遇其下，下懷忠信以事其上， *Shiji*: 5, 198
*Shàng hán chún dé yǐ yù qí xià, xià*
High cherish ample virtue YI meet POSS low, low
*huái zhōng xìn yǐ shì qí shàng*
be.concerned.about loyalty trustworthiness YI server POSS above
"[Those in] high [position] cherish ample virtue in meeting [those in] low [position], [those in] low [position] are concerned about loyalty and trustworthiness in serving [those in] high [position.]"

In *Liji*, a text probably dating from the Early Middle Chinese period, a considerable number of nominal instances of *xìn* is attested, frequently in contexts determining proper behavior and the relevance of reliability in human relations. In these contexts, it is predominantly listed in combination with other nouns referring to related concepts of proper social behavior. In Example (28), all instances of *xìn*, including those following the function word *yǐ* 以, have to be analyzed as nominals derived from the adjective (unaccusative) variant of *xìn*. In Example (29), it occurs in unmarked coordination with *chéng* 誠 "sincerity"; the coordinated nouns then appear in marked coordination with another pair of coordinated nouns, consisting of *zhōng* 忠 "loyalty" and *jìng* 敬 "respect." It also appears in direct unmarked coordination with *zhōng* 忠, as in Example (30), and in marked coordination with *yì* 義 "righteousness" in (31).

22 Translation by Legge 1879, 105.

(28) 告之以直信。信，事人也。信，婦德也。 *Liji* 11.03
*gào zhī yǐ zhí xìn. Xìn, shì rén yě.*
tell OBJ YI uprightness reliability. Reliability, serve people SFP.
*Xìn fù dé yě*
Reliability, wife virtue SFP
"Tell her about uprightness and reliability. Reliability means serving others, and reliability is the virtue of a wife."

(29) 是故賢者之祭也，致其誠信與其忠敬， *Liji* 25.01
*Shì gù xián zhě zhī jì yě, zhì qí*
This reason virtuous NOM GEN sacrifice SFP, bring.about GEN
*chéng xìn yǔ qí zhōng jìng*
sincerity reliability CON GEN loyalty respect
"Therefore, the sacrifices of a virtuous man bring about his sincerity and reliability and his loyalty and respect."

(30) 忠信，禮之本也；義理，禮之文也。 *Liji* 10.1[23]
*Zhōng xìn, lǐ zhī běn yě; yì lǐ,*
Loyalty reliability, propriety GEN root SFP; righteousness reason,
*lǐ zhī wén yě*
propriety GEN form SFP
"Loyalty and reliability are the source of propriety; righteousness and reason are the form of propriety."

(31) 義與信，和與仁，霸王之器也。 *Liji* 26.1
*yì yǔ xìn, hé yǔ rén, bà*
righteousness CON reliability, harmony CON benevolence, hegemon
*wáng zhī qì yě*
king GEN tool SFP
"Righteousness and reliability, harmony and benevolence, are the instruments of the hegemonial king."

In Example (32), *xìn* appears as the complement of a prepositional phrase with the preposition *yú* 於 in a list of attitudes required by representatives of the different social strata; this is its predominant meaning within the Confucian concepts of human relations. (see also Example (1)).

23 This combination is further listed around 100 times in the corpus of Archaic Chinese in the AS corpus, always in direct coordination, never in coordination marked by *yǔ* 與.

(32) 為人君，止於仁；為人臣，止於敬；為人子，止於孝；為人父，止於慈；與國人交，止於信。*Liji* 42.1
*Wéi rén jūn, zhǐ yú rén; wéi rén chén, zhǐ yú*
Be man ruler, stop at benevolence; be man subject, stop at
*jìng; wéi rén zǐ, zhǐ yú xiào; wéi rén fù, zhǐ yú*
respect; be man son, stop at piety; be man father, stop at
*cí; yǔ guó rén jiāo, zhǐ yú xìn.*
kindness; with state man contact, stop at reliability
"As a ruler, he rested in benevolence; as a minister, he rested in respect; as a son, he rested in filial piety; as a father, he rested in kindness; in intercourse with his subjects, he rested in good faith." (transl. Couvreur, cf. TLS)

In the following instance *xìn* is attested as a nominal predicate marked by *yě*.

(33) 小所以事大，信也。小國無信，兵亂日至，亡無日矣。*Zuozhuan*, *Xiang* 8
*Xiǎo suǒ yǐ shì dà, xìn yě. Xiǎo guó wú*
Small REL YI serve great, reliability SFP. Small state not.have
*xìn, bīng luàn rì zhì, wáng wú rì yǐ*
reliability, warfare chaos day arrive, perish not.have day SFP
"It is reliability with which a small state serves a big one. If the small state does not have reliability, war and chaos arrive every day, and its perdition will not take long."

### 2.3 *Xìn* 信 *as a Modifier from Late Archaic Chinese to Early Middle Chinese*

*Xìn* can also function as a verbal or sentential modifier, i.e., an adverb, and as a nominal modifier, i.e., an attributive adjective. In the EAC literature this kind of employment of *xìn* is not attested, it is evidently a LAC development; first instances occur in the *Zuozhuan*. Wei[24] argues that *xìn* belongs to the adverbs expressing realis (*biǎo shí* 表實): These are *guǒ* 果 "really," *gù* 固 "certainly," *chéng* 誠 "really, actually," *xìn* 信 "truly," and *shí* 實 "really." These adverbs must be distinguished into different subcategories, including epistemic, evidential, and evaluative adverbs.[25] They are all speaker-oriented and appear in a high position with regard to other adverbs, *wh*-words, and negative markers. In

24 Wei 1999, 261.
25 Meisterernst 2016, 110f.

Example (34) it appears preceding the negative marker *bù*, in Example (35) it follows the topic of the sentence, and in examples (36) and (37) (from Early Middle Chinese) it follows the subject/topic.

(34) 若召季孫而不來，則信不臣矣， *Zuozhuan, Zhao 31*
*Ruò zhào Jì sùn ér bù lái, zé xìn bù*
If summon Ji sun CON NEG come, then evidently NEG
*chén yǐ*
subject.like SFP
"If you invite Jisun, but he does not come, he evidently does not behave like a good subject."

(35) 牽牛以蹊者，信有罪矣； *Zuozhuan, Xuan 11*
*Qiān niú yǐ xí zhě, xìn yǒu zuì yǐ*
Drag ox CON trod REL, evidently have guilt SFP
"Those who drag oxen and let them trespass [other's fields], are evidently committing a crime."

(36) 子晳信美矣，抑子南，夫也。 *Zuozhuan, Zhao 1*
*Zǐ Xī xìn měi yǐ, yì zǐ Nán, fū yě*
Zi Xi evidently beautiful SFP, but zi Nan, husband SFP
"Zi Xi is evidently handsome, but zi Nan is my husband."

(37) 傳書之家，信以為然，世人觀見，遂以為實。 *Lunheng* 5.19
*Chuán shū zhī jiā, xìn yǐwéi rán,*
Transmit document GEN family, evidently take.for be.like,
*shì rén guān jiàn, suì yǐwéi shí*
generation man observation view, then take.for real
"The scholars who transmitted the documents evidently considered it correct; and the observations of the people of [subsequent] generations then took it for real."

In Example (38), *xìn* occurs as the modifier of a noun phrase, i.e., as an attributive adjective.

(38) 君何不買信貨哉？ *Zhanguo ce* 2.9.2
*Jūn hé bù mǎi xìn huò zāi*
Prince why NEG buy trustworthy good SFP
"Why don't you 'buy' an article which all can believe is valuable?"

## 3 *Xìn* 信 in Early Middle Chinese Non-secular Texts (Mostly Buddhist Texts)[26]

According to the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/), *xìn*'s basic meaning is "faith." It appears in the sense of "conviction; trust; to believe in" and is "one of the ten wholesome mental factors 大善地法 enumerated in Abhidharma; one of the eleven wholesome mental factors 十一善 in Yogācāra."[27] It implies "facing the environment with clarity and calmness, thereby calming and quieting the other mental functions. Accepting the world as it is."

> Within the system of practice of Mahāyāna works that take a "buddha-nature" 佛性 or tathāgatagarbha 如來藏 approach to the explication of the process of salvation … faith tends to become the most critical factor in the attainment of deep religious insight, or liberation, as a conviction that the basic composition of one's own mind is not different from the Buddha is the mainspring of practice. The importance of the realization of a deep, radical form of faith is the main focus of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* 大乘起信論, which became one of the most influential texts in all of East Asian Buddhism.[28]

Example (25) demonstrates that the combination *qǐ xìn* 起信 "raise faith (confidence)," chosen to refer to the "awakening of *Mahāyāna* faith," is already attested in the *Shujing*.

### 3.1 *Verbal xìn* 信 *in Early Buddhist Chinese*

I will provide only a few instances of *xìn* 信 in Early Buddhist texts to display the similarities and differences with regard to its employment in the traditional non-Buddhist literature. *Xìn* can in general appear in the same functions as in the LAC and EMC non-Buddhist literature, i.e., as a transitive verb "believe," as an intransitive adjective "believable >> reliable, trustworthy," and as a noun derived from either of the two functions. The basic meaning "faith" is

26 For a more content-oriented interpretation of *xìn* in early Buddhist scriptures, see Tam's chapter in this volume.

27 For more on both these lists, see Tam's chapter in this volume.

28 Charles Muller, ed., *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/search-ddb4.pl?Terms=%E4%BF% (accessed 2 April 2018).

a derivation from the transitive variant of *xìn*. In contrast to the EAC and LAC literature, the verb *xìn* frequently appears in coordination with other verbs, usually with other psych verbs. The theme of *xìn* is often [–HUMAN], but connected to human activities or abstract concepts in the widest sense; the variety of theme subjects and objects evidently increased in comparison with LAC. The same has been demonstrated for the secular Chinese texts. Examples (39) and (40) are from Eastern Han Buddhist translations and belong to the earliest Chinese Buddhist texts; in (39) *xìn* appears in the complement of the modal verb *kě* 可, i.e., it is passivized/unaccusative. In Example (40), a wide range of objects, including clausal ones, appears following the transitive verb *xìn*.

(39) 佛告沙門．慎無信汝意．意終不可信． T17, no.784, p. 723b
*Fó gào shāmén, shèn wú xìn rǔ yì,*
Buddha tell monk, careful $\text{NEG}_{\text{mod}}$ believe you thought,
*yì zhōng bù kě xìn*
thought eventually NEG can believed
"The Buddha told the monks, be careful not to believe your thoughts, thoughts are eventually not to be believed in."

(40) 諦見為何等？信布施，信禮，信祠、信善惡行自然福、信父母、信天下道人、信求道、信諦行、信諦受。 T01, no.112, p. 505a
*Dìjiàn wéi héděng? Xìn bùshī, xìn lǐ,*
Right.view be whatPL? Believe give.alms, believe ceremony,
*xìn cí, xìn shàn è xìng zìrán fú,*
believe sacrifice, believe good bad deed spontaneously merit,
*xìn fùmǔ, xìn tiānxià dào rén, xìn qiú dào,*
believe parents, believe world DAO man, believe search DAO,
*xìn dìxíng, xìn dìshòu*
believe true.practice, believe receive.with.care
"What implies the right view? [It implies:] Believing in alms giving, believing in ceremony, believing in sacrifices, believing that good and bad deeds result in spontaneous merits, believing in your parents, believing in the people who follow the DAO in this world, believing in searching for the DAO, believing in true practice, and believing in careful reception."

In Example (41) from the Lotus Sutra (406 CE), *xìn* appears as an unaccusative intransitive verb in the complement of *nán* 難 "difficult." Both serve as modifiers of the noun *fǎ* 法 "dharma." The theme of "belief" is [–HUMAN] and [+SPIRITUAL], the cognitive agent is [+HUMAN].

(41) 咸得聞知一切世間難信之法。 T09, no. 262, p. 3c
*Xián dé wén zhī yīqiè shìjiān nán xìn zhī fǎ*
All can hear know entire world difficult believable GEN dharma
"They can all experience the almost unbelievable dharma of the entire world."

In most instances, though, the verb appears in the transitive (intransitive) variant with a cognitive agent as its subject. In examples (42) and (43), the complements are nominalized relative clauses, the subjects of which are [+HUMAN]. In Example (43), the object of belief is [–HUMAN], i.e., an abstract clausal complement, which can probably also be qualified as [+SPIRITUAL].

(42) 舍利弗！汝等當信佛之所說， T09, no. 262, p. 7a
*Shèlìfú! Rǔ děng dāng xìn fó zhī suǒ shuō …*
Śāriputra! You PL should believe Buddha GEN REL speak
"Śāriputra! You should believe what the Buddha says …"

(43) 少智樂小法，不自信作佛， T09, no. 262, p. 9c
*shǎo zhì lè xiǎo fǎ, bù zì xìn*
Few knowledge enjoy small dharma, NEG himself believe
*zuò fó*
make Buddha
"We are of little knowledge and like the small dharma, we do not believe that we ourselves are Buddhas."

In early Buddhist literature, *xìn* increasingly occurs in coordination or combination with other verbs of similar or cognitively related semantic contents. Some of these coordinations are already attested to a certain extent in the LAC literature, but most are innovations. They can appear as single words, but they can also still occur separately. In Example (44), *xìn* is coordinated with *xiàng* 向 in an example from the Eastern Han period in the meaning "believe and be dedicated"; the number of instances of this coordination seems to increase over time; in (45), *xìn* is coordinated with *jìng*, this combination is already attested in the archaic Chinese literature. No object appears, but the subject is clearly a cognitive agent. The DDB lists the meaning "venerate" for *jìngxìn*. The cognitive agent is [+HUMAN], the inherent theme, expressed in the preceding topicalized clause, is [+SPIRITUAL]; however, the reference to the Buddha's speech is coded in the same manner as are utterances of [+HUMAN] cognitive agents or themes in the LAC literature.

(44) 其心信向無有異. T15, no. 626, p. 405b
*Qí xīn xìn xiàng wú yǒu yì*
POSS heart believe dedicate NEG have difference
"Their hearts believed and were dedicated without any differentiations."

(45) 聞佛所說，則能敬信。T09, no. 262, p. 6c
*Wén fó suǒ shuō, zé néng jìngxìn*
Hear Buddha REL say, then able.to venerate
"When they heard what the Buddha said, they were able to respectfully believe."

*Xìn* occurs relatively frequently in combination with *jiě* 解 "explain," in (46) as a transitive verb with a cognitive agent, in (47) with an implied theme, and in (48), the two morphemes *xìn* and *jiě* appear separately, respectively modified by *nán* 難. In Example (49), *xìn* is combined with the verb *guī* "rely on" > *xìn guī*. The reverse order *guī xìn* is also possible.

(46) 舍利弗！汝等當一心信解受持佛語。T09, no. 262, p. 7c
*Shèlìfú! Rǔděng dāng yī xīn xìn jiě shòuchí*
Śāriputra! YouPL should one heart believe understand uphold
*fó yǔ*
Buddha word.
"Śāriputra! You should single-mindedly confide and uphold Buddha's words."

(47) 則能信解，汝當為說，妙法華經。T09, no. 262, p. 16b
*Zé néng xìnjiě, rǔ dāng wéi shuō, miàofǎhuájīng*
Then able.to confide, you should BEN speak Miaofahua sutra
"Then you are able to believe and you should explain the Lotus sutra for them."

(48) 如來智慧，難信難解。T09, no. 262, p. 25c
*Rúlái zhìhuì, nán xìn nán jiě*
Tathāgata knowledge difficult believe difficult understand
"Tathāgata's wisdom is hard to believe and to understand."

(49) 若人信歸佛，如來不欺誑， T09, no. 262, p. 8a
*Ruò rén xìn guī fó, rúlái bù qīguàng*
If man believe rely Buddha, Tathāgata NEG deceptive
"If people believe and rely on the Buddha, Tathāgata will not be deceptive."

In Example (50), *xìn* appears in a passive construction in combination with the verb *yòng*. As already mentioned, according to Cheung and Larson,[29] the Modern Mandarin equivalent *xiāngxìn* is not permitted in passive constructions.

(50) 若從是語，今則不為人所信用， T04, no. 202, 382c (fifth c. CE)
*Ruò cóng shì yǔ, jīn zé bù wéi rén suǒ*
If follow this talk, now thereupon NEG PASS man PASS
*xìn yòng*
believe employ
"If I follow this talk, then I will not be respected by others."

### 3.2 *Nominal xìn* 信 *in Early Buddhist Chinese*

Similar to LAC, *xìn* can also appear as a noun; it is frequently attested as a noun following the existential verb *yǒu* 有, as in Example (51). In Example (52), *xìn* appears in the meaning of "credential" in combination with *yìn* 印 "seal."[30] In Example (53), it occurs in the combination *xìnrěn* 信忍, for which the meaning "cognitive faith" is listed in the DDB; in the first clause of (53), the telic verb *rù* 入 "enter" is already modified by the aspectual adverb *yǐ* 已 and the adverbial *xìn* functioning as a manner adverb. The position following the aspectual adverb excludes an analysis of *xìn* as a sentential adverb. In this function, it had to precede *yǐ*.

(51) 則梵行不具。若比丘有信． T01, no. 1, p. 56b (early fifth c. CE)
*Zé fànxíng bù jù, ruò bǐqiū yǒu xìn*
Then Buddhist.practice not ready. If bhiksu have faith
"Then the pure practices will be deficient. If the monks have faith …"

(52) 始知是大王種類．故持鑷印信． T14, no.553, p.897b (Eastern Han)
*Shǐ zhī shì dà wáng zhǒnglèi, gù chí*
Inititally know COP great king lineage, therefore grasp
*huán yìnxìn*
golden.ring official seal
"From the beginning I knew that I was of the lineage of great kings, therefore I held the golden ringed seal."

29 Cheung and Larson 2015, 159.

30 For a discussion of this usage, see Assandri's chapter in this volume.

(53) 我已信入菩薩種子，已住信忍無疑無惑， T14, no. 485, p.685a (sixth c. BC)
*Wǒ yǐ xìn rù púsà zhǒng zǐ, yǐ*
I already believingly enter bodhisattva kind son, already
*zhù xìnrěn wúyí wúhuò*
dwell cognitive.faith without.doubt without.disturbance
"I already trustfully entered the state of a Bodhisattva follower, and I already dwell in cognitive faith without doubt and disturbance."

In Example (54), *xìn* occurs as an adjective modifying the noun *xīn* 心 "heart, mind."

(54) 長者子聞此法者。信心清淨。信心清淨已。作如是觀。T01, no.1, p. 96b (early fifth c. CE)
*Zhǎng zhě zǐ wén cǐ fǎ zhě, xìn xīn*
Elder NOM son hear this dharma NOM, believing heart
*qīngjìng. Xìn xīn qīngjìng yǐ, zuò rúshì guān*
calm and pure, Believing heart calm and pure RES, make such insight
"When the son of the chief heard this dharma, his believing heart was calm and purified. After his believing heart was calmed and purified he had such an insight …"

### 3.3 *Xìn* 信 *in an Early Middle Chinese Daoist Text, the Xiang'er Commentary*[31]

In comparison to the vast variety of occurrences of *xìn* in the early Buddhist literature, the *Xiang'er* 想爾 commentary to the *Dao de jing* only constitutes a very confined corpus with few syntactic variations of *xìn*. Assandri[32] notes that the thirty-four surviving chapters of the *Xiang'er* commentary contain thirty-one instances of *xìn*, nineteen of them occurring in the combination *xìndào* 信道. This combination describes one of the possible relations between humans and the DAO. From a linguistic point of view, the occurrences of *xìn* in the *Xiang'er* commentary do not yield any results different from what we found in the early Medieval Buddhist literature; in the Buddhist corpus, the attested coordinations, but also complement structures, are certainly more

31 For a comprehensive discussion of *xìn* in Early Medieval Daoist literature, see Assandri's chapter in this volume.

32 See Assandri's chapter in this volume.

significant. Both functions, the verbal and the nominal usages, are attested in the *Xiang'er* corpus. In both transitive examples in (55), *xìn*'s complement is [–HUMAN]. In (55a), the complex nominal complement evidently has an underlying clausal structure, comparable to Example (17); (55b) is one of the numerous instances of DAO in the complement of *xìn*. Example (56) represents nominal *xìn*. The nominal predicate *dà xìn* is concluded by the marker of nominal predication *yě* 也, similar to Example (34) from LAC.

(55) a. 内信不足。故不信善人之言也。 *Xiang'er* 0010. 17 234
*Nèi xìn bù zú, gù bù xìn shàn rén zhī*
Inner faith NEG suffice. Therefore NEG believe good man GEN
*yán yě*
word SFP
"The inner faith is not sufficient, therefore they do not believe the words of the good people."

b. 至令後學者不復信道。 *Xiang'er* 0014. 19 268
*zhì líng hòu xué zhě bù fù xìn dào*
arrive.at make later students NOM NEG again believe DAO
"Eventually it will cause later students not to believe in the DAO anymore."

(56) a. (其中有信）古仙士寶精以生。今人失精以死。大信也 *Xiang'er* 0021. 21 322
(*Qí zhōng yǒu xìn*) *gǔ xiān shì bǎo jīng*
POSS middle have faith. Old immortal noble treasure essence
*yǐ shēng. Jīn rén shī jīng yǐ sǐ, dà*
CON live Today man neglect essence CON die, great
*xìn yě*
faith SFP/NOM
"The ancient nobles treasured the essences to gain life. Today's people lose the essences and die. These are [the Dao's] eminent tokens of good faith."[33]

33 Translated by Bokenkamp 1997, 113.

## 4 Conclusion

Linguistically speaking, *xìn* 信 appears in three different functions from Early Archaic to Early Middle Chinese, including the early non-secular (Buddhist) literature. These functions are:

a) As an unaccusative intransitive verb; unaccusative verbs are characterized by theme subjects: "believable >> reliable, trustworthy" ("X is believed >> can be believed, is reliable, trustworthy")
b) As a transitive or intransitive mental attitude verb; mental attitude verbs characteristically have a cognitive agent (experiencer) subject; the transitive variant has a theme, or an underlying or overt clausal complement ("X believes [that] (Y)") (to a certain extent comparable to psych verbs such as "fear").
c) As a noun: the nominal functions can be derived from both verbal functions.

In Late Archaic Chinese with first instances in the *Zuozhuan*, a function as a speaker-oriented adverb developed based on the unaccusative, adjectival use of *xìn*.

In Early Archaic and Late Archaic Chinese, the internal argument of *xìn* (subject of the unaccusative and object of the transitive variant of *xìn*) is predominantly [+HUMAN]; a few instances of [–HUMAN]/[+SUPERNATURAL / SPIRITUAL] complements such as *tiān* 天 are attested.

In the Early Middle Chinese period, and particularly in the Buddhist literature in Early Middle Chinese, the frequency of [–HUMAN]/[+SUPERNATURAL / SPIRITUAL] complements increases considerably; in addition, the number of overt clausal complements also increases. However, this tendency is not confined to the Buddhist literature; an extension of usage to [–HUMAN], more abstract and conceptual complements can also be observed in the non-Buddhist EMC literature in informal and formal contexts. In these instances, *xìn* is predominantly employed with the basic verbal meaning "believe." The basic nominal meaning is "faith," the derivation from the transitive variant of *xìn* "believe."

The regular employment of *xìn* with a [–HUMAN] complement—though usually connected to human concepts—is an evident innovation in Early Middle Chinese. In the Buddhist literature, this frequently extends to complements, which have the feature [+SPIRITUAL]. This may imply that the usage of *xìn* extends from a more colloquial reference to trust and belief in human behaviors in different social (mostly Confucian) contexts to a reference to beliefs in abstract spiritual concepts, while the informal sense of believing still

prevails. This development is supported by the fact that *xìn* belongs to what Cheung and Larson[34] label Experiencer Subject Psych verbs, which are characterized by an intensional reading, meaning that the proposition is true even if the verb's complement does not have a reference in the real world, i.e., it is non-denoting. The employment in contexts with spiritual content may then lead to its integration into the Buddhist religious terminology[35] "faith, belief." The fact that *xìn* did not appear as a singular conceptual term[36] predefined in the philosophical Confucian tradition, but—as a singular term—rather occurs in a colloquial way in all its basic meanings, may have facilitated its usage as referring to all kinds of beliefs, including belief in spiritual concepts. Even in Archaic Chinese, it already occasionally appears with *tiān* "heaven" as its complement. It is evidently the transitive meaning "believe" and its derived nominal meaning "faith" that serve as basis for *xìn*'s usage in the Buddhist literature referring to Buddhist faith, rather than the unaccusative reading "trustworthy" and its derived nominal reading "trustworthiness." It is only the latter reading in which *xìn* appears in component terms in LAC, according to Gentz. This certainly needs more investigation, but as a first result, it can be proposed that the development of *xìn*'s usage in Buddhist contexts is related to the colloquial single term employment of *xìn* in LAC and not to its appearance in component terms. The fact that the verb *xìn* "believe" as an Experiencer Subject Psych verb allows an intensional reading may also have supported its usage in religious contexts.

Another innovation, which I will briefly mention here, is *xìn*'s frequent occurrence in coordination with other verbs, usually psych verbs. This may be part of the general process of disyllabification observed in Early Middle Chinese, where the number of compounds in the language increases considerably due to different linguistic and sociological factors.

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34 Cheung and Larson 2015, 139.

35 See Assandri's chapter in this volume.

36 See Gentz's chapter in this volume.

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CHAPTER 5

# An Inquiry into Conceptions of *xin* 信 in Early Medieval Daoism

*Friederike Assandri*

## 1 Methodological Preface: *xin* 信 and Believe/Belief

*Xin* 信, the key term this volume focusses on, is translated in the context of religions most often as "belief/believe" (or faith).[1] Occurrences in Daoist texts from the medieval period are no exception to this. Since *xin* has a broader semantic and grammatical range in classical Chinese[2] than the terms "belief" and "believe" in English,[3] we might ask if, and in what aspects, the semantics of the terms *xin* and "belief/believe" can be compared in the specific context of early medieval Daoism. The exploration of the semantic field and usage of *xin* in early medieval Daoism in comparison to aspects of the semantic fields of the terms "belief/believe" invites further reflections regarding the way the relations between humans and deities were conceived in early medieval Daoism.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the basic meaning of *believe* (v) is "to accept something as true, even in the absence of proof," and from this derives also the meaning of *belief* (n) as "faith, religious belief."[4] In a Christian-theological sense, *believe/belief* defines a "relation a human being

1 The other common translation of the term is "trust" or "trustworthiness," see the Introduction to this volume.

2 I use the term "classical Chinese" as a translation of the Chinese *wenyanwen* 文言文 in a broad sense of the written language before the twentieth century, and not as the narrower definition of the language of the Pre-Qin and Han authors. For a detailed discussion of the grammatical and semantic usage of the term from late archaic to middle Chinese, see Meisterernst's chapter in this volume.

3 The Oxford English Dictionary lists seven meanings for "believe" and eight for "belief," http://www.oed.com/ (accessed 27 May 2022). The *Encyclopedia of Religions* (2005, 2954f) lists eleven related meanings for "faith." *Zhongwen da cidian* lists twenty different meanings under the pronunciation *xin*, and a further three meanings under the pronunciation *shen*, http://ap6.pccu.edu.tw/Dictionary/ (accessed 27 May 2022).

See also the chapters by Meisterernst and Gentz in this volume.

4 Compare also the lemma *faith* in the *Encyclopedia of Religions*, 2955–2958.

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assumes with regard to god,"[5] which is considered central to Christian religiosity.[6] The Western semantics of *believe* contain a tension between the secular meaning of "believe that," which poses a problematic statement and implies lack of knowledge because of lack of empirical evidence, and the concept of "believe in" as religious belief or faith, which implies an assertoric statement, a truth claim accepted in the absence of empirical proof.[7]

Another aspect of the historical semantic field of *believe* was emphasized by Michel de Certeau in an article entitled "What We Do When We Believe." Exploring the ancient Indo-European origins of the word *believe*, Michel de Certeau pointed out three basic meanings of *believe*, namely "having confidence in someone or something," "believing in reality or what one sees," and "trusting in what is said."[8] His analysis shows that in all three meanings, "belief posits a relationship to something *Other*," and "implies the support of the other, which stands for what we have to rely upon."[9] In this perspective, he has pointed out the contractual nature of belief:

> … belief occurs between the recognition of an alterity and the establishment of a contract. It disappears if one of the two weakens. Belief no longer exists when difference is effaced by a process tending to equalize the partners and give them mutual mastery of the contract; it no longer exists when difference becomes excessive through a breach of the pact.[10]

The establishment of a contract presupposes loyalty on the side of the partners, and thus "the shadow of the believer and its opposite, the *renegade* or traitor, is already evident."[11] While de Certeau's analysis concerns the ancient

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5 *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, G–H, 627; cit. Ebeling 1959, 31ff.

6 *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, G–H, 627; cit. Ebeling 1959, 31ff. For a detailed discussion of this notion, see Jiang's chapter in this volume.

7 *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 3, G–H, 627. Cf. also Price 1965.

8 De Certeau 1985, 192.

9 De Certeau 1985, 192.

10 De Certeau 1985, 192. He emphasizes that in the contract the believer gives a gift, or "something" in the hope or certainty of receiving something back in the future. This deferred remuneration is what distinguishes belief from, e.g., economic exchanges, but also from knowing and seeing: "[T]he difference that distinguishes it [i.e., believing, FA] from *seeing* or *knowing* is not at first notable for the truth value for which a proposition is susceptible—to which an entire epistemology has been devoted—but by this inscription of *time* in a subject-to-subject relationship" (1985, 193). Cf. also Price (1965, 19) with the observation that when "belief-in" is used with a that-clause instead of a noun, the verb of that clause usually takes the future tense.

11 De Certeau 1985, 192.

Indo-European roots of the Western context of the term, nevertheless, his findings offer us an interesting angle to look at the Chinese usage of *xin*, to which we will return at the end of this paper.

## 2 Delineating a Semantic Field: *xin* 信 as a Way Humans Can Relate to Dao

In order to compare a use of *xin* in Daoism with the Western conception of "belief in an ultimate or absolute being" (like belief in God) as a primary way to relate to this ultimate, the term that we would hypothetically construe as a parallel in early medieval Daoism would be *xin dao* 信道.[12] While early medieval Daoism has a host of more or less powerful savior deities and deified masters, the ultimate reference of all Daoist lineages and sects is Dao—as origin, substance, and rule of the cosmos, the gods, and the human world. Some of the early medieval Daoist groups understood this Dao not only as abstract cosmic origin and regulating force, but also as embodied in a personified deity like, for instance, *Taishang Laojun* 太上老君 (the divinized Laozi 老子) in the Heavenly Master tradition.

If belief is a way to relate to "God" or an "absolute being," and if Dao can be considered such an absolute entity or being, then we could—still working hypothetically—construe *xin dao*

1. as a (primary) way to relate to Dao,
2. as an acceptance of a truth claim that cannot be proven by empirical bodily or cognitive experience or deliberation, and
3. as a correct way in opposition to an incorrect or evil way.

**However, with regard to *xin* as a way to relate the human being to Dao (expressed as V+O), we need to first note that *xin* is not the only possible means.** A far more common way to relate to Dao would be to "obtain" it, *de dao* 得道, a term which is attested in the earliest Daoist texts like the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (chapters 7, 14, et al.) and the *Liezi* 列子. Another action would be *xing dao* 行道, to practice Dao, also attested already in Warring States texts; we furthermore have *xiu dao* 修道, *xue dao* 學道, and others, with several of these phrases attested in the Confucian tradition as well.[13]

12 We should take note that long before the divinization of Laozi as a deity and incarnation of Dao, the V+O expression *xin dao* appears in the *Lunyu*, chap. 19, Zi Zhang 子張, in the expression 信道不篤—however, this expression does not seem to be relevant in the context of early medieval Daoism, which is my focus in this chapter.

13 See, e.g., *Xunzi* 荀子, chap. 21, "Jiebi 解蔽": 故仁者之行道也，無為也；聖人之行道也，無彊也, or *Liji* 禮記, chap. 31, "Zhongyong 中庸": 天命之謂性，率性之謂

A search in the Daoist section of the Kanseki repository[14] for different V+O combinations, which specify human action or attitude versus Dao, produces the following quantitative results:

TABLE 1 Kenseki repository results

| Search term Positive | Filter KR5 (Daoist texts) | Search term Negative | Filter KR5 (Daoist texts) | Ratio positive/negative |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 得道 | 8178 | 不得道 | 158 | 51:1 |
| 行道 | 4825 | 不行道 | 36 | 134:1 |
| 學道 | 4526 | 不学道 | 21 | 215:1 |
| 知道 | 2209 | 不知道 | 493 | 4:1 |
| 修道 | 1872 | 不修道 | 54 | 34:1 |
| 守道 | 612 | 不守道 | 14 | 43:1 |
| 念道 | 550 | 不念道 | 10 | 55:1 |
| 受道 | 530 | 不受道 | 2 | 265:1 |
| 信道 | 463 | 不信道 | 138 | 3,3:1 |

Covering Daoist texts of all periods, these statistics indicate that of the various V+O (Dao) combinations that specify what humans do in relation to Dao, *xin dao* is the rarest. And one in three times the term appears as a negative, a ratio much higher than in other combinations.[15]

道，修道之謂教。道也者，不可須臾離也，可離非道也. *Chinese Text Project*, http://ctext.org (accessed 27 May 2022).

14 Kanseki repository, key-term search in texts, undifferentiated hits (i.e., there will be many doubles), filter KR5 (i.e., Daoist texts, including *Daozang*, *Xu Daozang*, Dunhuang Daoist texts, Qing dynasty Daoist texts). Kanseki Repository (漢リポ kanripo), http://www.kanripo.org/ (accessed 27 May 2022).

15 The only similar ratio is found with *zhidao* and *buzhidao*, but this ratio might be not comparable, because *zhidao* has not only the meaning of knowing Dao (V+O), but is also employed as a composite verb for "to know"; in particular in the negative "*buzhidao*." This usage as a composite verb appears according to *Hanyu da cidian* (3. 曉得) since Tang dynasty, however, we find this usage also in a comment of Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456–536) in his *Zhengao* 真誥 (DZ 1016, 7, 4b): 范帥言不知道誰; see Smith 2020, 159: "Spoken by the commander Fan, I do not know of whom he speaks." Since the Kanseki database does not allow to refine the search to filter Daoist texts and time periods, and since the the use of *zhidao* and *buzhidao* as composite verb is frequent in texts written after the Tang, I assume the occurrences of *zhidao* and *buzhidao* in this particular database search will not all represent the V+O combination with the meaning of "knowing Dao." Therefore I disregard this particular combination here.

The next step is then to look if clusters of the term *xin dao* occur with a high frequency in specific texts.[16] In fact, we can find clusters of the term *xin dao* in three texts: in the third-century Heavenly Master commentary to the *Daode jing* 道德經, the *Xiang'er* 想爾 *Commentary*, in the related *Dadao jialingjie* 大道家令戒, and in the fourth-century *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經; all three have an eschatological character.[17]

Having thus located texts in which *xin dao*, the term whose semantic field hypothetically comes closest to the Western connotations of belief/believe-in as delineated above, occurs with a high frequency, I will now employ a close-reading approach in the following.

## 3 The Heavenly Masters

### 3.1 *Xin* 信 *in the Laozi Commentaries and the* Xiang'er *Commentary*

Although many conceive of the *Laozi*, or *Daode jing*, as a philosophical text, Daoists of various lineages or traditions throughout history have read and interpreted it as a guideline for religious practice. The term *xin* appears in the chapters 8, 17, 21, 23, 38, 49, 63, and 81 of the *Laozi*, but it does not appear in combination with the object Dao.

The best known early medieval commentaries to the *Daode jing* are the Wang Bi 王弼 (226–249) commentary, classified as *xuanxue* 玄學, the Study of the Dark, and the *Heshang gong* 河上公 commentary (HSG).[18] Lastly, there is the *Xiang'er Commentary* from the Heavenly Master tradition, likely produced in Sichuan in the first half of the third century, before 255 CE. It has survived incomplete in Dunhuang manuscripts.

Neither the Wang Bi commentary nor that of *Heshang gong* use the term *xin dao*; instead the most frequent combination of *xin* is the verb/adjective

16 With additional searches in the Dokisha database, http://www.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/~dokisha/ (accessed 27 May 2022), and the Academia Sinica database, http://erf.sbb.spk-berlin.de/han/ScriptaSinica/hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm, (accessed 27 May 2022).

17 See Kleeman 2008, 982, for the Heavenly Masters, and Mollier 2004, 269, for the *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing*. Compare also the section "Xin in an Eschatological Context" in Goossaert's chapter in this volume. It reminds one also of the eschatological context of believing in the Jewish tradition as well as New Testament and (early) Christianity (cf. Jiang's chapter in this volume with a specific reference to Judaism and Paul).

18 See Wang Ka 1993, 3, and Barrett 2008, 620, for a critical discussion of the dating of the HSG. Although the text's origins remain unclear, it seems certain that it was in circulation by the mid-third century CE.

compound *zhongxin* 忠信 or 信忠 (translatable as "loyal/faithful and trustworthy,"[19] six times in HSG, four times in Wang Bi). It is thus all the more striking that we find in the 34 surviving chapters of the *Xiang'er* commentary out of 31 occurrences of the word *xin* 19 occurrences in the combination *xin dao* 信道. *Dao*, the second part of the phrase, occurs 345 times in the *Xiang'er* commentary; we find it in the following V+O combinations that establish or describe a relation between humans and *Dao*: *de dao* 得道 three times, *xin dao* 信道 nineteen times, *fa dao* 法道 eighteen times, *shou dao* 守道 seven times, *xing dao* 行道 thirteen times, *xue dao* 學道 three times, *wei dao* 違道 four times.

We can note at first glance that with regard to the different ways of relating to Dao as tabulated above, the relative frequency of *de dao* and *xin dao* is inverted here: While overall the quantitative search indicated *de dao* as the most frequent occurrence and *xin dao* as the rarest, in the *Xiang'er* commentary *xin dao* appears most frequently as a V+O combination that describes what humans do in relation to Dao.

To illustrate the usage of the term *xin dao* in the *Xiang'er Commentary*, I will present an excerpt from chapter 20:[20]

> DDJ:「人之所畏，不可不畏，荒其未央。」"That which human beings fear, they cannot but fear—yet vast the number of those not yet ready."
>
> **Commentary:** 道設生以賞善，設死以威惡，死是人之所畏也。仙王士與俗人，同知畏死樂生，但所行異耳。俗人莽莽，未央脫死也。俗人雖畏死，**端不信道，好為惡事**，奈何未央脫死乎！仙士畏死，**信道守誡**，故與生合也。[21]
>
> The Dao established life to reward the good and death to threaten the evil. Death is something that all humans fear. Transcendent kings and nobles, like common people, know fear of death and delight in life. It is just that their actions differ. Ordinary people are "vast in number" and "not yet ready" to escape death. Although they fear death, they still do **not *xin**[22] DAO**, but delight in evil. Is it any wonder that they are not ready to escape death? Transcendent nobles fear death but they ***xin**[23] **Dao, maintaining its precepts** and thus joining with life.

19 See Gentz's chapter in this volume.

20 I am citing from Bokenkamp's (1997) translation; for the sake of my essay's argument, I have replaced the English terms used to translate *xin* with pinyin *xin**.

21 Rao Zongyi 1956, 27.

22 Bokenkamp 1997, 110: "do not keep faith with Dao."

23 Bokenkamp 1997, 110: "keep faith with Dao."

Here, *xin* is a way humans should relate to Dao. *Xin dao* is associated with keeping precepts, with life, and with noble transcendents; and it is juxtaposed with acting in evil ways, death, and common people. The same associations are elaborated also in other parts of the commentary where the term *xin dao* occurs, in particular chapter 21.

The association of *xin dao* with following specific regulations becomes even more pronounced in a slightly later Heavenly Master text, the *Dadao jialingjie* 大道家令戒, which again contains aggregated occurrences of the expression *xin dao*, with five out of fifteen occurrences of the word *xin*.[24]

### 3.2 *Xin* 信 *in the* Dadao jialingjie 大道家令戒[25]

The text begins with a description of Dao in its cosmic dimensions:

> 大道者，包囊天地，系養群生，御萬機者也。無形無像，混混沌沌，然生百千萬種，非人所能名。自天地以下，皆道所生殺也。
>
> The great Dao is that which encompasses heaven and earth, is joined with and nourishes all forms of life, and controls the myriad initiatory mechanisms. Without shape or image, it is undifferentiated and yet spontaneously gives birth to the million species. Though it is something to which humans cannot put a name, from heaven and earth on down everything is born and dies[26] through the Dao.[27]

Then follows a longer exposition of cosmogony, and after that a description of a (presumably current) situation of decay and insecurity. Lack of *xin dao* is named as the reason for the decay.

> 夏商周三代，轉見世利。秦始五溜，更相克害。有賊死者，萬億不可勝數。皆由不信其道。
>
> The three eras—Xia, Shang, and Zhou—saw a turn to desire for worldly profit. Then the Inaugural Thearch of the Qin and the Five Hegemons

24 Cf. also Puett 2004, 11.

25 In *Zhengyi fawen tianshe jiaojie ke jing* 正一法文教戒科經, DZ 788, 12a–19b, transl. in Bokenkamp 1997, 165–185. This text was most probably written in 255 CE, possibly by the third Heavenly Master Zhang Lu 張魯, or by someone impersonating him; see Bokenkamp 1997, 150 and 161, note 4.

26 I cite Bokenkamp's translation, yet we should note that *sha* means "kill," or "bring to death"—which involves an active agency, here from Dao. Thus, a literal translation would be "all are born and brought to death by Dao."

27 Bokenkamp 1997, 165.

> attacked and injured one another and banditry arose. Millions died—more than can be counted. All of this occurred through **not *xin** this Dao.**[28]

Next, the text offers a history of Daoism, where the personified Dao, Taishang Laojun, is a major actor wanting to save human lives.[29] After bestowing the Dao on Gan Ji 干吉, the alleged recipient of the *Scripture of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing* 太平經), the text claims that the Dao went west to the barbarians,[30] imposing extremely strict prohibitions on them (西入胡授以道法，其禁至重，無陰陽之施，不殺生飲食). However, the barbarians were **unable to *xin**[31]Dao** (胡人不能**信道**), and in response Dao transformed itself into a perfect transcendent (遂乃變為真仙), described as a visible being flying above the shores of a river, and after being able to see—that is, verify with bodily senses—the transformed Dao, the barbarians finally did ***xin*** that [visible] perfect transcendent (**信真人**).[32]

This episode emphasizes reciprocity: Humans must *xin dao* in order to be saved by Dao, yet Dao also actively helps to produce the conditions that enable the relation or attitude of *xin dao*. Thus, in the passage above, when the barbarians were unable to *xin* Dao, Dao transformed into a visible shape to convert them.

Overall, in the context of the *Xiang'er* commentary and the slightly later *Dadao jialingjie*, the conceptual connotations of the term *xin* in the V+O phrase *xin dao* suggest a semantic overlap with some elements of the Western concept of belief, in as much as (1) *xin* is the primary way to establish a relation between humans and a higher, or ultimate, being, in our case Dao. Furthermore, (2) this ultimate being (Dao) is not knowable with empirical knowledge (it is "without shape or image"), wherefore *xin* must necessarily occur in absence of empirical proof. (3) *Xin dao* is further associated with obeying specific regulations for human behavior given by Dao; and (4) *xin dao* is a criterion for demarcation: People who do not *xin dao* are depicted as evil, greedy, socially low-standing, and adhering to other teachings, whereas *xin dao* is associated with "noble transcendents" and life.

However, this specific usage of *xin* as a primary way to relate to Dao, which in my opinion can be rendered as "believe in" because of the rather large semantic overlap with the connotations of the Western term, cannot be

28 Bokenkamp 1997, 167: "loss of faith with the Dao."

29 Cf. Assandri (2009, 108–109) for a discussion of the importance of overcoming human mortality in Daoism.

30 The polemic connection to the west and the Buddha is obvious here.

31 Bokenkamp 1997, 170: "place their faith in the Dao."

32 See Bokenkamp (1997, 170) for a translation of the paragraph summarized here.

considered representative for all early medieval Daoism, as a look at the usage of the term *xin* in another early medieval Daoist text from a different environment documents.

## 4 *Xin* 信 in Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Baopuzi* 抱朴子

Ge Hong (283–343), a prominent representative of the Jiangnan Daoist tradition, represents a different type of Daoism:[33] that of the immortality seekers, whose methods were alchemical, physiological, sexual, and dietetic exercises transmitted in secret recipes.

The term *xin dao* appears in his book *Baopuzi* nine times out of 176 occurrences of the word *xin*, five of the nine occurrences being negative references to those who do not *xin dao*.[34] In the four remaining instances, he uses the term as an attribute to *xin* 心, mind, or *xing* 性, nature: the mind of *xin dao* or the nature of *xin dao*, which he described rather as a condition than as something that a human actively does or a way to relate to Dao.[35]

Using *xin* as a verb, Ge Hong mostly employs it in the negated form *bu xin* in the sense of "not believing that"[36] something exists, because of a lack of empirical proof. Where the *Xiang'er* commentary states that a lack of visibility, that is, lack of empirical proof through the bodily senses, should not be a reason to slight Dao, and urges its reader to *xin dao*,[37] Ge Hong seems to propose a very different approach to the issue:

33 His major work *Baopuzi* was written around 320. Ge Hong seems to have been aware of the Heavenly Masters (cf. Kleeman 2016, 64–66), yet the *Baopuzi* shows very little reference to them.

34 Meanwhile, the term *dedao*, obtaining the Dao, appears 24 times, *xingdao* 行道 three times, *shoudao* 守道 five times, *xuedao* 學道 eleven times, and *xiudao* 修道 nine times. *Fadao* 法道 and *shoudao* 受道 do not occur.

35 See, e.g., *Baopuzi*, j. 12: 故胞胎之中，已含信道之性，及其有識，則心好其事，必遭明師而得其法，不然，則不信不求，求亦不得也. Cf. also Meisterernst's chapter in this volume, esp. 3.2, example (54).

36 Here I use the translation "believing" instead of the pinyin *xin*, because *xin* here refers to the "problematic" statement, which seems a clear correspondence to the Western term "believe that."

37 *Xiang'er* commentary, chap. 21; Rao Zongyi 1956, 29; cf. Bokenkamp 1997, 113.

> Ge Hong, *Baopuzi*, j. 2: (13) 鬼神數為人間作光怪變異，又經典所載，多鬼神之據，**俗人尚不信天下之有神鬼**，況乎仙人居高處遠，清濁異流，登遐遂往，不返於世，**非得道者，安能見聞**？而儒墨之家知此不可以訓，故終不言其有焉。俗**人之不信**，不亦宜乎？
>
> Spirits and ghosts often produce strange phenomena and anomalies among humans, even the classics record many proofs of spirits and ghosts, [yet] **the common people do not believe that (*xin*) there are ghosts and spirits in the world**; how much less [will they believe in] immortals, who live in a high and remote place.... and never come back to this world; **those who have not obtained the Dao, how could they see or hear them.** And the Confucians and Mohists know that this cannot be taught, so they never speak about their existence. So is it not understandable that the **common people do not believe in them**?

The issue here is a **belief in the existence** of ghosts and immortals ("belief-that," a problematic statement), not a question of establishing a relation to them. Ge Hong explains that immortals are not visible and audible for commoners, but only for people who have "**obtained**" Dao.[38] The primary way to relate to Dao is therefore to "obtain" it (*dedao* 得道, 24 occurrences in the *Baopuzi*), presumably through practice.

Thus, we find here a juxtaposition of common people who do **not believe that (*xin*)** spirits or immortals exist, because they cannot get empirical proof through their bodily senses, and those who have **obtained** the Dao and can get exactly that bodily sense-related proof, and thus **know** or **see**, presumably because obtaining Dao changes the human faculties of perception.[39]

Thus, while in the cited Heavenly Master texts *xin dao* implies relating to Dao as the highest deity (believe in Dao) and following specific rules, and demarcates life from death, good transcendent people from evil common people, in Ge Hong's text the demarcation achieved by the term *xin* is between common people who do not believe that (*bu xin*) spirits and immortals exist because they cannot verify them with their own senses, and transcendents (immortals) who have **obtained** Dao and therefore can **see** that they exist.

38 The rhetorical question 非得道者，安能見聞 implies that one who **has** obtained Dao could see the immortals.

39 In a similar vein, in the chapter on Alchemy ("Jindan 金丹," j. 4, §3), we find those who do not *xin dao* described as the ones critical of the alchemical enterprise: "又不令**不信道者**知之，謗毀神藥，藥不成矣," and they instead believe or trust in (*xin*) allopathic methods "of medicine"—a term that can be read here as a reference to methods of immortality seekers: (世人不合神丹，反信草木之藥).

Or else, between people who do not trust (*xin*) in the specific Dao of alchemical methods, but opt for alternative "Daos" or methods of practice, and the alchemists. Dao in this context is not understood as a personal deity.

## 5 The *Taishang Dongyuan shenzhou jing* 太上洞淵神咒經

We find another cluster of the term *xin dao* in the *Dongyuan shenzhou jing* (DZ 335):[40] Here the term *xin* occurs 132 times, and forty-two of them in the phrase *xin dao*, mostly in the first ten chapters,[41] which are the earliest layer of this text. Twenty-nine of the forty-two occurrences are in the negative formulation "people who do not *xin dao*." Apart from Dao, *jing* 經, the scriptures (信經, eight times), and *fa* 法, the teaching (信法, seven times), also figure prominently as objects of *xin*.

This text originated at the end of the fourth century in the southern Jiangnan region, most probably from a sectarian movement.[42] It presents an apocalyptic scenario, where the world is invaded by hordes of disease-bringing demons. The scripture promises that the demon kings, who supervise the marauding disease-bringing demons, will interfere and restrain their subordinated demons to protect those who *xin dao* and *xin jing*.[43] The quantitatively almost equal occurrence of *xin dao* and *xin jing* shows that in this particular Daoist sect salvific power is ascribed not only to Dao as a personified deity, but also to the scriptures, which afford access to special divine protection for their legitimate owners.[44]

> *Taishang Dongyuan Shenzhou jing* 1.21: 道言：... 蜀漢之中，有赤鬼三萬，唯殺人民，**為人不信道**. Dao said: ... In Sichuan (Shuhan) there were 30,000 red demons,[45] all they did was kill the people; **this is because the people did not *xin dao***.

40 Cf. Mollier 1990 and Strickmann 2002, 89–100.

41 Chap. 1, four times; chap. 2, four times; chap. 3, five times; chap. 4, three times; chap. 5, seven times; chap. 6, two times; chap. 8, three times; chap. 9, five times; chap. 10, four times; chap. 14, once; chap. 16, once, chap. 20, five times.

42 Mollier 2004, 269.

43 The scriptures here are explicitly named as the Sandong 三洞, a set of scriptures including the Shangqing, Lingbao, and Sanhuang scriptures. Strickmann (2002, 96–97) pointed out that this text reveals Buddhist influence not only in its general setting and frame narrative, but also in the concept of the scriptures it betrays.

44 This might be related to the specific concept of scripture as powerful spiritual objects that form part of the ultimate reality of Dao as proposed in the Lingbao scriptures. Cf. Bumbacher 1995 and 2012, 113ff.

45 In Buddhism, *chigui* refers to the red demons of purgatory.

**1.22:** 道言：庚辰之年，…，天下浩浩，無不畏也。小人相苦，貴人無道。天下九十種病，病殺惡人。 …。當爾之時**惡人多，多有不信道**。受經者，其有受三洞者，大魔王等四十九億萬人悉來下護，助此法師耳。

Dao said: In the *gengchen* year … there will be a great flood in the world, nobody who does not fear. The small people treat each other harshly, the noble people have no Dao (morals), Heaven will send down 90 diseases, and the diseases will kill the bad people. … At that time **the evil people who do not *xin dao* are many**. Among those who receive the scriptures, there are those who receive the Sandong scriptures. The Great Demon kings, 49 billion of them, will all come down and protect them to help these dharma-teachers.

*Taishang Dongyuan Shenzhou jing* **1.2.**: 明羅[46] 等曰：世人積惡，**不信道法**。但聞有哭尸之音，不聞有仙歌之響。 Mingluo and others said: The people of the world accumulate evil, they do **not *xin* in the teaching of Dao**. This is why we only hear the sound of wailing corpses, but not the echo of the songs of the immortals.

Here we have again the motif of the earlier *Xiang'er commentary*: Those who do not *xin dao* act evilly and are associated with death (corpses).

These few examples shall suffice: We can see in this sectarian text again the association of the absence of *xin dao* or *xin jing*[47] with death, illness, disaster, and decay. The people who do not *xin dao/xin jing* are evil, common, or worldly. In all cases, they are juxtaposed to people who *xin dao/xin jing*. The latter will be spared in the coming apocalypse because the all-powerful demon kings will protect those who have received the Sandong scriptures.[48]

## 6 Pledges of Gold and Silk: the Nominal Use of *xin* 信

The emphasis on the salvific powers of scripture in this text from the late Eastern Jin dynasty shall serve as a bridge to another important use of the

46 Mingluo refers to the transcendent Yu Mingluo 真人蔚明羅, a figure otherwise unknown.

47 The strong emphasis on scriptures as equal or almost equal to Dao in terms of their soteriological power in this text differs from that of the early Heavenly Master texts. It might be related to the particular different conception of sacred scriptures in the Jiangnan region (see Strickmann 2002 cited above and Bumbacher 1995, 2012).

48 While this text shares the eschatological outlook with the *Xiang'er* and the *Dadao jialing jie*, it shows no specific references to the Heavenly Masters.

term *xin* in early medieval Daoism: the nominal use of *xin* as a designation of pledges for scriptural transmission.[49]

Many Daoist textual lineages[50] were esoteric, with ritual regulations covering the transmission of the scriptures from master to disciples. Scripture transmission rituals, in early Daoism and in particular in the alchemical tradition, required the adept to "swear a covenant (*meng* 盟) and establish a bond (*yue* 約, a word that in other contexts denotes a legal contract) with his master, and provide tokens (*xin*) that prove his commitment to receiving the texts and instructions and to keeping them secret."[51]

The model for this covenant designated with the terms *shi* 誓, *meng* 盟, *xin* 信, or *yue* 約[52] seems to have been a ritual of Zhou dynasty, in which feudal lords swore allegiance to their overlord (Kohn 2003, 380).[53] The terminology related to this ritual is described for example in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記·曲禮下):

> 諸侯使大夫問於諸侯曰聘，**約信**曰**誓**，蒞牲曰**盟**。When one prince sends a great officer to ask about another, it is called 'a message of friendly inquiry.' When there is a **binding to mutual faith**, it is called '**a solemn declaration**.' When they use a victim, it is called '**a covenant**.'
>
> LEGGE 1885, 112, emphasis mine, FA

Just like the feudal lords in Zhou dynasty established a bond between their overlord and among each other, so did the adept when he received a scripture establish a bond between the deities that guarded the scripture, and with the Master that transmitted the scripture (Kohn 2003, 382). The ancient rituals for the covenant involved blood of a sacrificial victim (usually a white rooster), a practice we still find documented in scriptures of the alchemists tradition,[54]

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49 For discussion of the pledges in Daoism, see Strickmann 1977 22ff, Schipper 2000, 42.

50 See Raz 2012, 4: He argues that Daoism evolved out of "an assemblage of intersecting textual and ritual lineages with a set of shared core beliefs or attitudes which formed a commonality as opposed to other traditions such as Buddhism, on the one hand, and the practices of common religion, on the other."

51 Pregadio 2006, 80.

52 All four terms can occur as single terms or as binomes, in various combinations, see also section four of Gentz's chapter in this volume.

53 For a discussion of these oaths and the accompanying rituals in Zhou dynasty, see Lewis 1990, 43–52. For a discussion of the covenants in early Daoism, see Raz 2012, 91ff.

The idea of covenant (confirmed by an oath) reminds also of biblical ideas of an—old and a new—covenant between God and his people where it is used as a juridical metaphor of a legally binding agreement between the two parties.

54 See Pregadio 2006, 79–82.

and in Ge Hong's *Baopuzi*.[55] Early medieval Daoists, beginning with the Heavenly Masters, rejected blood sacrifices as a major demarcation of their own community from popular local religion as well as from the imperial religion.[56] Thus the rituals which established the covenant between men and gods abolished blood sacrifices in favor of offerings of silk, metals, and other items, as for example this citation from the Shangqing scripture *Dongzhen taishang feixing yu jing* 洞真太上飛行羽經, which is listed in chapter 34 of *Wushang biyao* (DZ 1138, ca. 570 CE) documents:

> 凡受九真玄經者，皆先歃血累壇，剪髮立**盟**，為不宣不洩之**信誓**，後聖以歃血犯生炁之傷，剪髮違膚毀之犯，謹以黃金代刺血之**信**，青柔之帛三十二尺當割髮之**約**。
>
> All who wanted to receive the *Jiuzhen xuanjing*, before had to make a blood oath, establish an altar and cut their hair to establish a covenant (*meng* 盟), as a pledge-oath (*xinshi* 信誓) not to spread and divulge [the scripture]. The latter sage thought a blood oath would commit the violation of harming the rising (life-giving) *qi*, and cutting the hair would contravene by committing the crime of hurting the skin, he urges to take gold to replace the pledges (*xin* 信) of pricking the hand for blood, and thirty-two feet of green soft bo-silk to replace the bond (*yue* 約) of cutting the hair.
>
> *Wushang biyao* DZ 1138, 34, 13a[57]

We can see in this paragraph the terminology of the ancient covenants associated with the ritual for scriptural transmission: *meng* 盟, *yue* 約, *shi* 誓, *xin* 信. Daoist scriptures of the early medieval period contain many more examples, in fact many scriptures contain precise lists of pledges that had to be offered for the transmission of specific scriptures. These pledges were most often (but not exclusively) called *xin* 信, *faxin* 法信, or *xinwu* 信物.

For example, the *Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiuyou yugui mingzhenke* 洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉匱明眞科 (DZ 1411), a text from the original Lingbao corpus dated to ca. 400 CE,[58] lists at the end the pledges required for its transmission, two examples shall illustrate this:

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55 Compare Raz 2012, 98–101.

56 See Raz 2012, 97f.

57 Compare also *Dongzhen taishang feixing yujing jiuzhen shengxuan shangji* 洞真太上飛行羽經九真昇玄上記 (DZ 1351, 10a).

58 See Schipper/Verellen 2004, 225–226.

飛天神人曰受靈寶眞文十部妙經以金龍三枚投於水府及靈山所住宅中合三處**爲學仙之信**不投此三官拘人命籍求乞不達法依玉訣之文有違考属地官九都曹. (37b)

The divinity flying in heaven said: In order to receive the *Wondrous Scripture of the True Writ of the Lingbao* in ten parts, take three figurines of golden dragons and throw them in water, in a numinous mountain and in the place you live, in these three places, this is the pledge (*xin*) for studying [the methods of] the immortals. If one does not throw these three, then the three officials will detain the person's life records, and even imploring them after will not help. The method is according to the oral Jade instructions, those who violate this will be judged by the officials of the nine departments of the underworld.

飛天神人曰受靈寶眞文十部妙經法用上金五兩以盟五嶽**爲寶經之信**闕則犯慢經之科五嶽靈山不頌人學籍違者考属陰官曹. (38a)

The divinity flying in heaven said: For the [ritual] method to receive the *Wondrous Scripture of the True Writ of the Lingbao* in ten parts use five *liang* of high quality gold as a pledge (*xin*) to treasure the scriptures. If these [pledges] are amiss then this violates and disregards the rules of the scripture, and the spirits of the five sacred mountains will not praise the person [as one who is] registered as a student [of the said scriptures]. Those who disobey will be judged by the underworld officials.

In the fifth century, the Daoist Lu Xiujing (陸修靜, 406–477) compiled instructions for the transmission of the Daoist Lingbao scriptures in his *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shouduyi* 太上洞玄靈寶授度儀 (DZ 528),[59] citing the listings of the pledges (*xin*) from this same text.

The practice was so pervasive that the important sixth century encyclopedic compilation *Wushang biyao* (DZ 1138) contains a lengthy section, entitled *Faxinpin* 法信品, dedicated exclusively to the pledges required for scriptural transmission of different texts (DZ 1138, 34, 7a–16b). A quantitative research in this section shows twenty-six occurrences of *meng* 盟, fourteen of *shi* 誓, seven of *yue* 約, and thirty-two of *xin* 信. *Xin* is used as a noun in all cases, five times in the binomial term *faxin* 法信, three times in other binomial terms (*mengxin*

59 Shipper/Verellen 2004, 255–257: the text is a Tang revision, but attribution to Lu Xiujing seems credible. Lu strongly promoted the *Lingbao* scriptures, and his liturgical writings are constructed around these.

盟信, *xinshi* 信誓, and *shixin* 誓信), and twenty-four times as a stand-alone noun, typically in formulaic phrases 用/以 XY 為 YZ 之信 "take objects XY as pledges (*xin*) for YZ." We find the already cited examples from the *Lingbao* scripture transmissions shortened to turn the text into formulaic lists of offerings for specific deities in the ritual transmission, e.g.

> 當以文繒五方之綵各四十尺以關五帝爲告誓之信 (DZ 1138, 34, 7b) "One should take forty feet of patterned silk of the colors of the five directions as pledges (*xin*) for announcing the oath that the five emperors should receive,"
>
> or 法用上金五兩以盟五嶽爲寶經之信 (7b) "the [ritual] method is to use five *liang* (ca. 69.9 g) of high-quality gold to make a covenant with the [deities of the] five sacred mountains as a pledge (*xin*) for treasuring the scriptures."
>
> Or else 凡受外國放品經弟子齎上金九兩襟文之繒三十六尺爲信 (15b) "All disciples who receive the *Waiguofangpin jing* give nine *liang* (ca. 125.82g) of high-quality gold and thirty-six feet of patterned silk[60] as pledges (*xin*)."

These few examples shall suffice here; there are many more to be found in *Wushang biyao* and other early medieval Daoist texts.

The *Wushang biyao* also offers an interesting interpretation of the use of *xin* pledges:

> 天文祕重非信不寶故上聖以信效心無信則爲賤道無盟則爲輕寶 (7b) "The heavenly scriptures must be valued, if there are no pledges (*xin*) then they are not treasured. Therefore the highest sages take pledges (*xin*) to display [the truthfulness] of their mind-heart. If there are no pledges, then this is disdaining Dao, if there is no covenant then this is disesteeming the treasure."

According to this last citation, the pledges (*xin*) are visible proof of the [generally invisible] trust (*xin*) of the inner mind of the adept, and as such they are an important part of the covenant between humans and deities.

We should note though, that the covenant where this trust needs to be made visible is not with DAO or any other entity conceived of as a high deity, origin and rule of all being and a personal god, but with different minor deities with

60 For 襟文 compare the scripture where this is cited from, the *Shangqing waiguo fangpin qingtong neiwen* 上清外國放品青童內文 (DZ 1373, 2, 36b) which reads here 纕紋.

specific mansions, in the cases cited above with the deities of the five sacred mountains. The adepts promise secrecy, and offer material objects (*xin, xinwu, faxin*, etc.) to the gods. The remuneration for them by the gods is a promise of protection and long life in the future.

## 6 Conclusion

To conclude this array of different interpretations of *xin* in various early medieval Daoist texts and contexts, we should ask if some form of coherence of understanding of the term *xin* can be construed—after all, the Chinese character *xin* is always the same. Key to a coherent reading of the usages could be the conception of a contractual nature of the relations of humans with the divine. If the verb *xin* is interpreted as entering a contract, or covenant, with divine beings, and the nominal use of *xin* as a pledge, given to sustain the contract, such a coherence of understanding can be achieved. This understanding would warrant the translation "to believe" for the term *xin*, but with a strong emphasis on the term's contractual nature. Following de Certeau's analysis,[61] it rests on recognition of alterity (the gods) and a contract (made visible with material objects as pledges).

However, we must pay attention to the nature of "the alterity." In most cases of the pledges for scriptural transmission, the divine contractual partners are minor deities with specific mansions. Considering that the covenant rituals' terminology clearly derives from ancient models for contracts among human beings, we could argue that the boundaries between human and divine here are somewhat fluid. Nevertheless the divine partners to the contract or covenant are perceived as superior to the human side; thus, there is difference (in power, or better in "mastery of the contract"), which is an essential condition for "belief to occur."[62]

What about Dao, as ultimate reality or personified manifestation of ultimate reality? Conceived as ultimate reality, Dao differs fundamentally from both humans and the various deities with whom human beings might enter a contractual relationship. Thus, the observation that *xin* ("believing," interpreted as entering a contractual relation) is the least frequently mentioned way to relate to Dao is significant. As the examples from Ge Hong's *Baopuzi* and the statistics cited in the beginning document, many Daoist texts identify the most important way to relate to Dao as striving to "*de*" (obtain) Dao.

61 De Certeau 1985, 192, cited above.
62 Ibid.

Obtaining Dao implies becoming one with Dao. While this can certainly be considered a form of salvation in as much it allows the human who obtained Dao to gain immortality, this process or practice cannot be understood in terms of "belief" with a contractual nature, because with "obtaining Dao" the difference between Dao and human is effaced, and thus one of the necessary conditions for belief, "alterity," is eliminated. In this context, Dao is conceptualized not as a personified savior deity, but rather as something that an adept might "obtain" through practice. For this practice he will need instruction and help—from human masters, from divine beings, and from sacred scriptures. In order to practice, the adept needs to "*xin*" Dao, i.e., trust in the efficacy of the method (Dao—the ambiguity of the term Dao itself is relevant here). Divine beings, who protect the sacred scriptures and the human adepts legitimately owning them, can be enlisted for help by establishing a covenant and offering pledges (*xin*).

Yet we also found clusters of the usage of *xin dao*, proposing *xin* as the main way to relate to Dao, understood as a personified deity, in the earliest texts of the Heavenly Masters and in the *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing*. These texts originated in sectarian environments; they were communitarian, with more or less pronounced eschatological tendencies.

It is in these texts' usage of *xin* in the phrase *xin dao* that we find the largest semantic overlap with the Western notions of "belief" and "believe-in," in as much as *xin* is here the primary way for human beings to relate to Dao, which is conceived as an ultimate reality and personified deity. We could speculate that it was the aspect of personified savior deity that brought the abstract reality of Dao close enough to the "human plane" (because as personified deity it shared some features with humans or gods) to allow human beings to "*xin*" Dao—to "believe in Dao" in the sense of entering a contractual relation with Dao.

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CHAPTER 6

# The Concept of Faith in Chinese Buddhist Scriptures

*Tam Wai Lun*

## 1 Introduction

Faith is a central theme in religions of the book. The Christian tradition certainly comprises a wide range of meanings of the term "faith." The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives eight broad meanings of the word, including the following three related to religion:

1. Belief in and acceptance of religious doctrine
2. A system of religious belief
3. Firm trust or belief in or reliance upon something[1]

In such general senses, we certainly could talk about the "faith" of the Chinese Buddhists. In this paper, I aim to investigate how central the concept of faith or *xin* 信 is to Chinese Buddhist scriptures. In what sense does the Chinese Buddhist tradition use the term? We must first, perhaps, examine whether we are reading a foreign concept into pre-modern Chinese scriptures. Was the concept of "faith" intended to be used in the Buddhist scriptures? As the concern of the present chapter is with Chinese Buddhism, I will focus on texts of the Chinese Buddhist canon, including those translated into or written in Chinese, such as the apocryphal scriptures. From the second century onwards, Buddhist texts using the local Indian language that modern linguistics called Gandhari began to be translated into Chinese. As Barrett has put it, this "marked the beginning of one of the most extensive and protracted translation enterprises in world history."[2] Since then, over one and a half thousand works were rendered into Chinese out of Indian languages. The Buddhist texts, however, were not introduced to China in the order of their date of composition. The following survey will be, therefore, carried out in a loose chronological order of the translation of the Buddhist texts to find out how the concept of "faith," if there

1 Simpson and Weiner 1989, entry on "faith," https://www.oed.com/oed2/00081816 (accessed 10 November 2020).

2 Barrett 2019, https://www.bl.uk/sacred-texts/articles/translation-and-transmission-of-buddhism (accessed 10 November 2020).

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is any, was used in the translated Chinese Buddhist texts and what is its role in the Buddhist path as introduced in Chinese Buddhist scriptures.

In this chapter, by adopting a comprehensive textual approach, I will show that "faith" is indeed an important concept in Chinese Buddhist scriptures. In early translated texts, faith often appears as the first of a list of practices representing progressing stages of the Buddhist path. This indicates the preparatory nature of the role of "faith" in early translated Chinese Buddhist texts. While the concept of faith has both a cognitive and emotive aspect, it will be shown that the cognitive aspect, represented by the compound term "Confidence in Reality," or *xinjie* 信解, later became dominant in Chinese Buddhism. It is a deep understanding that keeps one continuously engaged in the Buddhist path. In early translated Buddhist texts, the objects of faith are retribution (*xinyou zuifu* 信有罪福) and the "Three Jewels" (*sanbao* 三寶). While these remain constant objects for faith in Chinese Buddhism, more emphasis was gradually given to the faith in Buddha nature that is well articulated in the Tathāgata School and its texts. This is because it provides a solution to the problem of the long path to the Buddhist salvation which already shows up in Pure Land Buddhism. The Pure Land path, which is characterized as an "easy path," may often mislead one to think of it as a path of "faith alone" in which we are not "saved" by what we do. It will be argued that this is not the case in Chinese Buddhism. What is at stake is the faith in one's Buddha nature which came to be the central tenet of Chinese Buddhism as a solution to the problem of a long path to the Buddhist salvation.

## 2 The Concept of "Faith" in the Chinese Buddhist Canon

### 2.1 *The Textual Evidence*

An early definition of faith in the Buddhist scripture is found in the *Za ahanjing* 雜阿含經 (Saṃyukta Āgama or Āgama of Combined Discourses), translated into Chinese by Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (394–468) from Magadha, India. According to this text, Mahānāma 摩訶男, one of the Buddha's first five monastic disciples, asked the Buddha what complete "faith" meant for the *upāsaka* (layman). The Buddha replied: "It is to have correct and unwavering faith and not be influenced by others including monks, Brahmins, heavenly beings, or demons."[3] Here, faith is defined as an attitude of strong, firm, and steady

3 *Za ahanjing* fascicle 33 no. 927, in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (Tōkyō: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932) (hereafter cited as T): T2:236b(18–22). The number after "T" is the volume number. The number after the

commitment, not to be changed or influenced by anyone. This confirms that "faith" or *xin* is indeed a concept used in Chinese Buddhist scripture.

One of the earliest occurrences of the term *xin* in Chinese Buddhist scriptures is found in the *Foshuo nandi shi jing* 佛說難提釋經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha to Nandi), translated by Faju 法炬 (*c*.259–309), an assistant of the famous early translator Dharmarakṣa (竺法護, 229–306) from Dunhuang, who not only introduced Guanyin 觀音 (bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara) to China through his translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經), but was also responsible for bringing 154 other sūtras into Chinese. Being unfamiliar with the Chinese language, Dharmarakṣa relied on assistants like Faju to translate the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese.[4] In the *Nandi shi jing*, a disciple of the Buddha called Nandi asked the Buddha what one should do if one had neither the chance to be with nor learn from the Buddha or the monastic community. The Buddha said that "one should practice the 'Five Methods' constantly: Always have faith, practice the precepts, listen to preaching extensively, give alms, and cultivate wisdom (*xin jie wen shi hui* 信戒聞施慧)." Later on, the text teaches that the practice of these "Five Methods" will lead to a rebirth in heaven.[5] A similar teaching is found in another text, *Foshuo zhai jing* 佛說齋經 (Sūtra on Fasting), a Theravāda sūtra in the Āgama section of the Chinese Buddhist canon said to have been translated in the third century by a son of an immigrant from the country of the Greater Yuezhi 月氏 called Zhi Qian 支謙.[6] This text also claims that practicing the "Five Methods" leads one to be reborn in heaven.[7] This *Zhai jing* was written for Buddhist laymen. It primarily teaches the Eight Precepts Observance (*ba guanzhai* 八關齋), which is still a popular Buddhist lay practice today. The eight precepts are taught together with the five kinds of Mindfulness, namely the Mindfulness of the Buddha, of his teaching, of his community, of his precepts, and of Heaven. The topic of faith appears in the Mindfulness of Heaven, or to be more exact, the Mindfulness of the Six Heavens of the Desire Realm.[8] Strong faith is

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colon is the page number. The letter after the number represents the column, "a" for upper, "b" for middle, and "c" for lower column. The numbers in the bracket are the numbers of the lines where the quotation is located.

4 Mei Naiwen 1996.

5 *Foshuo nandi shi jing*, T2: 506b(25).

6 The Yuezhi were nomadic pastoralists in the western part of the modern Gansu province in China, later split into the Greater Yuezhi and Lesser Yuezhi. Some scholars believe that the Yuezhi were an Indo-European people speaking the Tocharian language. See Narain 1990, 151–177, and Nattier 2008, 116.

7 *Foshuo zhai jing*, T1: 911c(11–12).

8 The Six Heavens of the Desire Realm refer to: 1. Caturmahārājakayikas, or the heaven of the four deva-kings 四王天, who guard the four quarters of the world; 2. Trāyastriṃśa,

required in this practice of the mindfulness of six heavens. Fundamentally, it is to bear in mind the blissful state of the Six Heavens, thereby generating a desire to be reborn there. It is generally believed that the teaching on methods to be reborn in heaven was intended to convert Indian non-Buddhists who already strongly believed in heavenly rebirth. It is mostly found in early Buddhist texts. The teaching of heavenly rebirth therefore suggests that the text belongs to an early phase of Buddhism when rebirth rather than Nirvāṇa was accepted as a goal of the Buddhist religion.[9] Corroborating evidence that the text *Nandi shi jing* belongs to an early phase is that there is a parallel paragraph in the *Za ahanjing* or Āgama of Combined Discourses,[10] which is the oldest *āgama* collection and is thought to be the only *āgama* compiled at the First Buddhist Council in Rājagṛha (literally, "house of the kings") in the present Indian state of Bihar. Many contemporary Chinese Buddhists also know this group of five practices (faith, precepts, teaching, almsgiving, wisdom) as the "five norms for being a Buddhist layman" (*zaijia wufa* 在家五法).[11]

Apart from the "Five Methods," the concept of faith also appears as one of the "Five Wholesome Roots" (*wugen* 五根), the "root of faith" (*xin'gen* 信根), and as one of the "Five Powers" (*wuli* 五力), the "power of faith" (*xinli* 信力), both of which belong to another group of thirty-seven kinds of practice for the attainment of enlightenment (*sanshiqi daopin* 三十七道品).[12] The term "thirty-seven kinds of practice" appears rather late in Chinese Buddhism. It probably first appears as a group of practices in the *Zengyi ahan jing* 增一阿

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the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods 三十三天 (also 忉利天 rayastriṃśa); 3. Yāmā, the heaven where the God Yāma resides 夜摩天; 4. Tuṣita, the heaven of contentment where the bodhisattva Maitreya is said to be preparing to be reborn in the world as the next kalpa's Buddha 兜率天; 5. Nirmāṇa-rati, the heaven where one's desires are magically fulfilled at will 樂變化天; 6. Paranirmita-vaśavartin, the heaven where one can partake of the pleasures of others, and also where Pipanyan, the King of the Māras, resides 他化自在天. Cf. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%85%AD%E6%AC%B2%E5%A4%A9 (accessed 10 November 2020).

9 Huang Huiying 2003.

10 *Za ahanjing*, fascicle 31 no. 874 and no. 930 in T2: 221a(8) &237c(5–7). Cf. fascicle 33 no. 927 in T2: 236b(18)–236c(9).

11 See Shi Shengyan 2013, http://www.fodizi.tw/qt/shengyanfashi/12442.html (accessed 10 November 2020).

12 They are the Four Bases of Mindfulness 四念處, the Four Kinds of Right Effort 四正勤, the Four Occult Powers 四神足, the Five Wholesome Roots 五根, the Five Powers 五力, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment 七覺支, and the Eightfold Holy Path 八聖道. See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on 三十七道品, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id(%27b4e09-5341-4e03-9053-54c1%27) (accessed 10 November 2020).

含經 (Ekōttarāgama-sūtra or the Incremental Āgama).[13] As noted by Damien Keown, out of the four Āgamas of the Sanskrit *Sūtra Piṭaka* in the Chinese Buddhist canon, much of the *Zengyi ahan jing* was not formed until a fairly late date.[14] The term *sanshiqi daopin* is also found in the *Apidamo Dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (the Great Exegesis of Abhidharma), a text of the Sarvāstivāda School that is one of the major branches of Indian Abhidharma Buddhism. The text was written some 600 years after the death of the Buddha, that is, around 150 CE, and was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664).[15]

In addition, both "Five Roots" and "Five Powers" appeared separately in earlier texts, i.e., not as a group of the thirty-seven kinds of practice. "Root of faith," for instance, appears in fascicle 26 of the *Za ahanjing* translated by Guṇabhadra as part of the Five Roots.[16] Interestingly enough, "Power of faith" appears differently in the *Za ahanjing* as part of "Three Powers" (*sanli* 三力), "Five Powers," and "Seven Powers" (*qili* 七力), in which the power of faith always comes first.[17] This indicates that faith as one of the "Five Powers" from the group of the thirty-seven kinds of practice was not finalized at the time when the *Za ahanjing* was put together as a scripture. The concepts of "Root of faith" (*xin'gen*) and "Power of faith" (*xinli*) continued to be used in translated texts such as the *Xinli ruyin famen jing* 信力入印法門經 (Sūtra on Entering into the Seal of Dharma by the Power of Faith), translated later by Gautamaprajñā ruci (瞿曇般若流支, fl. 538–543) from Vārāṇasī.[18]

The term "Root of faith" was again found as a separate term in the same text *Apidamo dapiposha* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, which contains "thirty-seven kinds of practice for the attainment of enlightenment" (*sanshiqi daopin* 三十七道品).[19] We therefore believe that the "thirty-seven kinds of practice for the attainment of enlightenment" were put together some time 600 years after the Buddha and both "Root of faith" and "Power of faith" had been circulated

13 *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經, fascicle 1 序品第一; T2:551a(4).

14 Keown 2004, entry on "Ekottara Āgama," https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198605607.001.0001/acref-9780198605607-e-577?rskey=gBZCdu&result=577 (accessed 10 November 2020).

15 Potter et al. 1996, 1–636.

16 *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經, fascicle 26, no. 643; T2:182a(27–29).

17 The "Three Powers": Power of Faith, Mind and Wisdom is found in the *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經, no. 664, T2:184b(27–28), the "Five Powers" is found in no. 673; T2:185c(1–2) as 信力．精進力．念力．定力．慧力; the "Seven Powers" is found in fascicle 26, no. 691, T2:188a(20–21) as 信力、精進力、慚力、愧力、念力、定力、慧力.

18 *Xinli ruyin famen jing* 信力入印法門經, on the root of faith 信根: T10:936a(1–2), and on the power of faith 信力: T10:936a(19–20).

19 *Apidamo dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, T27:366a(12).

separately as part of other groups of Buddhist practices. It may not be easy to reconstruct how and when this happened, but it is clear enough that the concept of faith always appeared in groups of practices of the Buddhist path.

Further evidence that "faith" as a term in Chinese Buddhist scriptures always comes as a part of a group of practices is that it appears in the "*Wushier wei* 五十二位," or the fifty-two stages in the Bodhisattva path, in texts derived from the Tathāgata-garbha tradition, including the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經 (Flower Ornament Sūtra) translated by Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀, 652–710) from Khotan 于闐 in present southwestern Xinjiang, the *Renwang jing* 仁王經 (Sūtra for Humane Kings) translated by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什, 335–409), and the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (Sūtra of the Diadem [Crown] of the Primary Activities of the Bodhisattvas), said to have been translated by Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 (*c*.364–446) from Liangzhou 涼州 of present-day Gansu province.[20] The first ten stages in the "fifty-two-stage path" are called the "Ten stages of faith" (*shixin* 十信) since faith is the entry point of Buddhist practice. It is alternatively known as the "Ten kinds of mind" (*shixin* 十心). They are:

1. The Stage of Faith (*xinxin* 信心); the arousal of true aspiration.
2. The Stage of Mindfulness (*nianxin* 念心); the cultivation of six kinds of mindfulness.
3. The Stage of Endeavor (*jingjinxin* 精進心).
4. The Stage of Mental Stability (*dingxin* 定心).
5. The Stage of the Wisdom of Understanding Emptiness (*huixin* 慧心).
6. The Stage of Pure Self-restraint (*jiexin* 戒心).
7. The Stage of the Returning of Merit (*huixiang xin* 廻向心).

20 The fifty-two stages in the Bodhisattva path are broken down in the groups of the Ten Stages of Faith (*Shixin* 十信), Ten Abodes (*Shizhu* 十住), Ten Practices (*Shixing* 十行), Ten Dedications of Merit (*Shi huixiang* 十迴向), Ten Grounds (*Shidi* 十地), Virtual Enlightenment (*Dengjue* 等覺, also known as *Wu goudi* 無垢地), and Marvelous Enlightenment (*Miaojue* 妙覺). See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on the fifty-two stages 五十二位, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E4%BA%94%E5%8D%81%E4%BA%8C%E4%BD%8D (accessed 10 November 2020). While the *Huayan jing* contains no mention of "Ten Stages of Faith" as such, there are many discussions on the concept of faith in fascicle 14, the chapter on the Bodhisattva Xianshou 賢首品; cf. T10:72a(22ff). The concept of "Ten Stages of Faith" appears in the *Renwang jing* 仁王經, fascicle 1, in the chapter on the teachings of the Bodhisattva 菩薩教化品; T8:827b(18). It is also a prominent concept in the *Yingluo jing* 瓔珞經. According to this scripture, practicing the Ten Stages of Faith for fewer than ten *kalpas* can allow one to attain the stages of Ten Abodes, i.e., the mind dwells peaceably in the principle of emptiness. See T24:1014b(29)–14c(1).

8. The Stage of Maintaining the Dharma within Oneself (*hufa xin* 護法心).
9. The Stage of Detachment (*shexin* 捨心).
10. The Stage of Aspiration (*yuanxin* 願心).[21]

Faith also appears in one of the six groups of mental factors that comprise the full set of seventy-five *dharmas* of the Yogācāra (*weixin* 唯識) School outlined in the fourth-century *Jushe lun* 俱舍論 (Treatise on Kośa) of Vasubandhu 世親 (fourth–fifth century). The seventy-five mental factors listed in the *Jushe lun* classify all *dharmas* into seventy-five categories, divided into four groups:

(1) Material factors (*sefa* 色法) *rūpāṇi* (eleven items)
(2) Mind (*xinfa* 心法) *cittam* (one item)
(3) Factors associated with mind (*xin suoyou fa* 心所有法) *citta-saṃprayukta-saṃskārāḥ* (forty-six items)
(4) Factors not associated with mind (*xin buxiangying xingfa* 心不相應行法) *cittaviprayukta-saṃskārāḥ* (fourteen items)

Faith appears in the third of the above four groups, that is, factors associated with the mind 心所有法, which is again further divided into six:

(i) Omnipresent factors (*bian dadi fa* 徧大地法) *mahābhūmikāḥ* (ten items)
(ii) Wholesome functions (*da shandi fa* 大善地法) *kuśala mahā bhūmikāḥ* (ten items)
(iii) Major afflictions (*da fannaodi fa* 大煩惱地法) *kleśamahābhūmikāḥ* (six items)
(iv) Major unwholesome functions (*da bushandi fa* 大不善地法) *akuśalamahabhūmikāḥ* (two items)
(v) Minor afflictions (*xiao fannaodi fa* 小煩惱地法) *upakleśabhūmikāḥ* (ten items)
(vi) Indeterminate functions (*budingdi fa* 不定地法) *aniyatabhūmikāḥ* (eight items)

The second group (*Da shandi fa* 大善地法) of the above list consists of ten mental conditions for cultivation of wholesomeness, and faith is the first of the ten mental conditions.[22] The ten "Wholesome Functions" also appear as terms separate from the group of seventy-five dharmas in the *Apidamo*

21 See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on Ten Stages of Faith 十信, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id(%27b5341-4fe1%27) (accessed 10 November 2020).

22 The Ten Mental Conditions for Cultivation of Wholesomeness are faith (*xin* 信), zeal (*qin* 勤), pliancy (*qing an* 輕安), equanimity (*she* 捨), conscience (*can* 慙), shame (*kui* 愧), no-clinging (*wutan* 無貪), lack of antipathy (*wuchen* 無瞋), non-injury (*buhai* 不害), and vigilance (*bu fangyi* 不放逸). See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*,

*dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 or the Treatise of the Great Commentary on the Abhidharma, translated into Chinese by Xuanzang.[23] They are also found in the *Apidamo pinleizu lun* 阿毘達磨品類足論 (Treatise on the Dharma Classification of the Abhidharma), one of the six basic texts of the Sarvāstivāda school, which is attributed to Vasumitra 世友 of the first century and was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang in 660.[24]

I could further point out that the concept of faith appears in one of the "Seven Divisions of Sages" (*qizheng* 七證)[25] in the Abhidharma tradition recorded in the *Apidamo jushe shilun* 毗達磨俱舍釋論 (Verses on the Treasury of Abhidharma) by Vasubandhu in the fourth or fifth century, translated into Chinese by Paramārtha 真諦 (499–569) from Ujjain in central India and later re-translated by Xuanzang. This text summarizes the Sarvāstivādin tenets in eight chapters with a total of around 600 verses. According to the Theravāda tradition, there are four stages of training, the highest of which is that of "no more training" (*wuxue* 無學), belonging to an arhat. One who is still practicing and progressing in the Buddhist path and not yet perfected is in the *śaikṣa* (*youxue* 有學) stage, meaning that one is still engaged in spiritual training. This stage is further divided into "Eighteen Levels of Applied Practices" (*shiba youxue* 十八有學, or *aṣṭādaśa-śaikṣāḥ*).[26] The first is called "Practice According to Faith" (*suixinxing* 隨信行). It is for so-called "dull faculties" (*dungen* 鈍根).[27] The next level is the "Practice According to the Teachings" (*suifaxing* 隨法行),

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entry on *Dashan difa* 大善地法, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%A4%A7%E5%96%84%E5%9C%B0%E6%B3%95 (accessed 10 November 2020).

23 *Apidamo dapiposha* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, fascicle 42, T27: 220b(2–4).

24 *Apidamo pinleizu lun* 阿毘達磨品類足論, fascicle 2, T26: 698c(11–12).

25 Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on *Qizheng* 七證, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id(%27b4e03-8b49%27) (accessed 10 November 2020).

26 The "Eighteen Levels of Applied Practices or aṣṭādaśa-śaikṣāḥ" are: practice according to faith (*suixin xing* 隨信行), practice according to the teachings (*suifa xing* 隨法行), confidence in reality (*xinjie* 信解), attained through insight (*jianzhi* 見至), witnessing in this body (*shenzheng* 身證), goer from clan to clan (*jiajia* 家家), one interruption (*yijian* 一間), approaching stream winner status (*yuliu xiang* 預流向), realizing stream winner status (*yuliu guo* 預流果), approaching once-returned status (*yilai xiang* 一來向), realizing one's returner status (*yilai guo* 一來果), approaching non-returner status (*buhuan xiang* 不還向), realizing non-returner status (*buhuan guo* 不還果), the intermediate state (*zhongpan* 中般), rebirth into Nirvāṇa (*shengpan* 生般), Nirvāṇa with practice (*youxing pan* 有行般), Nirvāṇa without practice (*wuxing pan* 無行般), and Nirvāṇa countering the flow (*shangliu pan* 上流般). See *Apidamo jushe lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍釋論, T29:277c (9).

27 Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on *Suixin xing* 隨信行 (*śraddhânusāra*), http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?96.xml+id(%27b96a8-4fe1-884c%27) (accessed 10 November 2020).

which belongs to practitioners of "sharp faculties" (*ligen* 利根). The third level is called "Confidence in Reality" (*xinjie* 信解, *adhimukti* or *adhimukta*).

In the *Foshuo xinfo gongde jing* 佛說信佛功德經 (Sūtra on Merit of Faith in the Buddha), which is related to the *Sampadāniyasutta* in the Pāli Canon, the "Eighteen Levels of Applied Practices" were condensed into seven *pudgalas* (*bute galuo* 補特伽羅), which are: (1) Practice According to Faith (*suixin xing* 隨信行), (2) Practice According to the Teachings (*suifa xing* 隨法行), (3) Confidence in Reality, (4) Attained through Insight (*xianzhi* 見至), (5) Witnessing in this Body (*shenzheng* 身證), (6) Wisdom Liberation (*hui jietuo* 慧解脫), and (7) Liberation through both Wisdom and Concentration (*ju jietuo* 俱解脫).[28]

Finally, the concept of faith was introduced in another group of concepts known as the "Seven Holy Assets" (*qisheng cai* 七聖財). It appears in the *Wenshu shili wenjing* 文殊師利問經 (Sūtra on Questions from Mañjuśrī) translated by Sajghavarman (僧伽婆羅, 460–524), from Funan 扶南 in present Cambodia which gives the Seven Holy Assets as: faith (*xin* 信), shame (*can* 慚), ashamed (*kui* 愧), almsgiving (*she* 捨), precepts (*jie* 戒), hearing of the teaching (*wen* 聞), and wisdom (*hui* 慧).[29] It also appears in a text that consists of a collection of Jātaka stories entitled *Dafangbian fo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經 (Great Skillful Means Sūtra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness) by an unknown translator in seven scrolls, translated in the period of 445–515 CE.[30] It appears again in the *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經 (Great Treasures Collection Sūtra), translated in the Tang by Bodhiruci (菩提留支, fifth–sixth centuries) from north India,[31] and in the famous *Da bore jing* 大般若經 (Large Sūtra on Perfection of Wisdom), translated by Xuanzang.[32] The term continued to be used in later texts like *Foshuo dasheng pusazang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Orthodox Teaching

28 Translated by Devaśāntika (天息災, d. 1000), who changed his name to Faxian 法賢 at Emperor Taizong's (r. 976–997) command. *Foshuo Xinfo gongde jing* 佛說信佛功德經, T1:255c(26–27). The *Jingang sanmei jing* 金剛三昧經 (*Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*) teaches a five-level practice: (1) Stage of faith (*Xinwei* 信位); (2) Stage of deliberation (*Siwei* 思位); (3) Stage of cultivation (*Xiuwei* 修位); (4) Stage of practice (*Xingwei* 行位); (5) Stage of nonattachment (*Shewei* 捨位); T 273.9.371a–b. However, scholars tend to believe the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* was composed in China and is not a translated scripture. Cf. Kōgen 2003, 62–63.

29 *Wenshushili wenjing* 文殊師利問經, T14:500b(14).

30 *Dafangbianfo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經, T3:141a(20–22).

31 *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經, fascicle 35; T11:198a(25) and in fascicle 52; T11:305c(11–12).

32 *Da bore boluo miduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, fascicle 3; T5:12b(11–14).

of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva),[33] translated by Dharmapāla (法護, 963–1058), who came to China from Kashmir of north India in 1004, and in the *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing* 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Sāgaramati Bodhisattva's Question of the Practice of Pure Seals [samādhi]), translated by Weijing 惟淨 (d. 1052) and others.[34] Weijing was the nephew of the last ruler Li Yu 李煜 (*c*.937–978) of the Southern Tang during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.

My above survey of the concept of faith in Chinese Buddhist scriptures has shown that while faith is indeed a concept used in the Buddhist scriptures, it appears as part of a group of practices. In different groupings of practices, faith always appears at the beginning of the list, indicating its preparatory nature, as a preparation for one to engage in the Buddhist path. Practice according to faith is for those who are not ready for practice according to teachings. This can also be illustrated by two quotations from two influential Buddhist scriptures. The first comes from the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論 (Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom), attributed to Nāgārjuna (Longshu 龍樹) (*c*.150–*c*.250 CE), the founder of the Mādhyamaka School of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and was translated in the Later Qin by the renowned Kuchean Buddhist scholar Kumārajīva. The text states, "It is by virtue of faith that one is able to enter the great sea of the Buddha's Dharma. It is by virtue of wisdom that one is able to cross over."[35] The other quotation is from the *Huayan jing*: "Faith is the basis of the path, the mother of virtues, nourishing and growing all good ways."[36]

It is clear that "faith" in Buddhism prepares one to enter the practice of Buddhism according to the teachings of the Buddha. This, however, is not the whole story. Faith also plays a role in the next stage, "Practice according to the Teachings." The "Confidence in Reality" within the "Eighteen Levels of Applied Practices" (*shiba youxue* 十八有學) mentioned above appears as a chapter title in the famous *Lotus Sūtra* translated by Kumārajīva.[37] It is also frequently found in the *Focang jing* 佛藏經, also translated by Kumārajīva

33 *Foshuo dasheng pusazang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經, fascicle 5, T11:830b(27) on 阿闍梨財, or the assets of a religious preceptor (*ācārya*), and fascicle 9, T11:875a(25) on 七聖財.

34 *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing* 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經, fascicle 12, T13:505a(29).

35 *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論, fascicle 1, T25:63a (1–2). 佛法大海，信為能入，智為能度。

36 *Huayan jing*, fascicle 14, T10:72b (18). 信為道元功德母，長養一切諸善法， An earlier version of the *Flower Garland* scripture in 60 fascicles, translated by Buddhabhadra (佛馱跋陀羅, 359–429), gives the same statement on *xin*: "Faith is the basis of the path" 信為道元功德母, fascicle 7, T9:433a (26).

37 *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, chapter "Xinjiepin 信解品," T9:16b(7).

in 405.[38] This compound term "Confidence in Reality" is crucial in Chinese Buddhist scriptures.[39] It is also found in the popular text *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經 (Sūtra on the Merit of the Former Vows of the Seven Medicine Buddhas of Pure Crystal Radiance), translated by Yijing 義淨 (635–713) from Shandong 山東. The text, addressing the merit of chanting the names of the seven medicine Buddhas, states, "Ānanda! This is an extremely deep realm of the Buddhas that is difficult to have 'Confidence in Reality' (*xinjie* 信解). You, however, could admit and accept (*xinshou* 信受) it as the mighty power of the Buddha."[40]

The term "Confidence in Reality" continued to be popular in the Song and appears frequently in the text *Foshuo dacheng Pusa zang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經, translated by Dharmapāla 法護 and others.[41] There was even a scripture by the name of *Foshuo xinjie zhili jing* 佛說信解智力經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Power of Wisdom from Faith Based on Confidence in Reality), translated by Faxian 法賢 (also known as Devaśāntika 天息災, d. 1000) from Kashmir of north India in the Song.[42] *Xinjie* 信解 is also found in the text *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing* 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Questions of Bodhisattva Haiyi on the Practice of the Pure Seals).[43]

A good elucidation of "Confidence in Reality" was provided by Yixing 一行 (683–727), who was ordered by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762) to come to court to assist Śubhakarasiṃha (善無畏, 637–735) in translating the *Darijing* 大日經 (Vairocana Sūtra, also known as *Dapiluzhena chengfo shengbian*

38 Examples of *xinjie* 信解 in the *Focang jing* 佛藏經 are: T15:783a(28), 796c(9), 799b(4), 800a(5), 801b(6), 802b(19), 803a(15), 803a(20), 803b11. In T15:799b(4–7), the text states any monk who lacks a proper understanding of emptiness and yet receives offerings would make one impure and should be treated as a heretic and a thief of the Buddhist teachings (*Buneng xinjie … xing shi shamen, xin shi weitao, wei daofaren* 不能信解 … 形是沙門，心是外道，為盜法人).

39 *Xinjie* 信解 is the second most frequently appearing compound term related to *xin* 信 in the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, generating 4,247 results. The most frequently appearing term is *xinxin* 信心, which generates 4,730 results. The third most frequently appearing term is *xinshou* 信受, with 2,932 results.

40 *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經, fascicle 2, T14:415b(18–20). 阿難！此是諸佛甚深境界，難可信解。汝能信受，當知皆是如來威力。

41 Examples are: T11:785b(13), 794a(1), 794a(5), 794b(25),795a(12), 797a(9), 797a(27).

42 In the *Foshuo xinjie zhili jing* 佛說信解智力經, T17:747b(8) it defines the term *xinjie* 信解 as Five Powers: 信力 the Power of Faith (*śraddhā-bala*); 精進力 the Power of Effort (*vīryabala*); 念力 the Power of Mindfulness (*smṛti-bala*); 定力 the Power of Concentration (*samādhi-bala*); 慧力 the Power of Wisdom (*prajñā-bala*).

43 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經, T13:476b(26), 487a(1), 488b(11), 489c(8) etc.

*jiachi jingjuan* 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經卷 or the Sūtra of the Manifest Enlightenment of the Grand Resplendent One). In 724, the translation of the *Darijing* was completed and thereafter Yixing was requested to further clarify the text; he thus composed his commentary, the *Darijing shu* 大日經疏 (Commentary on the Vairocana Sūtra T1796), which he is thought to have completed in 725 CE. Yixing explained that

> *Xinjie* 信解 in Sanskrit is *abhimukti* [阿毘目底, probably a misspelling of *adhimukti*],[44] which means one approaches a teaching without any doubt—as one would dig a well, when one has not seen the water yet but is confident of its presence as soon as one finds mud. *Shenxin* 深信 in Sanskrit is *śraddhā* (捨攞馱). This is a belief based on reasoning or the teachings of others, such as those given by an elder.[45]

The *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集 (Compilation of Translated Buddhist Terms) by Fayun 法雲 (1088–1158), also says, "Faith without understanding is ignorance. Understanding without 'Confidence in Reality' (*xinjie*) is a mistaken view. Only with authentic 'Confidence in Reality' can one reach the source (the innately pure mind)."[46]

Therefore, faith also has a role to play when it comes to teachings, not just preparing for receiving teachings. It is faith in the sense of confidence in the Buddhist view or understanding of reality. This represents a transformation of the object of faith from the earlier "Law of Retribution" and the "Three Jewels" to a deep understanding of reality. The early *Foshuo zuiye yingbao jiaohua diyu jing* 佛說罪業應報教化地獄經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Retribution, Moral Education and Hells), a text translated in the second century by the Parthian An Shigao 安世高 in the late Eastern Han, was concerned with inducing faith in the newly introduced religion by calling attention to

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44 See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on 阿毘目底, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E9%98%BF%E6%AF%98%E7%9B%AE%E5%BA%95 (accessed 10 November 2020).

45 *Dari jing yishi* 大日經義釋, fascicle 3, in *Shinsan dainihon zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本続蔵経, ed. Kawamura Kōshō 河村照孝, Nishi Giyū 西義雄, and Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975–1989) (hereafter cited as X); X 23:304b(23)–304c(17) where the number after "X" is the volume number. The number after the colon is the page number. The letter after the number represents the column, "a" for upper, "b" for middle, and "c" for lower column. The numbers in the bracket are the numbers of the lines where the quotation is located.

46 *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集, fascicle 1, T54:1061c(18–19): (*Xin ruo wujie, xin shi wuming, jie ruo wuxin, jie shi xiejian, xinjie zhenzheng, fangliao benyuan* 信若無解。信是無明。解若無信解是邪見。信解眞正。方了本源).

the cause of rebirth in hell, which is supposedly not believing in the "Three Jewels" (that is the Buddha, his teaching, and his community of monks) or the "Law of Retribution." Another early text, *Foshuo fenbie jing* 佛說分別經 (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on Distinction), translated by Dharmarakṣa, discusses belief in retribution (*xinyou zuifu* 信有罪福), which will lead to rebirth in heaven.[47] The *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* talks about the deep belief in the "Three Jewels."[48] And the *Za ahanjing* identifies the "Four Objects of Indestructible Faith" (*shibu huaixin* 四不壞信) or "Four Objects of Unfailing Purity" (*shibu huaijing* 四不壞淨), that is the "Three Jewels" and the Rules of Morality (*jie* 戒), as the objects of faith.[49]

A text entitled *Foshuo dacheng guang wuyun lun* 大乘廣五蘊論 (Extensive Mahāyāna Treatise on the Five Skandhas), composed by An Hui 安慧 (Sthiramati), a sixth-century south Indian Buddhist scholar-monk renowned for his numerous and detailed commentaries on Yogācāra and Abhidharma, and translated by Divākara (地婆訶羅, 614–688) from mid-India, provides a definition of faith: "What is faith? It is to accord with the recondite true teaching of karma (*ye* 業), realizations (*guo* 果), noble truth (*di* 諦), and the Three Jewels (*sanbao* 三寶), thereby purifying one's mind."[50] Here we have four objects of faith: karma, realization, truth, and the Three Jewels.

The most comprehensive definition of faith can be found in the famous *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 (Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-Only), which is Dharmapāla's (法護, 530–561) commentary on the *Weishi sanshi song* 唯識三十頌 (Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only) by Vasubandhu to explain the entire received system of Yogācāra in an organized fashion. Supposedly, this text was translated into Chinese by Xuanzang. Most scholars, however, believe that the result is not a direct translation of a text but a selective, evaluative editorial, drawing on several (traditionally ten) distinct texts. The text states:

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47 *Foshuo fenbie jing* 佛說分別經, the Sanskrit title of which is unknown. Cf. T17:541b(26).

48 *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經, fascicle 1; T14:410b(19).

49 *Za ahanjing* 雜阿含經, fascicle 20, no. 554 T99:145b(10).

50 *Dacheng guang wuyun lun* 大乘廣五蘊論, T31:852a(10–11). 云何信。謂於業果諸諦寶等。深正符順。心淨為性。 I am following the reading of the passage by the modern scholar-monk Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005). See Yinshun 1985, 85, on "3. *Shiyi shanxinsuo* 十一善心所," http://yinshun-edu.org.tw/Master_yinshun/y44_01_04_01_03 (accessed 10 November 2020).

> What is belief (*śrāddha*)? It is the deep understanding of, and the ardent desire for, realities, qualities, and capacities. It has as its essential nature the purification of the mind. Its special activity consists in counteracting unbelief (*aśrāddha*) and loving that which is good. The varieties of belief are three in number:
>
> (1) Belief in realities (*shiyou* 實有). This signifies the profound faith in, and understanding of (*shen xinren* 深信忍), dharmas really existing, things, or principles (verities) (*zhenli* 真理).
>
> (2) Belief in qualities (*youde* 有德). This signifies the profound faith in, and intense fondness for (*shenxinle* 深信樂), all the pure qualities of the Three Precious Ones (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha).
>
> (3) Belief in capacities (*youneng* 有能). This signifies the profound faith in one's power to attain and realize all good mundane and supramundane *dharmas* (*shenxin youli* 深信有力), and produce the desire and aspiration for them.[51]

This represents a transformation of the object of belief in Chinese Buddhism. According to this text, three meanings of faith could be discerned in seventh-century Buddhist China:

(1) Faith based on a deep understanding of verities, also known as "Faith Endurance" (*shenxinren* 深信忍) ("deep faith endurance because of a deep understanding"). The *Cheng weishi lun* explains: "Tolerance is excellent understanding (*shengjie* 勝解). This is the cause of faith."[52] It refers to a cognitive aspect of faith and is closely related to another compound noun (*xinjie* 信解), which is also prominently used in the *Cheng weishi lun*.[53]

(2) Intense fondness for the Buddhist teaching out of faith (*shenxinle* 深信樂). The compound noun was commonly used before the translation of *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi śāstra* or *Cheng weishi lun* by Xuanzang. It is found in an early text, *Foshuo fenbie jing* 佛說分別經, translated by Dharmarakṣa.[54] It is also used in the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (Larger Pure Land Sutra), translated by Sajghavarman

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51 *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 fascicle 6: T31n1585: 29b(22–27). For an English translation, cf. Wei Tat 1973, 389. Chinese characters and transliterations of key terms in the passage are added in brackets by the author.

52 *Cheng weishi lun*, T31:29b(28–29).

53 *Cheng weishi lun*, T31:14c(2).

54 *Foshuo fenbie jing* 佛說分別經, T17:541c(28). 阿難問佛：「後若有人，信樂應法，至心欲求，斷世違俗，以從正道。若時無明師傳教誡者，若有一人，書寫戒律授與之，便可得度為道者不？」

(康僧鎧, 248–303) from India,[55] and in the *Focang jing*, translated by Kumārajīva.[56] *Xinle* 信樂 refers to an emotive aspect of faith. The *Cheng weishi lun* calls it a fruit of faith.[57]

(3) Profound conviction in the capability to realize the religious goal (*shenxin youli* 深信有力) (literally, "deep faith in capability"). This motivates one to put the teachings into practice. *Xinli* 信力 refers to a motivational aspect of faith. A more common compound noun is perhaps *xinshun* 信順, literally, "to believe and follow." Another even more common phase is *xinshou fengxing* 信受奉行, which frequently appears at the end of a *sūtra* or a śāstra, where it serves as confirmation that the whole congregation comprehended the Buddha's sermon, heartily took refuge in his teaching, and promised to practice it. The phrase, however, seems to appear quite late. The earliest appearance I could find is in the *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經.[58] It then frequently appears in texts translated in the Song such as the *Foshuo dasheng pusa zang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經, translated by Dharmapāla, who came to China in 1004,[59] and in *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing* 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經.[60]

## 2.2 *Concluding Discussion on the Concept of Faith in Chinese Buddhist Scriptures*

In his commentary on the *Huayan jing*, Qingliang Chengguan 清涼澄觀 (737–838) divides the scripture into four parts:

(1) The first Assembly is on goals to generate faith with joy (*juguo quanle shengxin fen* 舉果勸樂生信分)

(2) The second Assembly to seventh Assembly are on goals that generate understanding through cultivation (*xiuyin qiguo shengjie fen* 修因契果生解分)

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55 *Wuliangshoujing* 無量壽經,T12:268a(26)設我得佛，十方眾生至心信樂欲生我國，乃至十念，若不生者，不取正覺.

56 *Fozang Jing* 佛藏經, T15:789c(20) 心不清淨歡喜信樂，自知有過便疑此經：and T15:801b(04). 弊人不能信樂大法，於清淨大法無真實想。

57 *Cheng weishi lun*, T31:29b(29). 樂欲謂欲即是信果。

58 *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經, T14:418a(28): 信受奉行。

59 *Foshu dasheng pusa zang zhengfa jing* 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經. Examples are T11:799a(9); T11:834b(29); T11:846a(2); T11:853a(11). The compound noun *xinshun* 信順 also appears frequently in the text, e.g., here: T11:810a(13). See also T11:811a(3), 811b(17), 817b(7).

60 *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing*, T13:504c(29)–505a(1); T13:522b(26–27). The compound noun *xinshun* 信順 also appears frequently in the text, e.g.: T13:481c(16); T13:487c(3); T13:509b(18).

(3) The Eighth Assembly is on Cultivation (*tuofa jingxiu chengxing fen* 託法進修成行分)
(4) The Ninth Assembly is on Attainment and Achievement of virtues (*yiren zhengru chengde fen* 依人證入成德分)

This division became influential in Chinese Buddhist circles. The sequence of faith (*xin* 信) → leading to understanding (*jie* 解) → and to cultivation (***xing*** 行) → and finally to attainment (*zheng* 證) became a standard interpretation of stages in the Buddhist path, in which faith is the starting point. It is by virtue of faith that one is able to enter the great sea of the Buddha's Dharma.

My survey of the concept of faith in the Chinese Buddhist scriptures has yielded a similar result. Faith is regarded as the cause or the root for entering the Buddhist path as well as the condition or power that induces one to enter the Buddhist path. An important aspect for faith in Buddhism is the cognitive aspect represented by the compound term "Confidence in Reality." It is a deep understanding that keeps one continuously engaged in the Buddhist path. This is vividly shown by another compound term *xinren* 信忍 (literally, "faith endurance"). Deep understanding leads to intense fondness and deep joy represented by the compound term *xinle* 信樂, also commonly known as *faxi* 法喜, or "bliss of the Dharma," which is an emotive aspect of the Buddhist faith. Finally, we have the fruit of faith, *xinshou* 信受, or more commonly expressed as *xinshou fengxing* 信受奉行, a confirmation to heartily take refuge in Buddha's teaching and vows to put into practice.

## 3 Faith in Pure Land Buddhism

### 3.1 *Fideism in Buddhism?*

As noted in the beginning of this paper, faith is a central theme in religions of the book. "Faith" encompasses a wide range of meanings in the Christian tradition. The kind of faith represented by the Chinese compound term *xinkao* 信靠 or *xinlai* 信賴 cherished in the Christian tradition could be well illustrated by three healing stories in the gospel: the story of the healing of a paralyzed servant,[61] of a lady suffering from haemorrhage,[62] and the healing of two blind men.[63] The three stories' common feature is that all the subjects put their

61 Matthew 8:6–10, cf. https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=47&bible_chapter=8 (accessed 13 November 2020).
62 Matthew 9:20–22, https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=47&bible_chapter=9 (accessed 13 November 2020).
63 Matthew 9:27–29, cf. https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=47&bible_chapter=9 (accessed 13 November 2020). https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=47&bible_chapter=8 (accessed 13 November 2020).

confidence in Jesus. It is a trust in his ability to heal and a surrender of their will to him that is responsible for their healing. According to these stories, the Christian faith is thus not so much an intellectual agreement with an idea or accepting something as truth than a trust in and surrender of our wills to rely on our object of faith, Jesus.[64]

Is there a similar element of faith in Buddhism, referring to confidence in one's object of faith—designated as *xinkao* 信靠 or *xinlai* 信賴—with a connotation of trust and reliance which is similar to the monotheistic religions of the book? Here, Pure Land Buddhism immediately springs to mind. The scholar Huang Chi-chiang 黃啟江 has used the word "fideism" to describe Pure Land Buddhism's later development in China into a form with an exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone.[65] In the second part of this paper, I will examine the concept of faith in Pure Land Buddhism in China. I will argue that the dominant meaning of faith in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism is not so much an obedient faith in the sense of complete trust or confidence in someone, than faith as an ideal that requires works to achieve.

The popularity of the Pure Land faith could well be illustrated by the famous saying "every (Chinese) household [would chant] 'Amituo' (a Chinese version of the Sanskrit Amitābha) 家家阿彌陀." When we talk about Pure Land faith, we almost automatically equate it with Amitābha Buddha, or Amituofo 阿彌陀佛 in Chinese. Huang Chi-chiang, however, has rightly pointed out that it was not until the Song (960–1279) period that the Amitābha faith became the dominant mode of Pure Land faith in China.[66] Faith in the Pure Land of Maitreya was once as popular as—if not more popular than—that of Amitābha. As early as the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420), the famous monk Daoan 道安 (312–376) took a vow to be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven in order to be near Maitreya and be with him when he descended to earth. In the succeeding centuries, during the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–535), two great cave complexes were carved, sponsored by the court and royal families. The first lay at Yungang 雲岡, the other at Longmen 龍門. At Yungang, the earlier of the two sites, the Maitreya figures are prominent. The Longmen caves also contain many Maitreya figures that date to the first part of the sixth century.

According to Tsukamoto Zenryū's 塚本善隆 (1898–1980) survey of images made in Longmen, from 495 to 570 CE thirty-six images were made of Maitreya,

64 For further insights in the historical semantics of faith or belief in the Old and New Testaments and later periods in the West, see Jiang's chapter in this volume.

65 Huang 1999, 109.

66 Huang 1999, 108. Cf. the saying of the Northern Song Chan master Dazhong Delong 大中德隆禪師: *Chuchu mituofo, jiajia guanshiyin* 處處彌陀佛，家家觀世音. *Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會元, fascicle 16, X80:339c(4–6).

compared with forty-nine of Śākyamuni and nine of Amitābha.[67] This material evidence speaks to the fact that the Maitreya faith was still prominent during the sixth century. The famous monk Xuanzang is a witness to this. His biography relates that Xuanzang vowed to be reborn in the pure land of Maitreya[68] and that he had made a thousand paintings of the Maitreya Buddha image as an act of faith.[69] The first female emperor Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705), who lived in the same period, was proclaimed to be an incarnation of the Maitreya Buddha. The famous Yulin 榆林 Cave 25 in Guazhou 瓜州, 170 kilometers from Dunhuang 敦煌 and built around 776, also bears witness to the co-existence of the Maitreya and Amitābha faiths.[70] This cave preserves complex and large mural paintings on both the *Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing* 佛說觀無量壽經 (Amitāyus/Amitābha Meditation Sūtra) and the *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒下生經 (Sūtra That Expounds the Descent of Maitreya Buddha and His Enlightenment).[71] These mural paintings indicate that both the Amitābha and Maitreya faiths were popular in the eighth century.

What the Yulin cave painting on the Amitābha faith depicts, however, is far from "fideism" or an exclusive reliance upon faith alone. The mural painting is divided into three sections, with the predominant middle section depicting the "Paradise of the West," flanked by strips of tales in the *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* (Maitreyavyākaraṇa Sūtra), respectively known as "Enmity before Birth" and "Sixteen Visualizations (*shiliu guan* 十六觀)." Illustrated on the right margin of the preaching scene are the "Sixteen Visualizations." This corresponds to the part of the *Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing* in which Śākyamuni teaches

67 Tsukamoto 1969, 377–379. Corroborating evidence can be found in Coburn 1959, 124–131, in which he gives the number of images in Yungang and Longmen as: 112 images for Śākyamuni, 115 images for Maitreya, 29 for Amitābha, and 82 for Avalokiteśvara.

68 *Datang gu sanzang xuanzang fashi xingzhuang* 大唐故三藏玄奘法師行狀 (Biography of the Master of the Three Baskets Xuanzang in Tang), T50:219a(6): "From an early age, the master frequently wished to be reborn in the the Buddha-place of Maitreya (*fashi congxiao yilai, changyuan sheng mile fosuo* 法師從少以來。常願生彌勒佛所)."

69 Huili 慧立 (615–?), *Datang daciensi sanzang fashi chuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (Biography of the Master of the Three Baskets at the Cien Monastery of the Tang), fascicle 10; T50:277a(2–4).

70 Photography is forbidden in the cave but images are available through the website of the Dunhuang Academy, a national comprehensive institution responsible for overseeing the Mogao Caves of a UNESCO World Heritage Site located near Dunhuang in Gansu, China. Cf. http://public.dha.ac.cn/content.aspx?id=71980646305 9 (accessed 13 November 2020). The author visited the cave on 16 May 2019.

71 Translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 401, but an earlier version was produced by Dharmarakṣa, based on the *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含 *Ekottarika Āgama*, fascicle 44, T2:787c(2)–789c(27).

Vaidehī how to visualize the Pure Land to attain rebirth there.[72] Śākyamuni explains the importance of performing meritorious acts in order to be reborn in the Pure Land:

> Whoever wishes to be born there should practice three acts of merit: first, caring for one's parents, attending to one's teachers and elders, compassionately refraining from killing, and doing the ten good deeds; second, taking the three refuges, keeping the various precepts and refraining from breaking the rules of conduct; and third, awakening aspiration for Enlightenment, believing deeply in the law of causality, chanting the Mahayana sūtras and encouraging people to follow their teachings.[73]

The scripture's message makes it clear that rebirth in the Pure Land is not achieved by faith alone. Human works play a major role. In the final part of the *Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing*, Gautama Buddha discusses the nine levels into which those born into the Pure Land are categorized.[74] Sentient beings who commit such evils as the five gravest offenses, the ten evil acts, and all kinds of immorality could also be reborn in the Pure Land by sincerely and continuously saying the "Homage to Amitābha Buddha" (*Namo Amituofo* 南無阿彌陀佛) ten times. This seems to lend support to the idea of "fideism" in Pure Land faith. Sentient beings committing the gravest offenses, such as evil acts and immorality, would be incapable of saving themselves from the curse of their own bad karmas, but they could still be reborn at the lowest level of the lowest grade within a lotus-bud in the Pure Land by the saving vows of the Amitābha Buddha. However, this is not the end of the story. According

72 The thirteen contemplations are: 1. Contemplation of the setting sun; 2. Contemplation of an expanse of water; 3. Contemplation of the ground in the Pure Land; 4. Contemplation of trees in the Pure Land; 5. Contemplation of ponds in the Pure Land; 6. Contemplation of various objects in the Pure Land; 7. Contemplation of the lotus-throne of the Buddha; 8. Contemplation of the image of Amitābha; 9. Contemplation of Amitābha himself; 10. Contemplation of Avalokiteśvara; 11. Contemplation of Mahāsthāmaprāpta; 12. Contemplation of the aspirants to the Pure Land; 13. Contemplation of Amitābha and the two bodhisattvas.

73 Hisao Inagaki, trans. 2014, 4–5, https://www.hongaku.net/uploads/1/1/9/4/11947063/contemplation_sutra.pdf (accessed 13 November 2020). The text follows the *Taishō Tripitaka* edition, vol. 12, *Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經, T12:341c(9–13).

74 The nine levels are: (1–3) The highest level of the highest grade; the middle level of the highest grade; the lowest level of the highest grade; (4–6) the highest level of the middle grade; the middle level of the middle grade; the lowest level of the middle grade; (7–9) the highest level of the lowest grade; the middle level of the lowest grade; the lowest level of the lowest grade.

to the scripture, sentient beings who commit such evils would be reborn inside a lotus bud which would open for rebirth only after twelve great *kalpas*. Being trapped in a lotus bud for these twelve great *kalpas*[75] would serve both to spend off one's bad karma and engage in intensive religious practice.

The Maitreya faith, meanwhile, has two aspects: One is to gain rebirth in a future perfect society into which Maitreya will also be born and becomes Buddha to save all; the other aspect is to gain rebirth in the Tuṣita Heaven where Maitreya now resides. One could then benefit from Maitreya's teaching there. The former is depicted on the left of the north wall of Yulin cave 25 based on the *Mile dachengfo jing* 彌勒大成佛經 (Sūtra of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Attainment of Buddhahood), translated by Kumārajīva.[76] It contains anecdotes announcing Maitreya's future birth as the son of the minister Brahmayu in the city of Ketumatī under the reign of King Cakravartin-rāja Sankha. The painter's intention was to show a scene of peace and happiness in line with scripture, describing the joys of the time when Maitreya shall be born.[77] The main body of the painting screen depicts the Maitreya's three meetings. Maitreya currently resides in the Tuṣita Heaven and will descend to earth to preside over the Dragon Flower Assembly and bring about a new era in which all human

75 The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a *kalpa* as "an immense period of time, reckoned as 4,320 million human years, and considered to be the length of a single cycle of the cosmos (or 'day of Brahma') from creation to dissolution," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/kalpa (accessed 13 November 2020). In another simple explanation, there are four different lengths of *kalpas*. A regular *kalpa* is approximately 16 million years long (16,798,000 years), and a small *kalpa* is 1000 regular *kalpas*, or about 16 billion years. Further, a medium *kalpa* is roughly 320 billion years, the equivalent of 20 small *kalpas*. A great *kalpa* is 4 medium *kalpas*, or around 1.28 trillion years. Therefore 12 great *kalpas* is 12 × 1.28 trillion years = 15.36 trillion years. See Epstein in collaboration with the editorial committee of the Buddhist Text Translation Society 2003, 204.

76 *Mile dachengfo jing* 彌勒大成佛經, T14:428b(24)– 434b(12). It is believed that *Mile dachengfo jing* was an enlarged version of the earlier *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒菩薩下生經 (Sūtra that Expounds the Descent of Maitreya Buddha and His Enlightenment), translated by Dharmarakṣa (228–306), collected in T14:421a(3)–423c(1).

77 In Maitreya's land on earth, there will be no sorrows or cares, floods, fires, weapons, or men of war; nor shall any man suffer from hunger, poisoning, or other hurt; T14:424a(8–9). Women will only marry when they reach the age of 500; T14:423c(20), the people of the land when their span of life is over, will go of their own accord to the tomb and die there; T14:424a(6–7). Peace and happiness will prevail. Foods will all be in plenty, plowing and sowing will be no labor for one sowing will yield seven-fold; T14:424a(19). All the ground will everywhere be covered with golden sand; and here and there will be heaps of silver and of gold; T14:424a(3–4). In none of the towns or villages will men shut their gates. In Maitreya's time, many people will take up the religious life and meditate. Ordination scenes appear at the bottom of the Yulin cave 25 painting. King Sankha also leave his home and studies the way in company with his 84,000 great ministers.

beings will be saved in three commissions. The painting and the scripture the painting is based on describe an imagined ideal society that the faithful wishes to be reborn in. It is a place "on earth" rather than a pure land "in heaven."

Yet another aspect of the Maitreya faith is represented by the *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing* 佛說觀彌勒上生兜率天經 (Scripture on Rebirth in the Tuṣita Heaven),[78] translated by Juqu jingsheng 沮渠京聲 (?–464). This should be a later text as it quotes the just-mentioned earlier text *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒菩薩下生經.[79] The scripture starts with a question from Upāli, one of the ten chief disciples of the Buddha and an expert of monastic discipline and code, during an assembly with the Buddha at the famous Qishu jigudu yuan 祇樹給孤獨園 (Jetavanavihāra) of Śrāvastī. The question was what would happen to Ajita, another name for Maitreya who was also present in the assembly, if he died as an unenlightened person who had neither practiced meditation nor eliminated all afflictions.[80] The Buddha's answer was straightforward and simple: Ajita would die twelve years later and be reborn in the Tuṣita Heaven. The scripture then goes on to describe how different gods in the Tuṣita Heaven offered their precious jewel and celestial crowns, which turned into palaces, rows of trees, a heavenly lady, and music. Floral canopies, a wish-granting jewel and a pretty girl sprang from the follicles of different gods.[81] These descriptions of the Tuṣita Heaven fit its status as a heaven in the fourth level of the realm of desire.[82] The Buddha also told Upāli that the Tuṣita Heaven was the reward for those who practiced ten kinds of wholesome behavior.[83] The above descriptions of the Tuṣita Heaven were meant to be objects or themes for contemplation, the Buddha states in the text:

78 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing* 佛說觀彌勒上生兜率天經, T14:418b(3)–420c(23).

79 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing*, T14:420a(8).

80 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing*, T14:418c(6)–418c(9).

81 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing*, T14:418c(14)–419b(29).

82 Six heavens lie above Mount Sumeru, each higher than the last, stretching up towards the form realm (Sejie 色界).

83 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing*, T14:419c(2). Cf. T14:420b(24–25). The ten kinds of wholesome behavior are listed in *Yujia lun* 瑜伽論, T30:292b(4): 1. not killing (*bu shasheng* 不殺生); 2. not stealing (*bu toudao* 不偷盜); 3. not committing adultery (*Buxieyin* 不邪淫); 4. not lying (*bu wangyu* 不妄語); 5. not speaking harshly (*bu ekou* 不惡口); 6. not speaking divisively (*bu liangshe* 不兩舌); 7. not speaking idly (*bu qiyu* 不綺語); 8. not being greedy (*bu tanyu* 不貪欲); 9. not being angry (*bu chenhui* 不瞋恚); 10. not having wrong views (*bu xiejian* 不邪見).

> For those monks and laymen alike who are not tired of life and death and wish to be reborn in Heaven, if they love and respect an unsurpassed mind of enlightenment and wish to be the disciples of Maitreya, they should practice contemplation as described above. Besides, they should observe the Five Precepts[84] and Eight Precepts,[85] taking the full precepts to enter the Buddha saṃgha, be diligent in practice of the body and mind but not seek to break the bonds of afflictions, and practice the ten kinds of wholesome behavior.[86]

The scripture's message makes it clear that rebirth in Maitreya's Pure Land in the Tuṣita Heaven is also not achieved by faith alone. Human works play a major role. Scholars generally believe that the faith of Pure Land Buddhism developed from faith in Maitreya to co-existence of faith in Maitreya and Amitābha, and was then dominated by faith in Amitābha from the Song period onwards. Huang Chi-chiang has convincingly pointed out that debates and doubts on the Pure Land faith were still circulating in the Song period.[87] It was not until the Tiantai monk Zhipan 志磐, towards the end of the Southern Song, created a lineage for the Pure Land school for the first time in his *Fozu tongzhi* 佛祖統紀 (Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs, fascicle 26 *Jingtu lijiao zhi* 淨土立教志) that Pure Land became a "school."[88] Nevertheless,

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84 The minimal set of moral restrictions to be observed by Buddhist householder-practi tioners. They are: not killing (*bu shasheng* 不殺生); not stealing (*bu toudao* 不偸盜); no debauchery (*bu xieyin* 不邪婬); no false speech (*bu wangyu* 不妄語); no consumption of alcohol (*bu yinjiu* 不飲酒).

85 The Eight Precepts are: not to kill (*bu shasheng* 殺生); not to take things not given (*bu yuqu* 不與取); not to engage in ignoble (i.e. sexual) conduct (*fei fanxing* 非梵行); not to speak falsely (*bu xuwang yu* 不虛妄語); not to drink alcohol (*bu yinjiu* 不飲酒); not to use cosmetics, perfumes, jewelry, or engaging in dancing, singing, or seeing such performances (t*ushi xiangman wuge guanting* 塗飾香鬘 舞歌觀聽); not to sleep on beds or seats that are high off the ground, wide, or ornately decorated (*mianzuo gaoguang yanliuchuang shang* 眠坐高廣嚴麗床上); not to eat out of regulation hours, i.e. after noon (*shi feishi shi* 食非時食), also called (*zhaifa* 齋法). *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on *Bajie* 八戒.

86 *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing* 佛說觀彌勒上生兜率天經 T14:419c(5)–419c(9).

87 Huang 1999, 105–130.

88 Robert Sharf perhaps is the first English-speaking scholar to point out that "Pure Land never existed at all as an independent exegetical tradition, much less an institution or sect, in T'ang or Sung China" and that "There is simply no evidence that figures later regarded as major Pure Land patriarchs—T'an-luan 曇鸞 (476–542), Tao-Ch'o 道綽 (562–645), and Shan-tao 善導 (613–681), for example—conceived of themselves as

before and during the Song period, there were doubts expressed on the adequacy of the practice of chanting the name of Amitābha of the Pure Land faith that tends to replace the traditional Buddhist practices of listening to preaching on scriptures, reading and chanting scriptures, and keeping precepts. Another accusation was that the Pure Land practice replaces the religious target of attaining Nirvāṇa of Buddhism by seeking rebirth in the Pure Land.[89] A strong challenge to the Pure Land faith is that seeking rebirth in the Pure Land requires one to give up the Mahāyāna ideal of saving all sentient beings, aiming instead for personal comfort in the Pure Land.[90] Another doubt on the Pure Land faith was that its teaching is nothing more than an expedient teaching, but not the Perfect teaching of the Buddha. The Tiantai masters, however, strongly defended against this claim.[91]

Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆 has pointed out that Pure Land Buddhism in Japan after Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) was very different from Pure Land Buddhism in China. Hōnen emphasized *nembutsu* 念佛 based on the *hongan* 本願 (primal vows of the Amitābha Buddha) and salvation by *tariki* 他力 ("other-power"). This is because humanity's ability to listen to and to practice the Buddhist teachings deteriorates over time and loses effectiveness in bringing individual practitioners closer to Buddhahood at the present time of *mappō* 末法, or the Latter Day of the Law. Pure Land Buddhism in China,

belonging to a distinct or autonomous school." See Sharf 2002, 8 and 287, note 5. See also Kleine's chapter on Shin Buddhism in this volume.

89 Huang 1999, 108.

90 This is one of the ten doubts concerning the Pure Land attributed to Zhiyi of Tiantai, which scholars believed to be written by Tiantai scholars in the Song period. See *Zhu shìyi lun* 注十疑論, X61:154a(3)–154a(4): "One who aspires to rescue living beings … Why then is there this emphasis to seek rebirth in the Pure Land and attain the peace and tranquility there? To abandon living beings and to be apart from living beings is not great compassion; it is just to benefit oneself, and obstructs the path to Bodhi. 若欲救度眾生 … 因何求生淨土？自安其身，捨離眾生則是無大慈悲，專為自利，障菩提道。" The *Treatise* answers this challenge by quoting the *Vimalakīrti-Nirdeśa-Sūtra* (*Weimojie suoshuo jing* 維摩詰所說經), which asks how when one's own sickness is not cured, one cannot help to cure others. "自疾不能救，而能救諸疾？"; T14:542a(15). The *Treatise* goes on to say that this is because defilement is strong in this world. If one has no endurance, one's mind would bend to circumstances and be bound by sounds and forms; hence, one would be reborn in the three suffering destinies (hell-denizen, animal, and hungry ghost), so how could one save others? "自無忍力，心隨境轉，聲色所縛，自墮三塗，焉能救眾生？" See *Jingtu shiyilun* 淨土十疑論, T47:77c(5–6).

91 For instance, Zunshi 遵式 (964–1032), in his *Wangsheng jingtu jueyi xingyuan ermen* 往生淨土決疑行願二門 (Resolving Doubts on Rebirth in the Pure Land by Practice and Vows), states that Pure Land is the Perfect teaching of the Mahāyāna doctrines: "今談淨土唯是大乘了義中了義之法也"; T47:145b(11–12).

however, insists on observation of precepts and practice of meditation.[92] Even the *Wuliangshou jing* teaches that one with few morally positive habits (literally, "wholesome roots," *shan'gen* 善根) and causes of meritorious virtues (*fude yinyuan* 福德因緣) could not gain rebirth in the Pure Land![93]

In the above, I hope I have shown clearly enough that while faith is important in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, rebirth in Pure Land is not by faith alone. Human works have played a major role in both the Maitreya and Amitābha forms of Pure Land Buddhism since the third century, after the *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒菩薩下生經 was translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva in 401 in Chang'an.

### 3.2 *The Problem of a Long Path to Salvation*

Pure Land Buddhists tend to characterize their path as an "easy path," versus the traditional "difficult path." The term comes from the *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra*, A Commentary on the Sūtra on the Ten Grounds of the Bodhisattva), attributed to Nāgārjuna and translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva.

> There are numerous ways in Buddhism. This is similar to traveling in this world. There is a difficult way and an easy way. When one walks on foot, one would be in distress. When one travels by boat, it would be much easier. The path of a Bodhisattva is similar to this.... If there is an easy path which leads swiftly to the *avinivartanīya* (stage of non-retrogression), it is for the weak and the vulgar, not for those with strong ambitions.... If a Bodhisattva wants to reach the stage of non-retrogression in this life and achieve *anuttarā samyak saṃbodhi* or perfect enlightenment, he should recite the names of the Buddhas of ten directions.[94]

Legend has it that Nāgārjuna obtained a copy of the *Huayan jing* from the palace of a Dragon king that was a much longer version than the one circulated in the human world. The *Dābhūmivibhā sāstra* is a portion of the commentary he wrote on the newly obtained *Huayan jing*. Note that in the above quotation Nāgārjuna describes the cultivation method of the easy path for a Bodhisattva

92 Yang Baiyi 1985, 107–108. Cf. Yang Zengwen 1997, http://www.guoxue.com/discord/yzw/ywhd.htm (accessed 13 November 2020).

93 An alternative title is *Amituo jing*, see T12:347b(9–10): "It is not possible to obtain rebirth in that land with few wholesome roots and meritorious causes and conditions 不可以少善根福德因緣，得生彼國." On Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, see Kleine's chapter in this volume.

94 *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論, fascicle 5, T26:41b(3–4; 15–16).

as a recitation of the names of Buddhas of ten directions. It was Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542), who advocated a method of recitation concentrating on the name of the Amitābha Buddha alone.[95] It was the same Tanluan who emphasized faith, relying on other powers and the Buddha's vows for rebirth in the Pure Land Buddhist path.

In early Buddhism, the term bodhisattva was primarily used to refer specifically to Gautama in his former life. The "Yujia zhangzhe hui 郁伽長者會" chapter of the *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經[96] describes it as an arduous, difficult monastic path suited only for the few, which is nevertheless the most glorious path one can take. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the bodhisattva ideal is more universally applied. It refers to a human being committed to the attainment of enlightenment for the sake of others. Becoming a bodhisattva is the goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Although the Theravāda also holds the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest and the noblest,[97] it does not provide a separate literature devoted to the subject. The modern renowned Burmese Theravāda Buddhist monk, the Venerable Mingun Sayadaw (1911–1993),[98] in his monumental work, *The Great Chronicle of Buddhas*, says that for the Bodhisattvas of a wisdom mode, they will take four *asaṅkhyeyyas*[99] and a hundred-thousand aeons to become a Buddha. For the Bodhisattva of a faith mode, they could become Buddhas after eight *asaṅkhyeyyas* and a hundred-thousand aeons. For the

95 *Wuliangshou jing youbodishe* 無量壽經優波提舍 (Treatise on the Sutra of Limitless Life), also known as *Wangsheng lun* 往生論 (Treatise on Rebirth), T40:844a(26–27); T40:844a(1–2); T40:843c(25).

96 The "Yujia zhangzhe hui 郁伽長者會" (The Inquiry of Ugra) contained in the *Da baoji jing* 大寶積經, fascicle 82, T11:472b(4). This is a variant translation of the *Fajing jing* 法鏡經 (Sutra of the Dharma Mirror, *Ugraparipṛcchā sūtra*).

97 Rahula 1974, 137–138. Cf. Mingun Sayadaw 1992.

98 Venerable Mingun Sayadaw 明昆三藏持者大長老 was best known for his memory skills and his role in the Sixth Buddhist Council. Under the auspices and patronage of the U Nu government, the Sixth Buddhist Council was held in the purpose-built Mahapasana Cave at the Kaba Aye Pagoda in Yangon from 1954 to 1956. As the "Chief Respondent," the Sayadaw answered all questions concerning the Vinaya. He is said to have recalled the exact book, page, and line of every term in the Tripitaka. On the Sixth Buddhist Council, see Addison J. Eastman 1954, 281–285.

99 The word *asaṅkhyeyyas* or "*asaṃkhyeya*" in Sanskrit literally means "innumerable" in the sense of "infinite." It is a Hindu/Buddhist name for the number $10^{140}$ as it is listed in the *Huayan jing*. See *Huayan jing*, fascicle 45, Śikṣānanda (652–710), trans.; T10:237b(7). According to Mingun Sayadaw, there are three kinds of Bodhisattva: (1) Paññādhika future Buddhas (*zhihuixing pusa* 智慧型菩薩) (Bodhisattva of a wisdom mode), (2) Saddhādhika future Buddhas (*xinxinxing pusa* 信心型菩薩) (Bodhisattva of a faith mode), and (3) Viriyādhika future Buddhas (*jingjinxing pusa* 精進型菩薩) (Bodhisattva of a diligent mode). See Mingun Sayadaw, 1992, vol. 1, part 2, 118.

Bodhisattvas of a diligent mode, they will take them sixteen *asaṅkhyeyyas* and a hundred-thousand aeons.

In short, it is not an overstatement to say that the Bodhisattva path according to the Theravāda tradition is an endless one that takes an infinite period of time to achieve. The Mahāyāna is also dedicated to the Bodhisattva ideal and they have not only produced a remarkable literature on the subject, but also created a fascinating class of mythical Bodhisattvas.[100] On the way to becoming a Buddha, a bodhisattva proceeds through ten grounds or *bhūmis*.[101] Various sets of ten stages of practice are found in different texts and traditions. Some common examples are those given in the *Da borejing*,[102] in the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論,[103] and in the apocryphal *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 (Brahmā's Net Sutra).[104]

Despite the varying number of stages for the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva path, the consensus among different scriptures seems to be that a beginner would take countless eons (*mahāsaṃkhyeya kalpas*) to become a Buddha. The most commonly quoted text is the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (Sūtra of the Diadem [Crown] of the Primary Activities of the Bodhisattvas), which states that "it takes one kalpa, two kalpas, and three kalpas before one can reach the first abode (i.e., the abode of arousing the intention or *faxinzhu* 發心住)," [105] and later continues that "it takes one kalpa, two kalpas, and three kalpas to cultivate the ten (stages of) faith and receive the award of rebirth in the six heavens."[106] Another example is the famous *Yujia shide lun* 瑜伽師地論, translated by Xuanzang in 100 volumes from 647 to 648. Legend has it that Asaṅga (fl. fourth century CE) ascended to Maitreya's place in Tuṣita Heaven in meditation to learn the *Yujia shide lun*. Jiexian 戒賢 (Śīlabhadra,

100 Rahula 1996, 461–471, http://ftp.budaedu.org/ebooks/pdf/EN082.pdf (accessed 13 November 2020).

101 A representative set of ten grounds includes (1) Great Joy, (2) Stainless, (3) Luminous, (4) Radiant, (5) Very difficult to train: strive to help sentient beings without emotionally involved, (6) Obviously Transcendent: abiding in neither saṃsāra nor nirvāṇa, (7) Gone afar: perfection of skillful means, (8) Immovable: able to choose his place of rebirth, (9) Good Discriminating Wisdom, and (10) Cloud of Dharma. Cf. Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhi sm*, entry on 十地 or ten stages, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id(%27b5341-5730%27) (accessed 13 November 2020).

102 *Mohe bore boluo mijing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, fascicle 6, T8:259c(12–14).

103 *Dazhi dulun* 大智度論, fascicle 75, T25:585a(2–6).

104 *Fanwang jing* 梵網經, fascicle 1, T24:997c(27)–998a(2).

105 *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經, fascicle 1, T24:1011c(6).

106 *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經, fascicle 2, T24:1017a(19–20): "若一劫二劫三劫修十信，受六天果報."

529–645) lectured on the *Yujia shide lun* to Xuanzang three times at Nālandā before the latter brought back the scripture to China for translation.[107] According to the text,

> It takes one big kalpa to pass through the abode of resolute practice or *shengjie zhu* 勝解行住[108] and in sequence, one could reach the stage [or abode] of extreme bliss. This applies only to those who are continuously and extremely industrious, and not to those who are not. It then takes a second big kalpa to exceed the stage of extreme bliss (*ji huanxi zhu* 極歡喜住) … and in sequence one reached a mark-less stage that has neither applied practices nor exertion … Again, it takes a third big kalpa to exceed the stage that has neither applied practices nor exertion and the next stage, the stage of unhindered understanding, to achieve the stage of ultimate consummation of bodhisattvahood.[109]

107 *Datang daciensi sanzang fashi chuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, fascicle 3, T50:238c(27); T50:238c(29).

108 According to the *Yujia shide lun* 瑜伽師地論 (*Yogâcārabhūmi-śāstra*), there are twelve bodhisattva abodes: (1) The abode of the bodhisattva nature 菩薩種性住, (2) the abode of resolute practice 勝解行住, 3) the abode of extreme bliss 極歡喜住, (4) the abode of superior morality 增上戒住, (5) the abode of intensified thought 增上心住, (6) superior insight associated with the factors of enlightenment 覺分相應增上慧住, (7) superior insight associated with all correct perceptions of reality 諸諦相應增上慧住, (8) superior insight associated with the cessation of dependently arisen transmigration 緣起流轉止息相應增上慧住, (9) the markless abode that has applied practices and exertion 有加行有功用無相住, (10) the markless abode with no applied practices and no exertion 無加行無功用無相住, (11) the abode of unhindered understanding 無礙解住, and (12) the abode of ultimate consummation of bodhisattvahood 最上成滿菩薩住. This is followed by the abode of the Tathāgata 如來住. When the three abodes of superior insight (i.e., stages 6 to 8) are counted as one stage, the number of twelve is reduced to ten, and in the *Yogâcārabhūmi-śāstra*, each of these abodes is explained as being equivalent to the same-numbered ground (*bhūmi*) in the ten grounds of the bodhisattvas 十地. See Muller's *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, entry on 菩薩十二種住, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?83.xml+id(%27b83e9-85a9-5341-4e8c-7a2e-4f4f%27) (accessed 13 November 2020).

109 *Yujia shide lun*, fascicle 48 本地分中菩薩地第十五第二持隨法瑜伽處住品第四之二, T30:562a(9–13; 15–17): 住總經於二無數大劫方得圓證。謂經第一無數大劫。方乃超過勝解行住。次第證得極歡喜住。此就恒常勇猛精進。非不勇猛勤精進者。復經第二無數大劫。方乃超過極歡喜住 … 次第證得無加行無功用無相住 … 復經第三無數大劫。方乃超過無加行無功用無相住及無礙解住。證得最上成滿菩薩住.

I have already noted how a great *kalpa* (or *kalpâsaṃkhyeya*, *asengqijie* 阿僧祇劫) is an incalculably long eon, an exceedingly long period of time![110] With regard to the innumerable rebirths to develop the wisdom and compassion necessary to become a Buddha, Harris raises the interesting "overdemandingness" objection.[111] "If a theory is extremely demanding," Harris says, "then it opens itself to the charge that it asks too much of its followers!" Harris argues that theory must addresses the "overdemandingness" problem: the incredibly difficult and demanding task of becoming a Bodhisattva before progressing to full Buddhahood. Would the endpoint of spiritual practice as suggested by the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva path lie beyond most people's abilities? Is it too much to ask that we remain in *saṃsāra* for countless eons, subjected to the torments of continual death and rebirth in order to engage in the Bodhisattva path? Are there any strategies that lessen the demandingness of the Bodhisattva path, especially when that path is not optional and is not only reserved for extraordinary living beings with advanced abilities?

## 4 Buddha Nature as the Solution: the Cognitive Aspect of Faith

In the last part of this paper, I will argue that the Buddha-nature faith developed in Chinese Buddhism provides an answer to the important "over-demanding" question mentioned above. It is not an exaggeration to say that Buddha-nature is one of Chinese Buddhism's most important concepts. I have argued that an important aspect of Buddhist faith is the cognitive aspect represented by the compound term "Confidence in Reality," or *xinjie* 信解. It is a deep understanding that keeps one continuously engaged in the Buddhist path. In early Buddhist texts, the objects of faith are retribution (*xinyou zuifu* 信有罪福) and later a deep belief in the "Three Jewels," or sometimes the "Four Objects of Indestructible Faith" (*si buhuai xin* 四不壞信), which are the Three Jewels plus the Precepts (*jie* 戒). While these remain constant objects for belief in Chinese Buddhism, more emphasis was gradually given to the belief in Buddha nature that is well articulated in the Tathāgata School and its texts.

It has become a received tradition in Chinese Buddhism that Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism comprised three main strands of thought: the Madhyamaka School, the Yogācāra School, and the Tathāgata School. The most

110 See note 75 above.

111 Harris 2015, 201–216.

representative scholar of this view is Venerable Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005).[112] There were debates on which of the three represents the highest teaching. Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943), who founded the famous Chinese Metaphysical Institute (Zhina neixueyuan 支那內學院) in 1922, thought that the Yogācāra School represents the highest form of teaching in Buddhism. Venerable Taixu 太虛 (1889–1947), the Buddhist activist and thinker who advocated the reform of Chinese Buddhism and founded the Wuchang Institute of Buddhism (Wuchang foxueyuan 武昌佛學院), disagreed and maintained that only the Tathāgata School could be the highest form of the Buddha's teaching. Yinshun, however, took the Madhyamaka School as the highest of the three.[113] Scholars also debated on whether a Tathāgata School actually existed in India or whether it was a creation of Chinese Buddhists, leaving only the Madhyamaka School and the Yogācāra School as Buddhist Schools to have actually existed in India. Scholars tend to believe that although Indian Buddhism included scriptures teaching Tathāgata-garbha ideas, they formed no separate school akin to the Madhyamaka or Yogācāra Schools.[114] Akira Hirakawa 平川彰 (1915–2002), for instance, maintained that the idea of "the intrinsic purity of one's self-nature contaminated by outward dust" was found in the *Āgama sūtra*.[115] The early teaching on the idea of "self-nature being intrinsically pure" (*prakṛiti-prabhāsvaratā*) refers mostly to a state of mind and is the goal for practice.[116] It was in China that the Tathāgata-garbha ideas became a separate school of thoughts through the translation of relevant scriptures.

According to the studies by the Taiwanese scholar Li Zhifu 李志夫, scriptures teaching Tathāgata-garbha thoughts appeared from the third to fifth century in India after the Madyamaka School was formed.[117] From the end of the

112 This view of Yinshun shared by many others is first found in his "*Fahai tanzhen* 法海探珍," collected in his *Huayu ji* 華雨集 (1993) as well as his two books, *Yindu zhi fojiao* 印度之佛教 (Shi Yinshun 1985b) and *Yindu fojiao sixiang shi* 印度佛教思想史 (Shi Yinshun 1988), where he defines Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism in three streams: Nominalism of Empty Nature (*Xingkong weiming lun* 性空唯名論), Unreal Consciousness-Only (*Xuwang weishi lun* 虛妄唯識論), and Mind of Permanence and Reality-Only (*Zhenchang weixin lun* 真常唯心論).

113 See Ouyang Zhen 2016, http://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/special/jlkjc/yxyt061/2016-07-08/10995.html (accessed 13 November 2020).

114 See Yang Weizhong 2001, 44; Sun Changwu 2013, 187–189; Sharf 2002, 8, and 287, note 5.

115 Akira Hirakawa 2002, 174, 301.

116 Examples are (1) *Foshuo chang ahan jing* 佛說長阿含經, fascicle 1, T1:10c(3–5); (2) *Foshuo chang ahan jing* 佛說長阿含經, fascicle 20, T1:136a(28–29); (3) *Foshuo chang ahan jing* 佛說長阿含經, fascicle 15, T1:96c(7–10); (4) *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經, fascicle 51, T1:748a(16).

117 Li Zhifu 1991, 35–52, http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/07_03.htm (accessed 13 November 2020).

third century to the seventh century, scriptures teaching the Tathāgata-garbha thoughts were translated in China. According to the Chinese tradition, the Tathāgata-garbha idea is explicitly articulated in three sūtras:

(1) The *Tathāgata-garbha sūtra* (*Rulaizang jing* 如來藏經)

(2) The *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa sūtra* (*Buzeng bujian jing* 不增不減經, Sutra of Neither Increase nor Decrease)

(3) *Śrīmālādevī siṃhanāda sūtra* (*Shengman shizihou yicheng dafangbian guangjing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經, Sutra of the Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā) and one śāstra: *Ratnagotra-vibhāgo Mahāyānottaratantra-śāstra* (*Baoxing lun* 寶性論, Jewel-Nature Treatise), attributed to Jianhui 堅慧 (Sāramati, ca. 4th–5th century) and translated by Lenuo modi 勒那摩提 (Ratnamati, fl. 508–515).

The Tathāgata-garbha ideas were later elaborated by the Buddha-nature theory that all living beings possess Buddha nature. It was articulated in the *Dabo niepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (*Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*), translated by Tanwuchen 曇無讖 (Dharmakṣema, 385–433) from mid-India.[118] The story started with Daosheng 道生 (355–434), who advocated his belief in the universality of Buddha-nature, against claims found in the first translation of the six-fascicle version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* by Faxian 法顯 (fl. 418–423) from 418 that *icchantikas* (a class of sentient beings who are deemed incapable of attaining Nirvāṇa) cannot be saved. While such assertions initially brought him criticism and expulsion from the order, he held to his position, and even vowed that his body would be covered with leprosy if he were wrong. With the translation of a new version of the *Niepan jing* by Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433) into Chinese, Daosheng found direct textual support for his beliefs about the *icchantika* in passages in chapter 23, which state that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature and are capable of attaining liberation. Through another group of "three scriptures and one treatise," the idea was spread to all Schools of Chinese Buddhism, including the Sanlun 三論, Tiantai 天台, Huayan 華嚴, Yogācāra 慈恩, Tantric 密, Pure Land 淨土, and Chan 禪 schools. The "three scriptures and one treatise" are:

(1) The Mahāyāna version of the *Dabo niepan jing* 大般涅槃經, exposition of a large number of radical new doctrines, the most significant of which form an interrelated complex, Buddha nature and Tathāgata-garbha.

118 *Dabo niepan jing* 《大般涅槃經》, T12:645b(10–11).

(2) The *Ru Lengga jing* 入楞伽經 (*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, Sutra on [the Buddha's] Entering [the Country of] Lanka), probably composed in the fourth or fifth century CE and translated by Bodhiruci (Puti liuzhi 菩提流支) in 513.

(3) *Shidijing lun* 十地經論 (*Daśabhūmikasūtra-śāstra*), written by Vasubandhu and translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci and others in the sixth century, which is an extensive explanation of the gist of the "Ten Stages" chapter of the *Huayan jing* 華嚴經.

The "one treatise" refers to the *Dacheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith), attributed to Aśvaghoṣa (Maming 馬鳴). The text offers a view of the mind that can be said to include, and sometimes synthesize, distinctive approaches from the two Indian-derived soteriological positions of the *tathāgata-garbha* (Rulai zang 如來藏) and *ālayavijñāna* (*alaiyeshi* 阿賴耶識).

Corroborating evidence of the concept of Buddha-nature's centrality in Chinese Buddhism is perhaps its criticism as a heretical concept by the so-called "Critical Buddhism" of some Japanese Buddhist scholars. Matsumoto, for instance, has argued that Buddha-nature thought is *dhātu-vāda* (基體說), violating Buddhist strictures negating the existence of essences or substances.[119] It was the Chinese Buddhists who had smuggled the concept of "self" in terms of Buddha nature into Buddhism.

Sallie King, however, strongly believes that the doctrine of Buddha-nature is impeccably Buddhist.[120] The gist of the Buddha-nature doctrine is to speak positively of what may be found at the end of the Buddhist path, in contrast to the negative language prevailing among earlier exponents of the teaching of emptiness. Buddha-nature is neither an ontological theory nor a pure substantive essence. Speaking of Buddha nature is "to encourage practice," "to cause sentient beings to overcome an inferior mind," and "to aspire to Buddhahood."[121] Buddha-nature is a soteriological device, not an ontological theory. It represents a belief in human equality, the inherent dignity and value of each human being, and a faith statement: "I believe that all sentient beings can and ultimately will attain freedom from samsara."[122]

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119 Matsumoto 1997, 165–173, especially 172.

120 King 1997, 174–192, https://web.archive.org/web/20090225181930/http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/nlarc/pdf/Pruning%20the%20bodhi%20tree/Pruning%209.pdf (accessed 13 November 2020).

121 King 1997, 182–183. She bases her work on the *Buddha-Nature Treatise*, translated by Paramārtha (499–569); T31:787a(10): "*weiling zhongsheng li xialie xin gu* 為令眾生離下劣心故 (to cause the sentient beings to detach from their inferior mind)."

122 King 1997, 188.

This faith in human equality and inherent dignity of each human being was once again reiterated in the *Puti damo dashi lüebian dacheng rudao sixingguan* 菩提達磨大師略辨大乘入道四行觀 (Essential Discourse on Entering the Mahayana Path by Principle and by Practice), written by the great master Bodhidharma who lived during the fifth or sixth century, who is traditionally regarded as the first Chinese patriarch of the Chan school of Buddhism.

> To enter the Great Way there are many paths, but essentially, they are of two means: by Principle and by Practice. Entering the Way by Principle means to awaken to the Truth through doctrine, with a deep faith that all sentient beings have the same true nature. Obscured by the fleeting dust of delusions, this nature cannot manifest itself. If one can relinquish the false and turn to the true, fix the mind in "wall meditation," understand that neither the self nor others exist, that mortals and saints are equal and one, abiding this way without wavering, clinging not even to the scriptures—then one is implicitly in accord with the Principle. Being non-discriminative, still, and empty of effort is to enter by Principle.[123]

This Dunhuang text was first re-discovered by D.T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) in the Beijing library and published in 1936.[124] Sekiguchi Shindai 關口真大 (1907–1986) believed that only the text's beginning, the section quoted above, belongs to Bodhidarma.[125] Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006)[126] believed that the text represents the earliest record of Bodhidharma's sayings by his disciples.

The answer to the "over-demanding" question could be found in another text entitled *Damo dashi poxianglun* 達摩大師破相論 (Great Master Dharma's Breakthrough Treatise), which is also attributed to Bodhidharma.[127] An alternative title for this text is *Guanxin lun* 觀心論 (Treatise on the Contemplation of the Mind). According to the *Yiqie jing yin yi* 一切經音義 (The Sounds and Meanings of all the Terms in the Canonical Texts) of Hui Lin 慧琳 (737–820),

123 *Puti damo dashi lüebian dacheng rudao sixingguan* 菩提達磨大師略辨大乘入道四行觀, more commonly known as *Erru sixing lun* 二入四行論 (Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices), X63:1a(20–24); translated from the Chinese by the Chung Tai Translation Committee May 2010, vol. 1.4.6, https://terebess.hu/zen/bodhidharma-eng.html#* (accessed 14 November 2020). Cf. the translation by McRae, 1986b, 102–105.

124 D.T. Suzuki 1935 & 1936.

125 Sekiguchi Shindai 1967.

126 Yanagida Seizan 1969. Cf. Yanagida Seizan 1985, 211–663.

127 *Damo dashi poxiang lun* 達摩大師破相論 (Treatise on the Refutation of Characteristics by Bodhidharma), X63:1.

the text was actually the work of Shenxiu 神秀 (606–706), the founder of the northern school of Chan Buddhism.[128] Seven versions of the text were found in Dunhuang.[129] The text contains the following discussion on the long period of practice required in the Buddhist path:

> [Student:] But the Buddha said, "Only after undergoing innumerable hardships for three *asankhya kalpas* did I achieve enlightenment." Why do you now say that simply beholding the mind and over-coming the three poisons is liberation?
>
> The Buddha's words are true. But the three *asankhya kalpas* refer to the three poisoned states of mind. What we call *asankhya* in Sanskrit you call countless. Within these three poisoned states of mind are countless evil thoughts. And every thought lasts a *kalpa*. Such an infinity is what the Buddha meant by the three *asankhya kalpas* … People who can transform the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion into the three releases are said to pass through the three *sankhya kalpas*.[130]

Here, the countless period of innumerable hardship to attain Buddhahood is acknowledged but re-interpreted and explained away as a state of mind. The three *asankhya kalpas* are no longer understood as a length of time but as an infinite possibility of the state of mind, especially countless possibilities of evil thoughts. The ability to squash evil thoughts is equivalent to passing through the infinite three-*asankhya kalpas* period of time required to achieve enlightenment. In other words, enlightenment could be achieved in a moment of thought. Buddhist practice is interpreted by an overcoming of evil thoughts represented by the three poisoned states of mind—greed, anger, and delusion. All traditional Buddhist meritorious works such as building monasteries, casting statues, burning incense, scattering flowers, or lighting eternal lamps could be understood through beholding the mind or contemplating the mind (*guanxin* 觀心). Extinguishing the three poisoned states of mind, keeping the senses pure and the body and mind still is equivalent to building a

128 *Yiqiejing yinyi* 一切經音義 (The Sounds and Meanings [of all the words in] the Scriptures), T54:932a(1). For a study, see Yang Zengwen 楊曾文 1990, 68–83; and McRae 1986, 148, where McRae states that "evidence from a contemporary Tang manual has established beyond question that it was written by Shen-hsiu [Shenxiu]."

129 The seven versions are P4646, RyuKoku version, S2595, S5532, S646, P2460, P2657. See Nishiguchi 1996, 123–170.

130 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:9b(11–18). For an English translation of the text, see Red Pine, trans., n.d., *Breakthrough Sermon: The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, https://terebess.hu/zen/bodhidharma-eng.html#break (accessed 14 November 2020).

monastery.[131] Acting in perfect accordance with the Buddha's teaching is to naturally create a perfect likeness of the Buddha, thus equivalent to casting a statue of the Buddha.[132] Burning incense does not mean ordinary material incense but the incenses of morality, meditation, wisdom, liberation, and perfect knowledge.[133] Scattering flowers of virtue refers to speaking the Buddhist teachings (*Dharma*) in order to benefit others.[134] To light the eternal lamp is to light the lamp of perfect awareness, which dispels all darkness and delusion. And those who pass the Buddhist teachings (*Dharma*) on to others are using one lamp to light thousands of lamps.[135]

This way of interpreting a text is known as "Interpretation through Contemplating the Mind" (*guanxin shi* 觀心釋), which is not only found in the *Breakthrough Treatise* but also in another famous text by Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), the *de facto* founder of the Tiantai School, also entitled *Guanxin lun* 觀心論 (Treatise on Contemplation of the Mind).[136] Reducing all methods into an essential method of contemplating the mind comes from the understanding of mind as the root from which all things grow. Our mind has two aspects: pure and impure.[137] Humans drift through the three realms and suffer countless afflictions all because their impure minds obscure their real selves.[138] By real "self," the text is referring to the Buddha nature. The text quotes from both the *Sūtra of Ten Stages* and the *Nirvāṇa sūtra* to prove its point.[139]

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131 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:10a(22–23). 若永除三毒。常淨六根。身心湛然。內外清淨。是名脩伽藍。

132 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:10b(3–4). 遍入一切戒律模中。如敬。奉行。一無漏缺。自然成就真容之像。

133 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:10b(6–11). 燒香者。亦非世間有相之香。乃是無為正法之香也 … 一者戒香。所謂能斷諸惡。能修諸善。二者定香。所謂深信大乘。心無退轉。三有。慧所謂常於身心。內自觀察。四者解脫香。所謂能斷一切無明結縛。五者解脫知見香。所謂觀照常明。通達無礙。

134 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:10b(15–16). 散花者。義亦如是。所謂豈。說正法。諸功德花。饒益有情。

135 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:10b(22)–c(3). 又長明燈者。即正覺心也。以覺明了。喻之為燈。是故一切求解脫者。以身為燈臺。心為燈炷。增諸戒行。以為添油。智慧明達。喻如燈火。常燃如是真正覺燈。照破一切無明癡暗。能以此法。轉相開示。即是一燈。燃百千燈。以灯續然。然燈無盡。故號長明。

136 *Guanxin lun* 觀心論, T46:584b(2–13). See Guo Chaoshun 郭朝順 2004.

137 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:8c(19). 有二種差別。云何為二。一者淨心。二者染心。

138 *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:8c(23–24). 沈淪三界。受種種苦。何以故。由彼染心。障真如體。

139 Quotations are found in the text, *Damo dashi poxiang lun*, X63:8c(24) 故十地經云。眾生身中。有金剛佛性。猶如日輪。體明圓滿廣大無邊。只為五陰重雲所覆。如餅內燈光。不能顯現。 and X63:9a(2). 又涅槃經云。一切眾生悉有佛性。無明覆故。不得解脫。

## 5 Concluding Discussion

Reducing all methods into an essential method of contemplating the mind can be described as a process of simplification. The mind here is the "self-nature," which is intrinsically pure. Fang Litian 方立天 (1933–2014), a renowned scholar of Chinese Buddhism, has argued that one of the three basic features of Chinese Buddhism is a tendency to simplify complicated doctrines and practices.[140] This process builds on a theory of Buddha nature that became a common central theme in Chinese Buddhism, popularized by the "Three Scriptures" and the "One Treatise." Realizing the true mind and seeing one's true nature—or in other words, realizing one's Buddha-nature—has become the goal of Chinese Buddhist practice. This goal builds on a strong conviction, a faith of a deep religious insight that the basic composition of one's own mind does not differ from the Buddha's and is the mainspring of practice. As put by the Sixth Patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–713):

> Why not immediately realize in your own mind the intrinsic nature of suchness? The *Pusa jiejing* 菩薩戒經 (Bodhisattva Sila Sūtra) says: "Our inherent nature is originally pure. If you realize your mind and see its true nature, you will attain Buddhahood."[141]

A similar statement is found in the famous *Dacheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith), said to have been translated by Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀, 652–710): "Believe that there is reality within one self that is pure in nature."[142] Faith in Chinese Buddhism has thereafter become a strong conviction that sentient beings can and ultimately will attain freedom from *saṃsāra*. It is best articulated in the same text, *Dacheng qixinlun*:

> Question: What kind of faith should a man have and how should he practice it?
>
> Answer: Briefly, there are four kinds of faith. (1) The first is the faith in the Ultimate Source. Because of this faith, a man comes to meditate with joy on the principle of Suchness. (2) The second is the faith in the

140 Fang Litian 1988, 378–411. The three basic features of Chinese Buddhism are (1) the tendency to harmonize different trends of thoughts; (2) the tendency to integrate different schools of thinking; (3) the tendency to simplify complicated doctrines and practices.

141 *Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing* 六祖大師法寶壇經 (Sixth Patriarch Great Master Dharma Jewel Platform Sūtra), T48:351a(10–12).

142 *Dacheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論, T32:586c(15); cf. T32:589c(1): "以決定信一切諸法從本已來性涅槃故 (an unshakable faith that all existence from the beginning possesses the nature of nirvāna)," cf. T32:586c(29).

> numberless excellent qualities of the Buddhas. Because of this faith, a man comes to meditate on them always, to draw near to them in fellowship, to honor them, and to respect them, developing his capacity for goodness and seeking all-embracing knowledge. (3) The third is the faith in the great benefits of the *Dharma* (Teaching). Because of this faith, a man comes to constantly remember and practice various disciplines leading to enlightenment. (4) The fourth is the faith in the *Sangha* (or Buddhist community), whose members are able to devote themselves to the practice of benefiting both themselves and others. Because of this faith, a man comes to approach constantly and with joy the assembly of Bodhisattvas and to seek instruction from them in the correct practice.[143]

As is always the case, the strong conviction of Buddha nature must be followed by dedicated practice before the essence of suchness, the Buddha nature, can manifest. Therefore, the text continues:

> It is like the case of wood: though it possesses a latent fire nature that is the primary cause of its burning, it cannot be made to burn by itself unless men understand the situation and resort to means of actualizing fire out of wood by kindling it. In the same way, a man, though he is in possession of the correct primary cause, Suchness with permeating force, cannot put an end to his defilements by himself alone and enter nirvana unless he is provided with coordinating causes, i.e., his encounters with the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or good spiritual friends. Even though coordinating causes from without may be sufficiently provided, if the pure principle [i.e., Suchness] within is lacking in the force of permeation, then a man cannot ultimately loathe the suffering of Samara and seek bliss in nirvana.[144]

It is generally believed that, in the matter of religion, the Chinese accept a priority on ritual and common symbol over belief. Therefore, beliefs are not the defining core of any Chinese religions. In contrast to a doctrinal model of religion in which "orthodoxy" is the norm, the religiosity of Chinese religions is best described by the term "orthopraxy." This means that Chinese religiosity

143 *Dacheng qixinlun*, T32:590a(20–25). For the English translation, see Hakeda 1967, 29, http://www.hongaku.net/uploads/1/1/9/4/11947063/the_awakening_of_faith_in_mahayana_english.pdf (accessed 14 November 2020) with Arabic numerals added in bracket by the author.

144 *Dacheng qixinlun*, T32:587a(7–12). For the English translation see Hakeda 1967, 17, http://www.hongaku.net/uploads/1/1/9/4/11947063/the_awakening_of_faith_in_mahayana_english.pdf (accessed 14 November 2020).

is not primarily a matter of holding correct opinions but of conforming to a set of behaviors.[145] Orthopraxy, thus, provides an alternative model for understanding Chinese religions and provides us with a non-doctrinal focus for analysis. This view on Chinese religion can be traced back to the renowned Harvard anthropologist James L. Watson who drew on his fieldwork in villages of the Hong Kong New Territories. Watson's argument about orthopraxy is based on his discovery that the New Territories peasants focused on the ritual act no matter what they thought or felt. What I have found in regards to the concept of faith in Chinese Buddhist scriptures, however, may lead us to a slightly different conclusion. Faith in Chinese Buddhism is both "orthodoxy" and "orthopraxy." There is a strong emphasis on the cognitive aspect of faith: a belief in the inherent dignity and value of each human being and a conviction that all sentient beings can and ultimately will attain Enlightenment. Yet the latent Buddha nature cannot manifest without a diligent process of practices. For example, there are five ways of practice that will enable a person to perfect his or her faith according to the *Dacheng qixinlun*: the practice of charity, observance of precepts, patience, zeal, and the cessation of illusions and clear observation.[146] This is orthopraxy but not without orthodoxy, an adherence to a particular creedal proposition of the possession of Buddha nature by all sentient beings.

### Abbreviations

T Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 1924–1934. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 [Taishō Tripiṭaka]. 85 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai.

X Kawamura Kōshō 河村照孝, Nishi Giyū 西義雄, Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎, eds. 1975–1989. *Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本続蔵経. 90 vols. Tōkyō: Kokusho Kankōkai.

145 Watson 1988a, 6 & 9–10. In ritual performance, Watson argues that the "accepted procedure" mattered, whereas "the internal state of the participants, their personal beliefs and aspirations are largely irrelevant." For example, "Cantonese funeral rites are deemed to have an efficacy dissociated from the internal state or perceptions of those who perform the required acts." See Watson 1988b, 134. Cf. also Adam Chau's chapter in this volume.

146 *Dacheng qixinlun*, T32:590a(20–25).

## Bibliography

### *Primary Sources*


| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Amituo jing* | 阿彌陀經 | T12 no. 366 | *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* | The Smaller Sutra on Amitāyus |
| *Apidamo Dapiposha lun* | 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 | T27 no. 1545 | *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā Śāstra* | Great Exegesis of Abhidharma |
| *Apidamo jushe lun* | 阿毘達磨俱舍論 | T29 no. 1559 | *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* | Abhidharma Storehouse Treatise |
| *Apidamo pinleizu lun* | 阿毘達磨品類足論 | T26 no. 1542 | *Abhidharma-prakaraṇapāda-śāstra* | |
| *Baoxing lun* (*Jiujing yisheng baoxing lun*) | 寶性論（究竟一乘寶性論） | T31 no. 1611 | *Ratnagotra-vibhāgo Mahāyānottaratantra-śāstra* | Treatise of the Treasure Nature of the Ultimate Ekayāna |
| *Buzeng bujian jing* | 不增不減經 | T16 no. 668 | *Anūnatvāpūrṇat-vanirdeśa Sūtra* | Sutra of Neither Increase nor Decrease |
| *Cheng Weishi lun* | 成唯識論 | T31 no. 1585 | *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi śāstra* | Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-only |
| *Da baoji jing* | 大寶積經 | T11 no. 310 | *Mahā ratnakūṭa sūtra* | The Great Treasures Collection Sūtra |
| *Da bore boluo miduo jing* | 大般若波羅蜜多經 | T5 no. 220 | *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* | The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom |
| *Dabo niepan jing* | 大般涅槃經 | T12 no. 374 | *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* | Sutra of the Great Decease |

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| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dacheng qixinlun* | 大乘起信論 | T32 no. 1667 | | Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith |
| *Dafangbian fo bao'en jing* | 大方便佛報恩經 | T3 no. 156. | | Great Skillful Means Sutra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness |
| *Damo dashi poxiang lun* | 達摩大師破相論 | X63 no. 1220 | | Bodhidharma's Treatise on the Refutation of Characteristics |
| *Darijing* (*Dapiluzhena chengfo shengbian jiachi jingjuan*) | 大日經 (大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經卷) | T18 no. 848 | *Mahāvairocana sūtra* | Vairocana Sutra |
| *Darijing yish* | 大日經義釋 | X23 no. 438 | | Commentary on the Vairocana Sutra |
| *Dacheng guang wuyun lun* | 大乘廣五蘊論 | T31 no. 1613 | *Pañca skandha prakaraṇa vaibhāṣya* | Extensive Mahāyāna Treatise on the Five Aggregates |
| *Daoxing borejing* | 道行般若經 | T8 no. 224 | *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* | Wisdom Scripture of Practicing Enlightenment |
| *Datang daciensi sanzang fashi chuan* | 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 | T50 no. 2053 | | Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of Dacien Temple |
| *Datang gu sanzang xuanzang fashi xingzhuang* | 大唐故三藏玄奘法師行狀 | T50 no. 2052 | | Biography of the Tripiṭaka teacher of Dharma Xuanzang |

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| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Dazhi dulun* | 大智度論 | T25 no. 1509 | *Mahāprajñāpāramitā śāstra* | Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom |
| *Erru sixing lun* (*Puti damo dashi lüebian dacheng rudao sixingguan*) | 二入四行論（菩提達磨大師略辨大乘入道四行觀） | X63 no. 1217 | | Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices |
| *Fajing jing* | 法鏡經 | T12 no. 322 | *Ugraparipṛcchā sūtra* | Sutra of the Dharma Mirror |
| *Fanwang jing* | 梵網經 | T24 no. 1484 | *Brahmajāla Sūtra* | Brahmā's Net Sutra |
| *Fanyi mingyi ji* | 翻譯名義集 | T54 no. 2131 | | Compilation of Translated Buddhist Terms |
| *Focang Jing* | 佛藏經 | T15 no. 653 | *Buddha piṭakaduḥ śīlanirgraha sūtra* | |
| *Foshuo xinjie zhili jing* | 佛說信解智力經 | T17 no. 802 | | |
| *Foshuo chang ahan jing* | 佛說長阿含經 | T1 no. 1 | *Dīrghâgama* | Longer Āgama-sūtra |
| *Foshuo dasheng pusazang zhengfa jing* | 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經 | T11 no. 316 | *Bodhisattvapiṭaka sūtra* | |
| *Foshuo fenbie jing* | 佛說分別經 | T17 no. 738 | | |
| *Foshuo guan mile shangsheng doushuaitian jing* | 佛說觀彌勒上生兜率天經 | T14 no. 452 | | Scripture on rebirth in the Tuṣita Heaven |
| *Foshuo guan wuliangshou jing* | 佛說觀無量壽經 | T12 no. 365 | *Amitāyur dhyāna sūtra* | Sutra of the Meditation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life (Contemplation Sutra) |

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| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Foshuo Haiyi pusa suowen jingyin famen jing* | 佛說海意菩薩所問淨印法門經 | T13 no. 300 | *Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā sūtra* | |
| *Foshuo mile xiasheng jing* | 佛說彌勒下生經 | T14 no. 453 | *Maitreyavyākaraṇa Sūtra* | The Sūtra that Expounds the Descent of Maitreya Buddha and His Enlightenment |
| *Foshuo nandishi jing* | 佛說難提釋經 | T2 no. 113 | *Nandapravrajyā sūtra* | |
| *Foshuo xinfo gongde jing* | 佛說信佛功德經 | T1 no. 18 | *Sampasādanīya Suttanta in the Pāli Dīgha Nikāya* | Sutra of Belief in the Buddha's Merits |
| *Foshuo zhaijing* | 佛說齋經 | T1 no. 87 | *Poṣadha sūtra* | Scripture on Fasting |
| *Foshuo zuiye yingbao jiaohua diyu jing* | 佛說罪業應報教化地獄經 | T17 no. 724 | | Scripture on Retribution, Moral Education and Hells Preached by the Buddha |
| *Fozu tongzhi* | 佛祖統紀 | T49 no. 2035 | | Complete Chronicle of the Buddha and Patriarchs |
| *Guanxin lun* | 觀心論 | T46 no. 1920 | | Treatise on Contemplation of the Mind |
| *Huayan jing* | 華嚴經 | T10 no. 279 | *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* | Flower Ornament Scripture |
| *Jingang sanmei jing* | 金剛三昧經 | T9 no. 273 | *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* | |

(*cont.*)

| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Jingtu shiyilun* | 淨土十疑論 | T47 no. 1961 | | |
| *Jushe lun* | 俱舍論 | T29 no. 1558 | *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya śāstra* | |
| *Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing* | 六祖大師法寶壇經 | T48 no. 2008 | | Sixth Patriarch Great Master Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra |
| *Miaofa lianhua jing* | 妙法蓮華經 | T9 no. 262 | *Saddharma Puṇḍárīka Sūtra* | Lotus sutra |
| *Mile dachengfo jing* | 彌勒大成佛經 | T14 no. 456 | | |
| *Mohe bore boluo mijing* | 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 | T8 no. 223 | *Pañca-viṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā* | The Perfection of Wisdom |
| *Pusa yingluo benye jing* | 菩薩瓔珞本業經 | T24 no. 1485 | *Bodhisattva keyūra mūla karma sūtra* | Sūtra of the Diadem (Crown) of the Primary Activities of the Bodhisattvas |
| *Renwang jing.* | 仁王經 | T8 no. 245 | | Sutra for Humane Kings |
| *Rulaizang jing* | 如來藏經 | T16 no. 666. | *Tathāgata-garbha Sūtra* | |
| *Ru Lengga jing* | 入楞伽經 | T16 no. 672 | *Laṅkâvatāra-sūtra* | The Sutra on (the Buddha's) Entering (the Country of) Lanka |
| *Shengman shizihou yicheng dafangbian fangguangjing* | 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經 | T12 no. 353 | *Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra* | Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā |
| *Shidejing lun* | 十地經論 | T26 no. 1522 | *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* | Treatise on the Scripture of the Ten Stages |

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| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Shizhu piposha lun* | 十住毘婆沙論 | T26 no. 1521 | *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* | Commentary on the Ten Stages Sutra |
| *Wangsheng jingtu jueyi xingyuan ermen* | 往生淨土決疑行願二門 | T47 no. 1968 | | |
| *Wangsheng lun*（*Wuliangshou jing youbodishe*） | 往生論（無量壽經優波提舍） | T40 no. 1819 | *Sukhāvatīvyūhôpadeśa* | Treatise on Rebirth |
| *Weimojie suoshuo jing* | 維摩詰所說經 | T14 no. 475 | *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* | The Sutra of the Teachings of Vimalakīrit |
| *Weishi sanshi song* | 唯識三十頌 | T31 no. 1586 | *Triṃśikā vijñapti-kārikā* | Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only |
| *Wenshushili wenjing* | 文殊師利問經 | T14 no. 468 | *Mañjuśrīparipṛcchā sūtra* | Sutra of the Questions of Mañjuśrī |
| *Wudeng huiyuan* | 五燈會元 | X80 no. 1565 | | Combined Sources for the Five Lamps |
| *Wuliangshou jing* | 無量壽經 | T12 no. 360 | *Sukhāvatī-vyūhaḥ-sūtra* | Sutra of Immeasurable Life |
| *Xinli ruyin famen jing* | 信力入印法門經 | T10 no. 305 | *Śraddhābāla dhānā avatāra mudrā sūtra* | |
| *Yaoshi liuliguang qifo benyuan gongde jing* | 藥師琉璃光七佛本願功德經 | T14 no. 451 | *Saptatathāgata pūrvapraṇidhāna-viśeṣavistara* (*sūtra*) | Merit of the Former Vows of the Seven Medicine Buddhas of Pure Crystal Radiance scripture |

(*cont.*)

| *Romanized title* | *Chinese title* | *Taishō vol.* | *Sanskrit title* | *Translated title* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Yingluo jing* (*Pusa yingluo benye jing*) | 瓔珞經（菩薩瓔珞本業經） | T24 no. 1485 | *Bodhisattva keyūra mūla karma sūtra* | Sutra of the Diadem of the Primary Activities of the Bodhisattvas |
| *Yiqiejing yinyi* | 一切經音義 | T54 no. 2128 | | The Sounds and Meanings [of all the words in] the Scriptures |
| *Yujia shide lun* | 瑜伽師地論 | T30 no. 1579 | *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* | Discourse on the Stages of Concentration Practice |
| *Za ahanjing* | 雜阿含經 | T2 no. 99 | *Saṃyukta Āgama* | Connected Discourses |
| *Zengyi ahan jing* | 增一阿含經 | T2 no. 125 | *Ekottarika Āgama* | Increased by One Āgama Sutras |
| *Zhong ahan jing* | 中阿含經 | T1 no. 26 | *Madhyamâgama* | Middle Length Āgama Sutras |
| *Zhu shiyi lun* | 注十疑論 | X61 no. 1149 | | |

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CHAPTER 7

# Japanese Buddhist Concepts of Faith (*shin* 信): the Postmodern Narrative of the Conceptual Hegemony of Western Modernity Reconsidered

*Christoph Kleine*

## 1 Introduction

When the first Christian missionaries came to Japan in the sixteenth century, they made an interesting observation. There existed a Buddhist sect—commonly called Ikkōshū 一向宗—which strongly resembled the "Lutheran heresy" spreading in Europe back then. Based on the teachings of the thirteenth-century monk Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), this sect firmly rejected any concept of works righteousness and—most importantly for our topic—emphasized faith above all. The Italian missionary Alessandro Valignano (1537–1606) pointed out that the Japanese Buddhists had a doctrine of *sola fide*, of justification by *faith alone*, which equaled the doctrine of the Protestant heretics. With reference to the Ikkōshū he wrote that this sect claims that,

> [...] even though humans commit as many sins as they wish, if only they invoke [the Buddha Amida's] name, saying *Namu Amida but*—which is to say, *sanctissimo Amida fotoque* [= *hotoke* 佛]—with faith and hope in him and the merits of his accomplishment, [...]—then by this they will be rendered immaculate and purged of all their sins by the virtue and merit of these *fotoques*, without any necessity to perform other penance or to involve themselves in other works, for thereby injury would be done to the penances and works which [the Buddhas] performed for the salvation of mankind. So much that they hold precisely the doctrine which the devil, father of both, taught to Luther [...] the very same doctrine has been bestowed by the devil upon the Japanese heathendom. Nothing is changed except the name of the person in whom they believe and trust, and the same effect being created among these heretics as obtains amidst these heathen: for these as much as the others are sunk in total carnality

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> and obscenity, divided in diverse sects, and living therefore in great confusion of belief and in continuous wars.[1]

It was in fact a scholarly habit in the twentieth century to compare the Pure Land teachings of Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), and especially his disciple Shinran, with Protestant theology.[2] It comes as no surprise that their respective concepts of faith played a major role in these comparative studies. In the meantime, comparisons of that kind have become unfashionable—partly for good reasons. In general, twenty-first-century scholarship tends to suspect such cultural comparisons of being superficial, generalizing, essentializing, and ideological or even theological.[3] Leaving aside for the moment the epistemological question of the possibilities and limits as well as the political appropriateness of inter- or transcultural comparisons, as human beings we simply cannot avoid comparison, since comparing things is a very basic function of human cognition. In that sense, it is virtually impossible to ignore the obvious structural analogies in the doctrines of Protestantism and East Asian Pure Land Buddhism, and more specifically those of the Jōdo shinshū 浄土眞宗 ("The True Pure Land School"),[4] better known as Ikkōshū in medieval Japan. Among the most striking similarities between both are in fact their respective concepts of "faith," i.e., *xin* 信 (read *shin* in Japanese).

As a counter-reaction to the often unreflected and ethnocentric universalism of twentieth-century cross-cultural comparisons, we have been witnessing a pendulum movement in the other direction for several decades. Informed by postcolonial criticism against imposing "Western" categories on "non-Western"[5] contexts and post-structural assertions of the uniqueness and incommensurability of heterogeneous cultural phenomena, postmodern cultural studies have developed a strong tendency towards particularism and a profound "skepticism towards the totalizing, universalizing metanarratives of modernism."[6] The excessive emphasis on the undeniably massive impact of

1 Elison 1973, 43; original in Xaverius and Valignano 1899–1900, 116–117.

2 For an overview see Kleine 2003; cf. Amstutz 1997.

3 For a comprehensive reflection on comparison as a method for religious studies see Freiberger 2019.

4 For further information about this tradition see Dobbins 2002 [1989].

5 By the way, this juxtaposition in itself is revealing, since it pays attention to the cultures of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, etc. solely in the mirror of an essentialized West, whose borders usually remain very vague.

6 Freiberger 2019, 55.

European colonialism and Western cultural imperialism on the developments of non-European cultures, however, harbors the danger to lose sight of indigenous, pre-colonial genealogies of ideas and concepts, systems of classification and orders of knowledge.[7] Moreover, post-colonial perspectives tend to ignore intra-Asian entangled histories. Long before the beginning of the (European) colonial period, we see large-scale cultural exchange processes outside Europe, and in many cases power asymmetries were at work here as well. This applies particularly to cultural exchange in East Asia, which is the subject of this article. For centuries, the Chinese Empire was the undisputed hegemonic power that defined the standards and norms in almost all cultural fields to which the often tributary empires of East Asia oriented themselves. However, as we will see, even China was massively influenced by processes of cultural transfer, especially from India and Central Asia. There have been entangled histories and transregional flows long before and independent of Western colonialism.

Paradoxically, the overemphasis on the Western impact on non-Western societies under the global condition and the concomitant disinterest in historical developments beyond the West and before the colonial era perpetuate older ethnocentric views and modernization narratives—under reversed normative connotations, of course. An orientalist narrative of the cultural lags and civilizational deficits of non-Western cultures, gave way to a postcolonial narrative in which non-Western cultures appear as pure objects, indeed as mere victims of hegemonic Western powers. In both cases, however, non-Western societies have only been viewed in relation to the West and thus bereft of both their cultural sovereignty and their historical agency. Non-Western cultures are no longer perceived as interesting research objects in their own right, but only to the extent that they can be analyzed as victims of colonial power.

When I initially read the call for papers, I sensed that the concept of the conference followed the same trend. More specifically, I was perplexed by the implied hypothesis that the "premodern term *xin*" had to be transformed in modern times to match the "Christian concept of faith" and to develop "into the signifier of a modernized and globalized meaning of belief(s)." Trained in Buddhist studies, I simply did not get the point. From my scholarly background, it was so obvious that the term "信" in the sense of "faith" or "belief" in something or someone had been a cardinal concept in Buddhist and especially East Asian Buddhist thought early on. Therefore, from my perspective,

7 Some authors even deliberately refuse to deal with culture-specific trajectories of development and corresponding path dependencies in the appropriation of epistemic and social structures of Western provenance in modernity. Especially with regard to the "Third World", they consider the influence of the West to be so total that local differences are negligible. Cf. Mahmood 2016, 8–11; Scott 2006, 292–294; Asad 1996, 264. With regard to East Asia, I consider this to be an untenable overestimation of Western formative power.

there simply was no need "to reconstruct the complex processes by which the premodern term *xin* has developed into the signifier of a modernized and globalized meaning of belief(s)." Given my limited competence with regard to the non-Buddhist conceptual history of China, my task can only be to give a brief overview of concepts of *xin* as "faith" in East Asian Buddhism, especially in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism—hoping that this will explain why I was so unwilling to subscribe to the hypothesis implied in the call for papers.

## 2 Faith (信) as a Cardinal Concept in Buddhism

In Chinese translations of Buddhist texts, the character 信 was most frequently used to render the Sanskrit term *śraddhā*. Once this character was chosen as an equivalent it was emancipated from the original Confucian interpretation as "trustworthiness." Another layer of meaning—roughly in the sense of Koselleck's *Zeitschichten*[8]—was added and the concept began to develop autonomously within the discursive field of Buddhism. This happened to many terms borrowed by Buddhist translators from Confucian, Daoist, or whatever usages.

It is quite evident that *xin* 信 as translation of *śraddhā* has been a central concept in Buddhist thought from the very beginning. And it is likewise evident that this Buddhist concept carries roughly the same meanings as does the Christian concept of *fides*. For a Buddhist, it is imperative to have "faith in the three jewels" (Skt. *triratna*), i.e., the Buddha, the *dharma*, and the *saṅgha*—*xin sanbao* 信三寶. This is where all Buddhist practice has to start. If you do not believe that Siddhārtha Gautama had attained perfect awakening and thus became a *Buddha*, that the insights he had achieved under the Bodhi Tree represented absolute truth, that the *dharma* he taught was in full accordance with this truth, and that his teachings have been faithfully transmitted over the centuries due to the relentless commitment of the *saṅgha*, you can hardly call yourself a Buddhist. The ordinary practitioner is certainly not qualified to grasp the absolute truth revealed by the Buddha simply through his or her own logical reasoning or personal experience. A concept such as *nirvāṇa* cannot even be verbalized, and therefore an unawakened person—afflicted by the three poisons (*tri-viṣa; sandu* 三毒) of craving (*raga; tanyu* 貪欲), anger (*dveṣa; chenhui* 瞋恚), and nescience (*moha; yuchi* 愚癡)—can only believe that the Buddha has told the truth about his experiencing *nirvāṇa* and about the fourfold "noble truths" (*ārya-satya; sidi* 四諦) of suffering (*duḥkha; ku shengdi* 苦聖諦), of the arising of suffering (*samudaya; kuji shengdi* 苦集聖諦),

8 Koselleck and Gadamer 2013.

of the cessation of suffering (*nirodha; kumie shengdi* 苦滅聖諦), and of the path to the cessation of suffering (*mārga; kumie daoji shengdi* 苦滅道跡聖諦), i.e., the eightfold correct path (*āryāṣṭaṇga-mārga*; *bazhengdao* 八正道).

Accordingly, in Mahāyāna Buddhism to have faith in the three jewels is the first prerequisite to enter the way to liberation (*nyāmâvakrānti*; *rudao* 入道) and to arouse the aspiration to attain Buddhahood (*bodhi-citta-utpāda*; *fa putixin* 發菩提心). The common modern idea that "faith" in Buddhism is no "blind faith" but a faith to be counterchecked against one's own experience and reasoning—in my view—is actually a *cliché* based on a modernist and rationalist interpretation of Buddhism popular since the late nineteenth century.

More specifically, *xin* 信 in terms of "faith" constitutes the first of the so-called "five roots" (*pañcānām indriyāṇām*; *wugen* 五根) or "five powers" (*pañca-balāni*; *wuli* 五力)—elements of practice conducive to awakening—namely (1) faith (*xingen* 信根/*xinli* 信力), (2) exertion (*jingjingen* 精進根/*jingjinli* 精進力), (3) mindfulness (*niangen* 念根/*nianli* 念力), (4) concentration (*dinggen* 定根/*dingli* 定力), and (5) insight (*huigen* 慧根/*huili* 慧力).[9] In the Chinese version of the *Dīrghāgama*, the "root" or "power of faith" is explained in terms of what a monk should believe in. Not surprisingly, it is the Buddha in the first place: "A *bhikṣu* believes/has faith in the Buddha (*xin fo* 信佛), the *tathāgata*, the *arhat*, the perfectly awakened one and all [the qualities referred to in] the ten epithets [of the Buddha]."[10]

Furthermore, in the *Abhidharma, xin* 信 is listed as one of ten "wholesome mental factors" (*kuśala-mahā-bhūmika*; *da shandi fa* 大善地法).[11] In Yogācāra it counts as one of eleven "wholesome mental factors" (*ekâdaśa-kuśala*; *shiyi shan* 十一善).[12] Yogācāra further distinguishes three types of faith, namely "unperturbed faith" (*xinren* 信忍), "joyous faith" (*xinle* 信樂), and "craving for the good dharma" (*shanfa yu* 善法欲),[13] which respectively connote the cognitive (*zhi* 知), emotive (*qing* 情), and motivational (*zhi* 志) aspects of faith.

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9 Cf. *Dīrghāgama; Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經 (T01, no. 1, p. 51, b12–14).

10 *Dīrghāgama; Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經 (T01, no. 1, p. 51, b15–16).

11 I.e. (1) faith 信, (2) zeal 勤, (3) pliancy 輕安, (4) renunciation 捨, (5) conscience 慙, (6) shame 愧, (7) desirelessness 無貪, (8) lack of antipathy 無瞋, (9) non-harming 不害, (10) vigilance 不放逸. Cf. *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-śāstra* by Kātyāyanīputra where the "ten non-harmful things" are listed as: (1) faith 信, (2) exertion 精進, (3) conscience 慚, (4) shame 愧, (5) no-clinging 無貪, (6) lack of antipathy 無瞋, (7) pliancy 輕安, (8) renunciation 捨, (9) vigilance 不放逸, (10) non-harming 十不害 (*Apidamo dapiposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論, T27, no. 1545, p. 220, b2–4).

12 (1) faith 信, (2) conscience 慚, (3) sense of shame 愧, (4) non-craving 無貪, (5) non-hatred 無瞋, (6) non-delusion 無癡, (7) vigor 勤, (8) serenity 輕安, (9) vigilance 不放逸, (10) indifference 行捨, (11) non-harming 不害. Cf, *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra*; *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 (T31, no. 1585, p. 29, b21—p. 31, b16).

13 *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra*; *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 (T31, no. 1585, p. 29, b23–27).

The emotive aspect of faith or "joyous faith" (*xinle* 信樂) is of particular importance within East Asian Pure Land Buddhism. Before I give some examples of how the concept was understood in this important Buddhist tradition, I will give a brief introduction to its historical and ideological development.

## 3 The Pure Land Tradition—a Brief Historical Overview

Besides the belief in a multitude of simultaneously existing Buddhas, the assumption that these Buddhas do not (at least not in the foreseeable future) vanish into a state of *nirvāṇa* completely disconnected from the world of the living, but remain active as saviors in some way represents another vital element of Mahāyāna Buddhology. A Buddha—often referred to "as the 'Great Physician' [*dayi* 大醫] or the 'King of Physicians' [*yiwang* 醫王]"[14] or "Great King of Physicians" (*dayiwang* 大醫王)[15] in Buddhist texts—is by definition a figure who wants to save all sentient beings. In his perfect wisdom (*prajñā; hui* 慧) in combination with his skill in the use of salvific means (*upāya-kauśalya; fangbian shanqiao* 方便善巧),[16] he is capable of providing the right "medicine" for the liberation from suffering for everyone. On the one hand, a Buddha opens the eyes of suffering beings through skillful instruction and stimulates them to embark on the path to liberation. Moreover, a Buddha has immense excessive merit, accumulated during his Bodhisattva career, which he can transfer to sentient beings. The underlying idea is that religious merit can be transferred from one person to another (Skt. *puṇyapariṇāmanā*), which is generally accepted not only in Mahāyāna Buddhism.[17] Merit can be transferred from one person to another, but also from a Buddha to a person in need of help. This concept is particularly important in Mahāyāna Buddhism and especially in the Pure Land tradition. It does not render the principle of karmic retribution ineffective, but sentient beings receive powerful aid in eradicating or balancing out unwholesome karma.

In short, the belief in a multitude of active, "transcendent" Buddhas and the possibility of transferring merit from a Buddha to a sentient being are two central elements in Mahāyāna Buddhism. At first glance, Mahāyāna Buddhism thus strongly resembles redemptive religions like Christianity. The Buddhas and some Bodhisattvas take on the function of benevolent, gracious gods, so to speak, which also help those who are sinful and incapable to salvation by means of their own insufficient efforts (Jap. *jiriki* 自力). This aspect

14 Salguero 2018, 13.

15 Cf. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra; Dabanniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (T12, no. 374, p. 378, c20).

16 For the concept of "skillful means" see Pye 1978; cf. Kleine 2004b.

17 Schopen 1985; Ruegg 2004.

of Mahāyāna Buddhism was very much emphasized in Pure Land Buddhism, especially in Japan, but also in China. The single most important Buddha whose aid people besought, was the Buddha known as Amitābha (Immeasurable Light; Wuliangguangfo 無量光佛) and/or Amitāyus (Immeasurable Life; Wuliangshoufo 無量壽佛). Hereafter I will refer to this Buddha by his Japanese name Amida 阿彌陀.

Early Buddhologists deemed the cult of Amida "un-Buddhist."[18] It seemed to resemble Christianity much more than the original teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama, allegedly preserved in the "Pāli Canon." This inevitably raised the question of where the seemingly un-Buddhist elements could have penetrated Mahāyāna Buddhism from. A direct Christian influence was historically unprovable, because the belief in Amida and his Pure Land Sukhāvatī seems to have been established already in a very early phase of the emergence of Mahāyāna-Buddhism, i.e., at the latest in the early second century AD. The cult seems to have been particularly popular under the Kuṣāṇa dynasty (about 50–200 AD) in the region of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan.[19] Amitābha/Amitāyus may have been known elsewhere in the Indian cultural sphere, too, but an independent cult around this Buddha is hardly verifiable. In contrast, his Pure Land Sukhāvatī seems to have been a "generalized religious goal" in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, the attainment of this goal of salvation was not necessarily linked to a special devotion to Amida or a fixed set of practices. Any form of Buddhist practice and devotion could lead to birth in Sukhāvatī if the believer "directed" (*huixiang* 廻向) his/her religious merit accordingly to this goal of salvation.[20]

The cult around the Buddha Amida was particularly popular in the region of Bactria under the rule of the Kuṣāṇa dynasty and reached China via the Silk Road early on. Obviously, the cult soon enjoyed great popularity in China. One factor contributing to the popularity of this Buddha may be the traditional belief in a Western paradise in China that Pure Land Buddhism could tie in with, namely the belief in a place of immortality in the Kunlun Mountains, where the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母) resides in her Jade Palace.[21]

An organized cult around Amida only becomes historically tangible with the founding of a community of 123 monks and lay people gathering around

18 For an overview of such accusations, see Kleine 2004a, 80.
19 Tanaka 1990, 3.
20 Schopen 1977.
21 Frühauf 1999.

Huiyuan 慧遠[22] (334–416) on Mount Lu in 402, which later became the prototype of all devotional groups striving for birth in the Pure Land, known as "Lotus Societies" (*lianshe* 蓮社) or "Societies of the White Lotus" (*bailianshe* 白蓮社). As important as Huiyuan was as founder of the first brotherhood of monks and laymen striving for birth in the Pure Land for the tradition and identity formation of the School of the Pure Land, he contributed little to the doctrinal development of this tradition. I will focus here, rather selectively, on those thinkers who exerted the strongest doctrinal influence on Japanese Pure Land Buddhism and its concepts of faith. The most important impulses for the doctrinal development of Pure Land Buddhism in East Asia came from the Chinese monks Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542 or 554), Daochuo 道綽 (562–645), and Shandao 善導 (613–681).

Arguably, the most important representative of Pure Land Buddhism in China was the Tang dynasty monk Shandao—at least for the independent doctrinal and institutional development of that cult in Japan. He is said to have developed the desire for birth in this Buddha land by looking at a pictorial representation of Sukhāvatī. Shandao dedicated himself entirely to the practice of Buddha recollection as suggested in the *Sūtra on the Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present* (*Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*)[23] and attained corresponding visions. At the age of about twenty he visited Daochuo and heard his lectures on the *Sūtra* [*on the Buddha*] *of the Immeasurable Life* (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha; Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經, T12, no. 360).[24]

Despite his passion for meditation, Shandao made it absolutely clear that the one "correct act" (*zhengye* 正業) that unfailingly leads into the Pure Land—therefore called "truly determining act" (*zhengding zhi ye* 正定之業)—is pronouncing the name of Amida, i.e., the verbal "Buddha recollection" (Chin. *nianfo*, Jap. *nenbutsu* 念佛). The reason is that it is in harmony with Dharmākara's primal vow—which we will deal with below. All other practices he only grants the status of "auxiliary acts" (*zhuye* 助業) that may support but never replace the verbal *nianfo*.

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22 Cf. Mochizuki 2001; Tsukamoto 1979; Hurvitz 1957.

23 This text has a complicated editorial history and there are at least four Chinese versions extant today: 1. *Dafangdeng daji xianhu jing, Xianhu fen* 大方等大集經賢護分 (T13, no. 416, p. 872a2); 2. *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (T13, no. 417, p. 897c25–27); 3. *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (T13, no. 418, p. 902, c23–25); 4. *Batuo pusa jing* 拔陂菩薩經 (T13, no. 419, p. 920, a3–6). For more information, see Kleine 2015, 444–55. Cf. Harrison 1990; Inagaki 1989.

24 Inagaki 1994; Müller 1894.

We must not forget in this context that even in early texts of Indian mainstream Buddhism ("Hīnayāna"), the *āgamas*, Buddha recollection is recommended as a soteriologically effective practice.[25] However, in these texts Buddha recollection seems to be regarded mainly as a mental rather than a verbal practice, the latter being favored by most East Asian representatives of the Pure Land tradition. Furthermore, the object of visualization in the *āgamas* is, of course, Śākyamuni and not Amida, and the aspired goal is *nirvāṇa* or birth in some heaven instead of Amida's Pure Land. Above all, it remains to be explained how the predominantly mental practice of Buddha recollection was transformed into a verbal practice in the course of the centuries in East Asia. However, the break between the verbal practice of invoking the Buddha's name and mental concentration on his appearance or virtues is not quite as hard as it appears at first glance. Likewise, the idea of putting the name of the or a Buddha at the center of practice is not quite as revolutionary as it seems. Both the mental and the verbal practice of Buddha recollection were regarded as soteriologically effective means in early Buddhism already, even though the object of recollection was Śākyamuni, of course.[26]

In any case, the question of the interpretation of the *nianfo/nenbutsu* practice was of decisive importance for the establishment of an independent doctrinal Pure Land tradition. As already mentioned, there was neither an independent Pure Land school in China nor in Korea. This only took shape in Japan. According to the traditional historiography of Japanese Buddhism, the foundation of the School of the Pure Land (Jōdoshū 淨土宗) is attributed to Hōnen-bō Genkū 法然房源空[27] (better known as Hōnen) and dated 1175. Hōnen saw himself as the spiritual successor of Shandao, who later in 1198 allegedly confirmed the orthodoxy of his interpretations in a dream vision and virtually authorized the Japanese monk to spread the correct Pure Land doctrine.

In his main work, the *Collection of Passages about the Nenbutsu Selected in the Primal Vow* [*of Amida*] (*Senchaku hongan nenbutsu shū* 選擇本願念佛集),[28] Hōnen argues that one should give up all practices other than pronouncing Amida's name. He tried to support this position with a multitude of quotations from the *sūtras* and the treatises of Chinese masters. Master Daochuo in his *Collection of* [*Passages about the Land of*] *Peaceful Bliss* (*Anleji* 安樂集;

25 See, for instance, *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經 (T02, no. 125, p. 554, a20–b10).

26 *Za ahan jing* 雜阿含經 (T02, no. 99, p. 143, b20–c04).

27 Kleine 1996; Repp 2005.

28 T83, no. 2608. For an English translation see Senchakushū English Translation Project 1998.

T47, no. 1958), for instance, divided the Buddhist teachings into the categories "Holy Path" (*shōdō* 聖道) and "Birth into the Pure Land" (*ōjō jōdo* 往生淨土) and argued that in the period of the "Final Dharma" (*mappō* 末法) it was extremely difficult to attain liberation on the Holy Path. It would therefore be better to turn to the path of the Pure Land. Daochuo was also important for Hōnen because he interpreted the practice of "tenfold recollection," selected by Amida himself as the most efficient practice in the eighteenth vow according to the *Sūtra* [*about the Buddha of*] *Immeasurable Life*, as a "tenfold invocation of the name." The sutra reads:

> If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who *with a sincere mind and joyful faith, desire to be born* in my land, and recollect [my Name], even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Awakening. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma.
>
> 設我得佛，十方眾生至心信樂欲生我國，乃至十念，若不生者，不取正覺，唯除五逆、誹謗正法。[29]

Daochuo paraphrases this eighteenth vow as follows:

> Should there be a sentient being that, even if it had done nothing but evil all its life, pronounces my name ten times in a sequence at the end of its life and still is not born [into my Pure Land], I will not accept true awakening.
>
> 若有衆生。縱令一生造惡。臨命終時。十念相續稱我名字。若不生者。不取正覺。[30]

For Hōnen it was crucial to prove that the extremely simple practice of verbal Buddha recollection was the only necessary and sufficient way to liberation, and above that, the only practice explicitly selected by Amida in his Primal Vow—hence the designation "Buddha recollection as selected in the Primal Vow" (*senchaku hongan nenbutsu* 選擇本願念佛).

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29 *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (T12, no. 360, p. 268, a26–28). English translation from Inagaki 1994, 243.

30 *Anle ji* 安樂集 (T47, no. 1958, p. 13, c11–13c13).

Furthermore, Hōnen refers to Dharma Master Tanluan, who in his *Remarks on* [*Vasubandhu's*] *Treatise on Birth in the Pure Land*[31] referred to Nāgārjuna's distinction between the "Path of Easy Practice" (*igyōdō* 易行道) and the "Path of Difficult Practice" (*nangyōdō* 難行道). Those who embark upon the "path of difficult practice" must rely on their (in fact completely inadequate) "self-power" (*jiriki* 自力). In contrast, the "path of simple practice" is based on the immeasurable "other power" (*tariki* 他力) of Amida. Obviously, to rely on the salvific power of the Buddha and to give up one's own fruitless efforts presupposes a good deal of faith. For Hōnen, the "path of difficult practice" was identical to Daochuo's "holy path" and the "path of easy practice" to the "gateway to the Pure Land." For Hōnen it was crucial to prove that the extremely simple practice of verbal Buddha recollection, accompanied by deep and genuine faith in the infallible power of Amida's Primal Vow, was the only necessary and sufficient way to liberation.

## 4 The Concept of 信 in East Asian Pure Land Buddhism

Let us now turn to the concept of faith as developed in Chinese and further elaborated in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. In his famous *One Sheet Document* 一枚起請文, a kind of testament that he dictated shortly before his death on the request of his disciple Genchi 源智 (1182–1238), Hōnen stresses the importance of faith, saying:

> There is no other reason for Birth in the [Land of] Utmost Bliss than just to say 'Namu Amida Butsu' and *to believe that without any doubt* one will [thereby] be born.
>
> 唯往生ごくらくのためには南無阿彌陀佛と申てうたがひなく徃生するぞとおもひとりて申外には別のしさい候はず.[32]

31 *Wangsheng lun* 往生論, also known as *Jingtu lun* 淨土論; full title: *Wuliangshoujing youpotishe yuanshengji* 無量壽經優波提舍願生偈 (T26, no. 1524); Skt. *Sukhāvatīvyūhôpadeśa*; Tanluan's commentary: *Wuliangshoujing youpotishe yuanshengji zhu* 無量壽經優婆提舍願生偈註, or simply *Wangsheng lun zhu* 往生論註 (T40, no. 1819). For the Chinese text and an annotated English translation, cf. Inagaki 1998.

32 Jōdoshū kaishū happyakunen kinen keisan junbikyoku 浄土宗開宗八百年記念慶讃準備局 1970–1972 [1911–1914], vol. 9, 1a, 5–7.

Hōnen's disciple Shinran (1173–1262) put even more emphasis on the aspect of faith than his teacher did. Tradition has it[33] that Shinran, with the permission of Hōnen, had once organized a kind of contest to find out who had actually attained true faith (*shinjin* 信心) in one's own birth in the "True Land of Retribution" (*shinjitsu hōdo* 眞實報土; according to Shinran the highest attainable level of birth in the Pure Land of Amida). For this purpose, he had the seats divided in two at a meeting of over 300 followers of Hōnen. On the one side, those whose faith was imperturbable (*shin futai* 信不退) should take their seats, on the other side, those whose practice was imperturbable (*gyō futai* 行不退). The noble and high-ranking Seikaku 聖覺 (1167–1235) and Shinkū 信空 (1146–1228), Hōnens most trusted disciple, had settled on the side of imperturbable practice. The next one, the novice Hōrikibō 法力房, took his seat together with Shinran on the side of the imperturbable faith. The decision of the master was eagerly awaited. After a while Hōnen announced that he would choose the side of imperturbable faith, whereupon those who had chosen practice were deeply ashamed. Asked about the reason for carrying out this test, Shinran told of an earlier incident. He once got into a quarrel with other students of Hōnen when he announced that there was not the slightest difference between his faith and his master's faith. Some of those present felt that Shinran's assertion to be equal to the master in terms of his faith was presumptuous. Shinran, in defense, argued that he had not claimed that his wisdom was comparable to that of the master. As far as faith is concerned, however, he did not claim this to be his own achievement, but a gift from Amida's "other power" (*tariki shinjin* 他力信心). Since Hōnen's faith, as anybody else's, was also a gift of the other power, how could there be a difference between the two faiths? Thereupon Hōnen noted that if the faith of two people differed, this was a sign for a "faith based on self-power" (*jiriki no shin* 自力ノ信) of the believer and thus not genuine and perfect. Amida always endows right faith, regardless of intelligence or virtue of the recipient.

As can be seen by this anecdote, Shinran's strong emphasis on and idiosyncratic interpretation of true faith (*shinjin*) and other power (*tariki*) is a distinguishing feature of his doctrine. Nevertheless, Shinran's notion of faith is clearly based on Chinese ideas. True faith—as Shandao and Hōnen had argued—is based (1) on insight into one's own sinfulness and inability and

33 The story is narrated in *The Illustrated Biography of Saint Shinran of the Hongan Temple* (*Honganji Shōnin Shinran den'e* 本願寺聖人親鸞傳繪) T83, vol. 2664, p. 0752, a13–52b03.

(2) on insight into the fulfillment of Amida's saving vows. The worst sinners in particular, who are completely dependent on Amida's grace, are the ultimate objects of Amida's grace and commitment. Having no merit or virtue to rely on, they are more susceptible to true faith than those who still trust in their own power. Shinran had allegedly said, "If the good are born, how much more so the bad" (善人ナヲモテ往生ヲトク。イハンヤ惡人ヲヤ).[34] This theory was by no means harmless, which Hōnen probably recognized and therefore hesitated to propagate publicly. In fact, many supporters of the *nenbutsu* movement claimed that a moral lifestyle signified a lack of trust. Violations of rules and norms, on the other hand, were seen as proof of a particularly strong faith. According to Shinran, no evil was so great that it could obstruct the power of Amida's vow.

For him, the eighteenth of the forty-eight vows that the Bodhisattva Dharmākara, the future Buddha Amitāyus, had taken and the fulfillment of which he had declared a prerequisite for his own acceptance of perfect awakening, was of utmost importance. As we have seen in the quotation above, the eighteenth vow makes "joyous faith" (*shingyō* 信樂) a decisive factor for attaining birth in his Pure Land. However, "joyous faith" should be accompanied by two other mental attitudes, namely a "sincere mind" (*shishin* 至心) and the "desire to be born" (*yokushō* 欲生) in Amida's Land of Perfect Bliss.

The importance of "resolute faith" (*myōshin* 明信) as the opposite of "doubt" (*giwaku* 疑惑) is further emphasized in another passage of the same sutra.

> If those beings become aware of the faults committed in their former lives and deeply repent, they can, as they wish, leave and go to where Amitāyus dwells. Then they can worship and make offerings to him; they can also visit innumerable and countless other Buddhas to perform various meritorious practices. Maitreya, you should know that the bodhisattvas who allow doubt to arise lose great benefits. For this reason, you should have resolute faith in the supreme wisdom of the Buddha.
>
> 若此眾生識其本罪，深自悔責求離彼處，即得如意，往詣無量壽佛所恭敬供養，亦得遍至無量無數諸如來所修諸功德。彌勒當知，其有菩薩生疑惑者，為失大利。是故，應當明信諸佛無上智慧.[35]

34 *Tan'ishō* 歎異抄 (T83, no. 2661, p. 728, c16–19).

35 *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (T12, no. 360, p. 278, b22–26); English translation from Inagaki 1994, 309–310.

The correct mental attitude of those who seek for birth in the Pure Land is thus threefold: you need a sincere mind, joyful faith and the desire for birth in the Pure Land. This roughly accords with the three types of faith distinguished in Yogācāra mentioned above. Moreover, it corresponds to the so-called "threefold mind" (*sanjushin* 三種心) prescribed in the *Sūtra on Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*:

> Those who attain birth [in Amida's Pure Land] on the highest level of the highest grade are sentient beings who resolve to be born in that land, awaken the threefold mind and so are born there. What are the three? They are, first, a sincere mind; second, a deep mind; and third, a mind that seeks birth there by transferring one's merit. Those who have these three kinds of mind will certainly be born there.
>
> 上品上生者，若有眾生願生彼國者，發三種心，即便往生。何等為三？一者、至誠心。二者、深心。三者、迴向發願心。具三心者必生彼國.[36]

There were some debates over the question whether the arousal of all three minds in a technical sense was a precondition for birth in the Pure Land. As we have seen, Hōnen in his *Ichimai kishōmon* had claimed that "the three minds, the four modes of practice, and such things are all definitely included in the firm belief to be born in the Pure Land by [uttering] Namu Amida Butsu" (ただし三心四修と申事の候はみな決定して南無阿彌陀佛にて徃生するぞとおもふうちにこもり候なり)[37] which means that practitioners do not need to bother themselves with technical details concerning the achievement of the "threefold mind" or any other mental states or specific modes of practicing Buddha recollection.

The second of these three mental attitudes, the "deep mind" is usually interpreted as "deep faith" or "faith" in a stricter sense. Shandao explains this in his *Verses in Praise of Birth in the Pure Land* (*Wangsheng lizan ji* 往生禮讚偈) in the following way:

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36 *Guan wuliangshoufo jing* 觀無量壽佛經 (T12, no. 365, p. 344, c10–13); English translation from Inagaki 1994, 339.

37 Jōdoshū kaishū happyakunen kinen keisan junbikyoku 浄土宗開宗八百年記念慶讃準備局 1970–1972 [1911–1914], vol. 9, p. 1a, 7–9.

> Second, deep mind; this is the true faith which accepts that you are an ordinary person full of evil passions, possessed of few roots of good, subject to transmigration in the three worlds, and unable to escape from the burning house; nevertheless, now you recognize the fact that Amida's Universal Primal Vow definitely ensures birth in the Pure Land of those who recite the Name even ten times or down to once. Since you do not entertain even a single thought of doubt, such a state of mind is called deep mind.
>
> 二者深心。即是眞實信心。信知自身是具足煩惱凡夫。善根薄少。流轉三界。不出火宅。今信知彌陀本弘誓願。及稱名號。下至十聲一聲等。定得往生。乃至一念無有疑心。故名深心.[38]

We understand that in Shandao's interpretation—which had an enormous impact on Japanese Pure Land thought[39]—a "deep mind" or "deep faith" has two major aspects: First, the practitioner has to gain the conviction (literally, "believe and know," *xinzhi* 信知; Skt. *avetya-prasāda*) that his or her own deficiencies make it virtually impossible for him or her to attain liberation relying on his or her utterly insufficient "self-power." Once he or she has accepted this fact, he or she takes refuge in the "other-power" of Amida's Primal Vow, firmly believing that this will surely bring about birth in the Pure Land.

Thus, Hōnen's disciple Seikaku 聖覺 (1167–1235) in his *Yuishinshō* 唯信鈔 (Essentials of Faith Alone) points out very clearly that the only thing a sinful sentient being can and must do is to have complete faith in the soteriological power of Amida's vow:

> There are two aspects concerning this mind of trust (信心): the first is to believe (信ず) oneself to be a foolish being of defiled karma, subject to birth-and-death, from incalculable kalpas past constantly sinking and constantly turning, without any condition that could lead to liberation. The second is to believe deeply and decisively (決定してふかく … 信ずる) that, since one does not doubt that Amida's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings, one rides on the power of that Vow and will without fail attain birth. People often say: "Not that I don't believe in Buddha's Vow (佛の願を信ぜざるにはあらざれ), but when I reflect on myself, I see that my karmic hindrances have accumulated greatly and that the appearance of a good heart is rare. My mind is ever distracted and single-mindedness

38 *Wangsheng lizan ji* 往生禮讚偈 (T47, no. 1980, p. 438, c6–10); English translation from Bloom and Tanaka 2013, 143.

39 Shinshū seiten hensan iinkai 眞宗聖典編纂委員會 1992, 923–924.

> (一心) is impossible to achieve. I am forever negligent and lack diligence. Although the Buddha's Vow is said to be profound, how can the Buddha possibly receive me?" Such thoughts appear truly sensible; arrogance (驕慢) is not aroused and self-conceit (高貢) nonexistent. Yet there is the crime of doubting the inconceivable power of the Buddha (佛の不思議力を疑ふとがあり). Does one know what power the Buddha possesses, when one says that because of one's karmic evil it is impossible to be saved? Even those wrongdoers who commit the five grave offenses (五逆の罪人), because of ten utterances (十念), attain birth (往生) in an instant; even more so those who never go so far as to commit the five grave offenses, and in merit far surpass that of ten utterances.[40]

> いまこの信心につきて二つあり。一つには、わが身は罪惡生死の凡夫、曠劫よりこのかた、　つねに沈みつねに流轉して、出離の縁あることなしと信ず。二つには、決定してふかく、阿彌陀佛の四十八願、衆生を攝取したまふことを疑はざれば、かの願力に乘りて、さだめて往生することを得と信ずるなり。世の人つねにいはく、「佛の願を信ぜざるにはあらざれども、わが身のほどをはからふに、罪障のつもれることはおほく、善心のおこることはすくなし。こころつねに散亂して一心をうることかたし。身とこしなへに懈怠にして精進なることなし。佛の願ふかしといふとも、いかでかこの身をむかへたまはん」 と。このおもひまことにかしこきに似たり、憍慢をおこさず高貢のこころなし。しかはあれども、佛の不思議力を疑ふとがあり。仏いかばかりのちからましますとしりてか、罪惡の身なればすくはれがたしとおもふべき。五逆の罪人すら、なほ十念のゆゑにふかく刹那のあひだに往生をとぐ。いはんや罪五逆にいたらず、功十念にすぎたらんをや。

Now, the emphasis on the redemptive power of faith is by no means a Japanese invention. In the so-called "Chapter on Easy Practice" (*yixingpin* 易行品) of the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*, a commentary on the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (*Shidi jing* 十地經) traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna (Chin. Longshu 龍樹; second–third century), faith is said to be the easiest way to gain access to the Buddha Dharma, and practice based on faith is likened to the pleasant way of traveling in a boat. The text states:

> There are innumerable modes of entry into the Buddha's teaching. Just as there are in the world difficult and easy paths—travelling on foot by land is full of hardship and travelling in a boat by sea is pleasant—so it

40 Shinshū seiten hensan iinkai, 1992, 923–924; English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 692.

> is among the paths of the bodhisattvas. Some exert themselves diligently, while others quickly enter Non-retrogression *by the easy practice based on faith*.
>
> 佛法有無量門。如世間道有難有易。陸道步行則苦。水道乘船則樂。菩薩道亦如是。或有勤行精進。或有以信方便易行疾至阿惟越致者。[41]

As we have seen, when it comes to genuine deep faith as the true cause of liberation from birth and death Shinran, the founder of the tradition which so strongly reminded the missionaries of the Lutheran heresy, is our man. Shinran argued that the so-called "threefold mind" as propagated in Dharmākara's Eighteenth Vow quoted above is nothing but three aspects of one single "faithful mind" (*shinjin* 信心). In his famous *Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land* he argues that:

> Although Amida Tathāgata discloses three minds, the true cause of attaining *nirvāṇa* is a faithful mind (*shinjin* 信心) alone; [...]. Looking into the literal meanings of the three minds, I find that the three should be taken as one. Why? In "sincere mind" (*shishin* 至心), *shi* 至 means truth, reality, sincerity; *shin* 心 means seed, kernel. In "entrusting" (*shingyō* 信樂), *shin* 信 means truth, reality, sincerity, fullness, ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, reverence, discernment, distinctness, clarity, faithfulness; *gyō* 樂 means aspiration, wish, desire, exultation, delight, joy, gladness, happiness. In "aspiration for birth" (*yokushō* 欲生), *yoku* means wish, desire, awakening, awareness; *shō* 生 means accomplishment, fulfillment, performance, establishment.
>
> We see clearly that sincere mind is the mind that is the seed of truth, reality, and sincerity; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. Entrusting is the mind full of truth, reality, and sincerity; the mind of ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, and reverence; the mind of discernment, distinctness, clarity, and faithfulness; the mind of aspiration, wish, desire, and exultation; the mind of delight, joy, gladness, and happiness; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. Aspiration for birth is the mind of wish, desire, awakening, and awareness; the mind of accomplishment, fulfillment, performance, and establishment. It is the mind of great compassion directing itself to beings; hence, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt.

41 *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (T26, no. 1521, p. 41, b2–6); English translation from Inagaki 1998, 135. Cf. Bloom and Tanaka 2014, 1.

> Here, in considering the literal meanings of the terms for them, we find that the three minds are the mind of truth and reality, free of any taint of falsity; they are the mind right and straightforward, free of any taint of wrong and deceit. Truly we know, then, that this is called 'faithful mind' because it is untainted by the hindrance of doubt. A faithful mind is the mind that is single. The mind that is single is a faithful mind that is true and real.[42]

> 彌陀如來雖發三心。涅槃眞因唯以信心。是故論主合三爲一歟。私闕三心字訓。三即合一。其意何者。言至心者。至者即是眞也·實也·誠也。心者即是種也·實也。言信樂者。信者即是眞也·實也·誠也·滿也·極也·成也·用也·重也·審也·驗也·宣也·忠也。樂者即是欲也·願也·愛也·悦也·歡也·喜也·賀也·慶也。言欲生者。欲者即是願也·樂也·覺也·知　画像也。生者即是成也·作也·爲也·興也。明知。至心即是眞實誠種之心。故疑蓋無雜也。信樂即是眞實誠滿之心。極成用重之心。審驗宣忠之心。欲願愛悦之心。歡喜賀慶之心。故疑蓋無雜也。欲生即是願樂覺知之心。成作爲興之心。大悲回向之心。故疑蓋無雜也。今按三心字訓。眞實心而虛假無雜。正直心而邪僞無雜。眞知。疑蓋無間雜故。是名信樂。信樂即是一心。一心即是眞實信心。

Furthermore, Shinran who was notoriously eager to demonstrate that no one in this defiled age of the Final Dharma (*mappō* 末法) has enough self-power to attain birth in the Pure Land by accumulating merit also engaged the question of how to achieve *shinjin* or a "faithful mind." In his view "Great Faith" (*daishin* 大信), as well as the "Great Practice" (*daigyō* 大行) of the *nenbutsu*—the practice of invoking Amida's name—is nothing to be achieved by the practitioner, but is transferred by Amida upon the practitioner. "This mind," he says, "arises from the Vow of birth through the *nenbutsu*."[43]

Naturally, the question arises, how "great faith" can be realized, if there is nothing that people can do by themselves to change their mind-sets. Shinran's answer to this question virtually amounts to a doctrine of predestination: "For the foolish and ignorant who are ever sinking in birth-and-death, the multitudes turning in transmigration," he says,

> it is not attainment of the unexcelled, incomparable fruit of enlightenment that is difficult; the genuine difficulty is realizing true and real

42 *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshinshō monrui* 顯淨土眞實教行證文類 (T83, no. 2646, p. 604, a3–19); English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 94.

43 *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshinshō monrui jo* 顯淨土眞實教行證文類序; (T83, no. 2646, p. 590, a10–590a16).

> *shinjin*. Why? Because this realization takes place through the Tathāgata's supportive power; because it comes about wholly through the power of great compassion and all-embracing wisdom. If pure *shinjin* should be realized, that mind will not be inverted; that mind will not be vain or false. Thereupon that sentient being of extreme evil, profound and immense, will realize the mind of great joy and receive the veneration and love of all the sacred honored ones.
>
> 然常沒凡愚流轉群生。無上妙果不難成。眞實信樂實難獲。何以故。乃由如來加威力故。博因大悲廣慧力故。遇獲淨信者。是心不顚倒。是心不虛僞。是以極惡深重衆生。得大慶喜心。獲諸聖尊重愛也。[44]

In the famous *Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith* (*Tannishō* 歎異抄), Shinran is quoted as saying that,

> the moment you entrust yourself thus to the Vow, so that the mind set upon saying the *nenbutsu* [i.e. Amida's name] arises within you, you are immediately brought to share in the benefit of being grasped by Amida, never to be abandoned.
>
> 彌陀の誓願不思議にたすけられまゐらせて、往生をばとぐる なりと信じて念佛申さんとおもひたつこころのおこるとき、すなわ ち攝取不捨の利益にあづけしめたまふなり。[45]

In the same vein, paraphrasing the Primal Vow, Shinran states in his *Kyōgyō shinshō*:

> All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of faith and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

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44 *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshinshō monrui* 顯淨土眞實教行證文類 (T83, no. 2646, p. 601, a13–18); English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 79–80.

45 Shinshū seiten hensan iinkai 眞宗聖典編纂委員會 1992, 626 (I have replaced the modern Japanese characters with the traditional ones for consistency). English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 661.

> 本願成就文。經言。諸有衆生聞其名號。信心歡喜乃至一念。至心回向セシメ玉ヘリ。願生彼國即得往生。住不退轉。唯除五逆誹謗正法。[46]

## 5 Conclusion

It should by now have become clear that "*shin*" in the sense of "faith" is in fact a central concept in Buddhism in general and in East Asian Pure Land Buddhism in particular. No Western or Christian influence was needed to interpret the Chinese "*xin*" as "faith" rather than "trustworthiness." Likewise, the notion of Buddhism being a religion based on critical reflection and personal experience rather than "blind faith"—and thus perhaps being no religion at all—is hardly more than a Western *cliché*.

To illustrate this, let me quote one more passage from the *Essentials of Faith Alone* (*Yuishinshō* 唯信鈔), written by Seikaku 聖覺 (1167–1235), a Tendai monk and disciple of Hōnen in 1221, a text held in high esteem by Shinran. The author explains here in simple, non-technical terms what a "deep mind," interpreted as "faith" or "faithful mind," actually means:

> You should first know the features of the faithful mind (信心). The faithful mind is to have deep faith in people's words without doubting (うたがはざる) them. For example, suppose that a man whom one deeply trusts and of whom one has no cause for suspicion whatever tells you about a place which he knows well at firsthand, saying that there is a mountain here, a river there. You believe (信じてん) deeply what he says, and after you have accepted these words, you meet other people who say it is all false. There is no mountain and no river. Nevertheless, since what you heard was said by a person whom you cannot think would speak a mere fabrication, a hundred thousand people might tell you differently but you would not accept it. Rather, you deeply trust (ふかくたのみて) what you heard first. This is called faith (信心). Now, believing in what Śākyamuni taught (釋迦の所說を信じ), entrusting yourself to Amida's Vow (彌陀の誓願を信じて), and being without any doubt should be like this.[47]

46 *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshinshō monrui* (T83, no. 2646, p. 601, a27–29); English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 80.

47 Shinshū seiten hensan iinkai 1992, 923. English from Shinran and Hirota 1997, 692.

In short: a Buddhist believes in what is transmitted in the sutras because he believes that these represent the words of the Buddha, a charismatic authority who is perfectly trustworthy.

I really do not see any relevant difference between the Christian notion of *fides* and this Pure Land Buddhist notion of *xin*. At least in the Pure Land Tradition, *xin* is characterized as being decidedly not based on rational reflection. When I read Shinran, I cannot help but think of Tertullian's famous saying that is usually paraphrased as "c*redo quia absurdum*"—"I believe *because* it is absurd."[48] In Shinran's view all intellectual calculation or "*hakarahi* はからひ" of one's own conditions for salvation is futile because the working of Amida's Primal Vow, the virtues of the Buddha's name and his wisdom are "incomprehensible" (*fukashigi* 不可思議), "inexpressible" (*fukashō* 不可稱), and "inexplicable" (*fukasetsu* 不可説).

Moreover, intellectual calculation on the side of the believer is not only futile, but proves to be an obstacle to pure and genuine faith. As long as one thinks he or she can calculate his or her own soteriological precondition, he or she still clings to his or her completely insufficient "self-power," which is a serious impediment to the achievement of true faith and complete reliance on Amida's "other power." In his last will and testament, the *Ichimai kishōmon* mentioned above, Shinran's teacher Hōnen had therefore urged his followers not to put on any airs and to practice the *nenbutsu* with the sincerity of lay priests and nuns, completely ignorant of Buddhist doctrines, even if they had actually studied all the teachings which Śākyamuni had taught during his life. They should just faithfully entrust themselves to Amida of whom they know only through the true words of Buddha Śākyamuni.

As Hōnen and Shinran strongly relied upon Chinese authors such as Daochuo, Tanluan, and Shandao, it can be said that their concepts of *shin* as "faith" stem from Chinese Buddhist sources. They are just elaborations of a concept the Chinese had adopted from Indian Buddhism hundreds of years before. Therefore, in conclusion, I would suggest looking for emic discourses when it comes to the genealogy of concepts before rashly presupposing Western influences—unless we regard Buddhism as a religion originating in India as "Western influence." This would of course be quite correct and in that vein, I would strongly recommend moving beyond the simple bilateral historical scheme of "the modern West" versus "the rest," and replace or supplement it by an intra-Asian *histoire croisée*, an entangled history of the East, if you will. In the light of what I said before, it seems fair to say that the transformation

48 The original sentence reads, "prorsus credibile est, quia ineptum est," which can be translated as "it is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd," in Tertullian's work *De Carne Christi* (ca. 203–206). Cf. also Jiang's chapter in this volume.

of the Chinese term *xin* has indeed been caused by Western influence—albeit not by European and American, but by Indian and Central Asian influence. And the basic transformation did not happen in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries but roughly one and a half millennium before—namely to match the "*Buddhist* concept of faith" rather than any "Christian concept of faith." In pre-modern East Asia (as elsewhere) there was not one homogeneous conceptual and discourse history, but many. From this it follows that my remarks on the development of the concept "*xin*" represent only one strand of conceptual history, i.e., a specific Buddhist genealogy. However, in view of the enormous influence of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan, it must be assumed that its specific concept of faith was generally available as a conceptual resource even outside the respective denominations in the nineteenth century.

## Abbreviations

T Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 1924–1934. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (*Taishō Tripiṭaka*). Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō kankōkai.

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CHAPTER 8

# Convinced by Amazement—Creating Buddhist *xin* 信 (Belief/Trust) in the Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks (T. 2064)

*Esther-Maria Guggenmos*

## 1 Introduction

Although underrepresented in Western academic writing due to a philosophically and "rationally" oriented *relecture* of the Buddhist traditions, miracle tales form a prominent part of Buddhist literature, especially in terms of demonstrating the convincing power of Buddhism.[1] Buddhist belief is often described as being induced by miraculous happenings. Tales about Buddha's life are full of miraculous occurrences, such as his ability to walk directly after birth with flowering lotus blossoms opening under his feet.[2] In expounding his teachings, the *sūtras* stress the Buddha's performance of his supernatural powers to attract the attention of his audience and convert them to Buddhism, despite their limited wisdom.[3] In Chinese Buddhism, miracle tales continue the tradition of narrations of the strange (*zhiguai* 志怪 literature). Stories centering on the miraculous power of Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音, Avalokiteśvara, feature prominently in early miracle tale collections.[4] "The collection and dissemination of miracle stories have remained one of the most effective ways to

1 For a first overview, see Kieschnick 2004. The miracle literature on South and Central Asian Buddhism is far better researched than the corresponding works in East Asia. Fiordalis 2014 provides a useful overview of South-Asian related works. For East Asia, the translations of Campany 2012 stand out, while Faure 1994 devotes two chapters to thaumaturgy and Kieschnick 1997 sees thaumaturgical competency as one of the three characteristics of eminent monks (*gaoseng* 高僧).

2 A good first impression of Sanskrit, Pāli, and Tibetan legendary material on the life of the Buddha is still Waldschmidt 1929. For a Chinese version of this work, see, for example, the *Fo benxing ji jing* 佛本行集經, T. 190.

3 See Zin 2006.

4 The corpus of miracle tale collections prior to the Sui dynasty (581–618) already contains a large portion of miracle tales that report the "responsive manifestations" (*yingyan* 應驗) of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, especially the *Xi Guanshiyin yingyan ji* 繫觀世音應驗記 (More Records of Avalokiteśvara's Responsive Manifestations) of sixty-nine narrations, compiled by Lu Gao 陸杲 in 501 CE, see Campany 2012, 3–5.

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inspire and sustain people's faith in this savior"—thus Yü summarizes the role of Guanyin in Chinese Buddhist miracle tales.[5] Even today on the mainland, she reports that belief in the (healing) miraculous intervention of Guanyin forms a stark topos in the narrations of believers.[6] Sincere (*cheng* 誠) belief in Guanyin's rescuing power evokes the bodhisattva's response, which can transform the disastrous outlook of the petitioner and inspire deep, grateful astonishment for improved fortunes. In the major collections of Chinese Buddhist biographies, miracle-working monks make up a separate one among ten different categories.[7] Miracles also occur in the remaining categories of Buddhist biographical collections, especially when Buddhist objects of veneration such as relics or texts must prove their authenticity and display their power.

In this chapter, I exemplify the role that miracles play in the creation of Chinese Buddhist belief by analyzing the narrative flow in the *Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks* (*Shenseng zhuan* 神僧傳, T. 2064; hereafter: SSZ).[8] In 1417 CE, the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360–1424, r. 1403–1424), assembled these biographies by selecting passages from 208 biographical entries from the large corpus of Buddhist and secular biographical writings. The emperor based his selections on whether he considered that the passages convincingly demonstrated the power and efficacy of Buddhism. He directly addresses his motivation in the preface to his work: He was creating this compilation in order to present in a single volume the reasons why the Buddhist monks selected were considered *shen* 神—equipped with divine

5 Yü 2007, 1244, based on Yü 2001.

6 This is in accordance with my own field research on lay Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan. In Guggenmos 2017, three of the nine presented lay Buddhist biographical narrations recollect an intimate relation with Bodhisattva Guanyin. See chaps. 7.2, 7.5, and 8.2, see also the reflection in 12.1.

7 In the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳) by Huijiao 慧皎, compiled around 530 CE, the third of ten categories is called *shenyi* 神異, wonder workers. In the following corpora, the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 and the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, this category is named differently (*gantong* 感通) while still relating to wonder workers (on the difference in terminology see Guggenmos/Li 2019, 8–9). The latter biographies include monks witnessing miracles that occur through the power of Buddhist teaching or Buddhist objects such as relics, while the monks of the *Gaoseng zhuan* often perform miracles themselves. For an introduction to Buddhist biographical writing, see Kleine 2010 and Wright 1954. For the role of miracles in these narrations, see also Shinohara 1994a and 1994b.

8 Twenty-one of these biographies are translated, annotated, and reflected upon in Guggenmos/Li 2019, which provides the first overview of Chinese Buddhist monks' divinatory activities in their social context.

powers and, in consequence, capable of performing miracles.[9] This would contribute to the convincing power of Buddhism: "By letting all people know what is 'divine' (*shen*) about these 'divine monks,'" the emperor states in his preface, "I can provide proof." What is proven here is obviously the divine, spiritually advanced stage of the monks and, in conjunction, the efficacy and power of Buddhism. The emperor continues: "I have set these words at the beginning of this book to make its overall sense recognizable" (使人皆知神僧之所以為神者有可徵矣。用書此於編首。概見其大意云爾，948b11). How do the biographical narrations address the convincing power of Buddhism? The moments in the narrations that express the emerging trust in Buddhism shall be my focus in the following pages. When exploring the semantic aspects of selected passages in the biographies, "belief"/"trust" (*xin* 信) unfolds as conveyed through the moment of "amazement" (mostly recognizable as *yi* 異, the "different," "strange"), to which the public might react with "fright" or "fear" (*jing* 驚, *ju* 懼).

Before exploring the text in greater depth, let us briefly contextualize the compiler's intention, as mentioned above. Zhu Di, known as the Yongle 永樂 Emperor, continued his father's heritage as third emperor of the Ming dynasty and is well-known for his costly projects, such as establishing the Forbidden City in Peking, initiating the sea expeditions under General Zheng He 鄭和 (1371–1433), and assembling the extant literature of his time in the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Yongle canon). He followed neo-Confucian interests in reshaping the education of candidates for officialdom. As the Prince of Yan, he was responsible for settling conflicts with the Mongols and continued these politics in his later years as emperor. In his youth, he decided to rebel against Emperor Jianwen 建文 (r. 1398–1402) upon the advice of the Buddhist monk and physiognomist Daoyan 道衍 (1335–1418) and the famous physiognomist Yuan Gong 袁珙 (d. 1410). Daoyan also accompanied the emperor in his later years. Concerned about legitimizing his rule, divination played a central role for Zhu Di. In the SSZ, predictions prevail as Buddhism unfolds as a counseling source for the ruler. Zhu Di demonstrated an interest in Tibetan Buddhism through ordering the printing of Tibetan Buddhist canonical writings in the *Yongle Canon*. He invited the Fifth Karmapa, who held a fasting ceremony in honor of the dynasty's founder, Zhu Di's father, Emperor Taizu 太祖

9 *Shen* is a vague term, translated here as "divine" or "thaumaturge." It can be a noun in the broadest sense of a "god": "In early China, as today, *shen* covers a semantic field ranging from abstract and ephemeral spiritual influences, to sages and enlightened human beings, to anthropomorphized deities and ancestors, or monsters and other ghostly denizens residing in mountains, lakes and forests" (Sterckx 2007, 23). As an adjective, it basically expresses the quality of such a god, his divine power.

(r. 1368–1398), and his wife. Although ruling families often distanced themselves from Buddhism after Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (625–705 CE) instrumentalized it for the legitimation of her reign, Zhu Di held a generally positive attitude toward Chinese Buddhism, as did his father. In 1402 CE, he sent the monk Zhiguang 智光 on a pilgrimage to Nepal. He ordered the Muslim Zheng He to bring a relic of the Buddha from Sri Lanka. Still, his interest should also be considered as inspired by pragmatic and strategic considerations. Personally, Zhu Di was strongly oriented toward Daoist practices, but also favored Tibetan Buddhism. The compilation of the SSZ, with its concentration on the miraculous effect and power of Buddhist teaching, is in line with his passion for immortality recipes, relics, and esoteric practices. In 1417, when the SSZ was compiled, the Forbidden City was almost completed, Tibetan rulers had been visiting or repeatedly invited. Unfortunately, we know little about how the SSZ was received by its contemporaries and later readers.[10] The preface alone provides us with a brief insight into the intentions that led to the compilation of this biographical collection, which often draws a very unfamiliar portrait of eminent monks as miracle workers, who are better known in the Buddhological collective memory as translators, pilgrims, or patriarchs. The SSZ as a collection is unique and precious as it provides condensed hagiographies that focus on thaumaturgical activities. This directs our attention to what might motivate a Buddhist self-identification and how faith was spread beyond the great translations and seminal missionary achievements: Miraculous activities of monks obviously induced fascination. And these activities can be found from the earliest biographies onwards that narrate the advent of Buddhism in China in the first and second century CE.

In the following, I will briefly confirm the usage of *xin* in the SSZ and continue with the semantic focus on turning points in selected biographical narrations by analyzing how the "strange" and "amazing" that might cause "fright" and "fear" is narrated. This sheds light on the role of miracles in inspiring Buddhist belief in the intended readership.

## 2 *Xin* 信 as "Trust in Buddhism"

A lexicographical search through the SSZ for the term *xin* 信 verifies what was stated in the introduction to this edited volume: In the SSZ, *xin* first of all

10 The SSZ is scarcely mentioned in biographies on the Yongle emperor; see Tsai 2001, Shang 1989. The relation of the Yongle emperor to Tibetan Buddhism is well represented in Toh 2004, Berger 2001, and Shen 2011. For further details, see Guggenmos/Li 2019.

signifies belief in the sense of trust.[11] This might be perceived as more "secular," as in the case of the verification of the prediction that the Han dynasty calendar will, one day, be corrected ("Thus the word of Luoxia Hong has been confirmed," 則洛下閎之言信矣, biography of Yixing 一行, around 700 CE; T. 2064. L: 995c23). It is often "religious" in nature, as in the case of a general who does not accept that a *stūpa* is radiating light, whereupon the *stūpa* emits light and the general shows his respectful trust (虛誕不經所未能信。 … 由是敬信, biography of Kang Senghui 康僧會, third century CE; 950a13–15). Trustful belief can be intense, as in the case of an official close to Yixing, who was a sincere believer in the Buddhadharma (寬深信佛法師事普寂禪師, biography of Yixing; 996a26). Believers are referred to through nominalizations of *xin* (信者, biography of Falan 法蘭, first century CE; 948c24; 歸信, biography of Moteng 摩騰, first century CE; 948c3). Belief and trust versus doubt (*yi* 疑) form a contrast in the case of the monk Wanhui 萬迴 (around 700 CE), whose parents are "torn between belief/trust and doubt" upon his sudden use of language (父母且信且疑, biography of Wanhui; 993c6). In the case of the monk Weiying 惟瑛 (ninth century CE), the trust of an aspiring candidate for officialdom in Weiying's prediction is a consequence of his having experienced the monk's far-reaching knowledge (賓虞深信之, biography of Weiying; 1006c1). In this case, Weiying's testing transforms disbelief into deep trust. Trustful belief is created in the run of the narration, which raises a question regarding how the biographies function as narrations.

## 3 Narrative Turns: Facing the Unexpected

According to the narratologist Matías Martínez, narrations are defined as following a chronological order of concrete states or events and/or causally connected central elements that can be framed as schemes of action.[12] Narrations are characterized by their eventfulness, tellability, and experientiality.[13] Eventfulness is recognized by points in the narration that diverge from the reader's expectations. When reading the biographies of the SSZ, a repeated narrative marker catches the eye: The reader's expected astonishment is marked through the public's amazement. Witnessing the divine (*shen*) powers

11 Here, as in the following, I focus on a synchronic reading of the text. A diachronic stratification would require a far deeper analysis and access to other textual sources, and exceed the scope of this article.

12 Martínez 2011, 11.

13 Martínez 2011, 6–8.

of the monks, the audience is "amazed" and recognizes the event's strange and extraordinary quality. Semantically, these phrases are often marked by the word "*yi* 異," the "strange" or "other" that causes "surprise" (*jing* 驚) or even "fear" (*ju* 懼) among the audience. Experiencing the unexpected convinces them of the strength of Buddhism and illustrates its "divine" (*shen* 神) power.[14] People recognize as "different" a monk who is qualified as "*shen*" (疑為矯異, biography of Kang Senghui; 949b27) and a "strange" facial expression causes respect (而神氣璅異見者悚然, same biography; 950a16). Words like *yi* mark divergences from people's expectations, but what is it that surprises them?

In my analysis, I identified three fields of monks' agency by which people are amazed: 1) karmic insight; 2) a detailed understanding of concrete conditions, here of personal success; and 3) other moments of astonishment and surprise such as unusual methods of bodily control. These fields reveal a deeper underlying knowledge that enables the monks to act by being in control of their own and others' life course.

### 3.1 *Karmic Duties*

An Shigao (安世高, second century CE) is commonly known as one of the first translators of Buddhist texts who conducted seminal work regarding the initial establishment of Buddhism in China. In contrast, the SSZ introduces us to the dense network of miracle tales surrounding this famous figure. The bits and pieces of these stories do not necessarily link well and leave blanks in the narration the logic of which has to be reconstructed by the reader's imagination. While this first leaves the reader with a puzzling reading experience, a search for semantic markers in the narration proves revealing: The whole narration is less concerned with relating An Shigao's biography than fascinated by how he is able to act in accordance with his own karmic burden. The witness to his actions transforms into a sincere proselyte of the Buddhist dharma, spreading insights into the mechanisms of the law of cause and effect.

In the SSZ, An Shigao is depicted as a Parthian prince with a promising childhood, who is knowledgeable about the interpretation of the sounds of birds and animals. On arriving in China in the second century, he stayed in the North for about twenty years, learned Chinese, and accomplished wonders.

14 Naturally, *yi* also occurs under less suspicious circumstances, in expressions like "one day" (*yiri* 異日; biography of Fotiao 佛調, fourth century CE; 954b1), an ugly, "strange" temple god (形甚醜異, biography of An Shigao 安世高, second century CE; 949a29), or compounds such as being "estimated" (*chongyi* 寵異) by the emperor (武貴妃寵異六宮; biography of Vajrabodhi 金剛智; 997a7), expressions like the "obscure arts" (*yishu* 異術, biography of An Shigao; 948c29), or referring to the ability to perform "spiritual wonders" (並有靈異, biography of Qi Yu 耆域, fl. fourth century CE; 950c6–7), etc.

The biography then narrates a loosely framed story of his previous existence. Living as a monk in China, with an ugly, hot-tempered fellow monk, he is finally beheaded by a little boy due to bad karma. In his ensuing life as a Parthian prince, he travels south after serving at the court as a translator. Next to a lake, he meets this former fellow, who is now a god in the form of a huge python, and helps him to obtain a better rebirth. He travels to the place where he was beheaded in his previous life and the now-adult individual who beheaded him finances his travels to the North, where he is again killed. The boy of yore witnesses the mechanics of karma for the second time and spreads the Buddhist teaching from then onward.

The biography as it is narrated in the SSZ contains five instances of *yi* 異. In the first and second instance, it forms part of a compound, *yishu* 異術 and *junyi zhi sheng* 雋異之聲, referring to various magico-mantic arts and An Shigao's extraordinary fame. In the fourth instance, it forms part of a direct speech by the temple god, who states that no one can help but fear his ugly, "strange" appearance. In the third and fifth instances, the semantic marker concludes an episode. In his former life, An Shigao willingly stretches out his neck to be beheaded. The little boy kills him: "Onlookers filled the streets and there was nobody who was not scared by his bizarre [behavior]" (觀者填陌莫不駭其奇異, 949a10). The biography concludes with An Shigao visiting the boy who killed him, now an adult, who finances his travel and witnesses An Shigao's accidental death when he becomes involved in a brawl. Through this event, the individual witnesses for the second time the workings of karma and begins to study the Buddhist teaching. The story concludes: "Far and near one heard and knew it. There was nobody who was not full of admiration (*tanyi* 歎異) at that" (遠近聞知莫不歎異焉, 949b10).

The semantically close reading reveals that sentences expressing the audience's admiration do not occur arbitrarily in this narration. The biography of An Shigao is actually centered around expressing the mechanics of karma through another person's witnessing. This message is supported by the careful choice of language.

In the biographies, it is not only with regard to their own karma that monks take sudden actions: Another biography tells of an old man feeling scared by the "strange" behavior of the monk Fahui 法慧 (fourth century CE, 954b27 ff.). Fahui suddenly recognizes that the old man is about to die and aims to rescue him, probably to free him from his karmic burden. He enters a field and asks the man for his ox, which he denies. The monk then simply takes the ox, frightening the old man: "Fahui stepped forward and grabbed the nose of the ox. The old man was scared at his unusual [behavior] and finally gave it to him" (慧前自捉牛鼻。公懼其異。遂以施之. 954c1–2). Fahui walks

alongside the ox and murmurs a mantra, taking seven steps back and forth, then giving the ox back to the old man, who dies a few days later. How far this interaction is beneficial to the old man remains a mystery and the story is full of allusions. The monk's interaction with the intention of supposedly rescuing an old, dying man from his karmic burden remains unintelligible to the audience and results in him being scared by the monk's "strange" (*yi*) behavior. The monk is obviously living according to an insight into karmic reality that remains hidden and frightening to the general public.

### 3.2 *Mechanics of Success*

The SSZ's narrations include a large variety of passages in which monks give advice and foretell the future. Personal, social, political, and military topics are covered; rulers, examination candidates for officialdom, but also ordinary people are involved, and the monks might predict spontaneously or apply a huge, seemingly arbitrary, variety of divinatory methods in their counseling. One of these stories develops from the tension between the extraordinary (*yi* 異) and astonishment and doubt (*yi* 疑), revealing a sophisticated knowledge that is untouched by karmic considerations. According to this knowledge, success in official examinations came to the candidate Zheng Fuli 鄭復禮.

The biography of the monk Hongdao 弘道 (around 800 CE) is taken from the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taiping Era, 976–983), one of the four great books (*Song si da shu* 宋四大書) of the Northern Song (960–1126); this work contains a wealth of stories from various periods of Chinese history and forms a kind of encyclopedia of supernatural, but not exclusively Buddhist, events. Throughout the narration, the monk Hongdao plays a peripheral role. The passage is concerned with the official Zheng Fuli, who incessantly tries to pass higher official examinations to promote his career. Upon request, Hongdao hesitantly reveals the complicated conditions under which he will pass (including an examination officer in charge of the examinations in two subsequent years and surnames in certain positions on the list of successful examinees), plunging Zheng Fuli into astonishment and doubt. In the course of the story, the conditions hold true and the oscillation between the prophecy's complexity and the amazed official's testing of it, sitting the examinations each year regardless, make up the narrative structure.

At first, Hongdao is hesitant to reveal the conditions necessary for the official to pass the exam: "This matter is extraordinary, I cannot talk about it" (然其事頗異不可言也, 1005c10–11), he states, denying the request. Zheng Fuli continues to press him. Hongdao forbids him from passing the information on and outlines the conditions. Zheng Fuli looks at him in astonishment and is unable to accept them (鄭愕視不可喻, 1005c14–15). Hongdao begins

by enumerating the four conditions and marking them as "special" (亦可以為異矣, 1005c16–17). Zheng Fuli is discouraged after hearing them: "Despite [this explanation], Zheng Fuli was full of doubt [*yi* 疑] about what [Hongdao] had said and felt depressed and without joy. He was sure that again there was no hope for him. He thanked him respectfully and departed" (鄭雖大疑其說然鬱鬱不樂 以為無復望也 敬謝而退, 1005c20–21). After the conditions were unfulfilled the next time, Zheng Fuli doubts that he will pass (意甚疑之果不中第, 1005c23). The following time, the situation seems favorable for Zheng Fuli, who secretly rejoices, and indeed passes the exams to the next higher level. Zheng is "respectfully astonished" for a long time (鄭奇歎且久, 1005c26). He participates numerous times in vain. Finally, the conditions are again fulfilled, and he is successful in the examinations. The women of the family begin wondering how this can be true (豈其然乎, 1006a6). Hongdao is no longer present at this time. The narration concludes with the emperor's son-in-law passing the examinations just as the same four highly unlikely conditions are fulfilled. The narration stresses the reliability of Hongdao's prediction (弘道所說無差焉, 1006a10).

The oscillation between amazement and doubt drives the plot of this narrative, and structures the biography. The story is less concerned with Hongdao as a person than with the astonishment that a highly sophisticated, fourfold conditioning holds true which, in itself, seems to lack any deeper rationale and also does not show any signs of Buddhist content, despite the fact that the counselor is a Buddhist monk. The compiler is obviously convinced by Buddhism's strength regardless of the fact that the complex knowledge about examination success does not relate to Buddhism, but mastered to perfection by a Buddhist monk.

An Shigao and Fahui showed insights into the workings of cause and effect with regard to their own and others' lives. While their minds were set on freeing themselves and others from unfavorable forms of rebirth and were finally concerned with enlightenment, Hongdao's counseling has the direct aim of examination success. Hongdao has insights into its mechanics. The exam candidate is well prepared and whether he passes or not depends on a complex combination of conditions that are beyond his control. The monk reveals these conditions, which seem impossible to modify. The mechanics function independently of whether the candidate believes in or doubts them. Zheng Fuli, together with the reader, seems to take the role of an observer: He participates in the exams continuously and witnesses the repeated verification and reliability of the prediction. This process adds trust in Hongdao's knowledge. As in the

case of An Shigao, the reader is to become convinced while moving through the story. There is no single moment of conversion or insight; instead, a gradual process of growing trust is built up through the narration. The conviction of the existence of a hidden complex conditioning according to which the world works is created for the reader through Zheng Fuli's lifelong and painful examination experience. The slowly growing conviction is caused by the knowledge of a Buddhist monk. The knowledge itself is in line with the generally shared Chinese cosmological assumption of correlation and an organic harmony, which Needham has characterized as a "correlative cosmology": All beings are "part in a hierarchy of wholes forming a cosmic pattern, and what they obeyed were the internal dictates of their own natures."[15] Hongdao is able to understand his client's situation as part of the dense network of conditions in which it is embedded. Whether things work out or not depends on a multitude of conditions, the interdependency of which is central to Chinese cosmological thinking.

### 3.3 *Moments of Surprise*

*Yi*'s position in the text does not always reveal the structure of the whole narration, as it does in the cases of An Shigao and Hongdao. Moments of surprise often shape single episodes, and it is in these passages that life seems less fated and sincerity in one's concerns can lead to a change in situation, according to the principle of stimulus-response.

The impact of sincerity is most obvious when the emperor asks Kang Senghui (third century CE) to prove the power and authenticity of Buddhism. He does so by promising that his sincere and ritually framed petitioning will make a relic appear. To emphasize his sincerity, he is willing to be executed alongside his disciples if he should fail. As nothing happens until the last moment, the participants become afraid (莫不震懼, 949c12). Finally, the relic materializes suddenly. The emperor is full of respect and stands up in surprise, interpreting the materialization as an auspicious omen (權肅然驚起曰，希有之瑞也, 949c15). This scene is a perfect illustration of the principle of stimulus-response, which is a characteristic of Chinese Buddhism and in line with the ancient Chinese and Confucian thinking that only sincerity can bring

15 Needham as quoted in Sharf 2005, 79. Correlative thinking is explained by Sharf 2005, 78–82.

about change.[16] "Sympathetic resonance," also known as stimulus-response, is caused by sincerity and occurs among things that are related to each other: "Resonance is the mechanism through which categorically related but spatially distant phenomena interact," Sharf comments. This resembles two strings of different instruments playing the same tune, the one beginning to emit sound as soon as the other vibrates—an image frequent in ancient Chinese literature, such as the *Huainanzi*, the *Chuci*, and the *Lüshi chunqiu*.[17]

Surprise is also the repeated reaction to monks who exercise control over the location of their own bodies: In the SSZ, monks are able to travel huge distances in an instant, which amazes people. The monk Fotiao 佛調 (fourth century CE) is able to be in two places simultaneously or to change his location without any recognizable traveling time lapse: While one person has seen him outside, another is certain that he has not left the temple. Fotiao laughs about this and people are left wondering (954a26). In another case, the monk Wanhui is obviously able to travel far to the border to visit his sibling, equip him with daily necessities, and return with detailed information the same day. His parents are astonished and his name, Wanhui, literally, abbreviating the story as "Ten thousand [miles and] returning," is based on this feat (993c3). "Divine" monks are able to "beam" themselves to different places without being bound by average bodily travel speeds.[18] Once dead, the corpses of divine monks might display specific qualities, especially when burnt. Their virtuous bodies behave differently, and sometimes do not burn at all, as in the case of Zhu Shiheng 朱士行 (third century CE). This astonishes people as well (眾咸驚異, biography of Zhu Shiheng; 950b18). It is also a pleasant surprise to people (皆驚喜作禮, 954b16) when the monk Fotiao reappears on a rock, freed of all worries, after his death and has a conversation with those who knew him. His body had disappeared from his grave and Fotiao assures the public that he will always be with them.

Chinese Buddhist biographical writing employs sources that are part of a writing culture that is not primarily concerned with Buddhist philosophical rectification. Applying abhidharmic knowledge and Buddhist concepts in general can therefore easily lead to misinterpretations of the texts, as there is, as Kieschnick puts it, a "gap between the popular imagination and Buddhist technical literature."[19] Still, it is worth considering how far Buddhist concepts

16 "It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can transform" (唯天下至誠為能化). *Zhongyong* 23, Legge 1991, 417.

17 Sharf 2002, 83.

18 There are also monks like Qi Yu who can be simultaneously a guest in five hundred homes (950c29 ff.)—but this episode is not marked by the amazement of the public.

19 Kieschnick 1997, 71.

are put into practice in the biographies. For the case of bodily control, a larger systematization of the spiritual advancements of Buddhist practitioners is at hand: Followers of both Indian and Chinese Buddhism commonly accept that a practitioner's spiritual progress develops together with six forms of supernatural competence (*abhijñā*, *shentong* 神通). Although these six forms differ slightly according to their traditions, in their first step they always address unlimited bodily possibilities: the transformation from one person into many, becoming invisible, being able to walk through walls, soil, water, air, or reach up to Brahmā's heaven. The examples in the SSZ seem moderate in comparison. The practitioner's advancement also includes insight into the past births of others to recognize their condition as a result of their deeds, and be informed about their destiny. This insight proves not only accurate regarding the karmic connections in his own life, but the logic lying behind it also provides a background for the vigorous divinatory activities of monks in the SSZ.

The monks apply various mantic arts with ease. No biography mentions any particular training. This is not specific to the SSZ: "Like medicine, divination was a separate discipline that monks mastered 'on the side'."[20] Divination leads to astonishment: While traveling at night with Fotudeng 佛圖澄 (fl. fourth century CE), Dao'an 道安 (fourth century CE) uses the simple arrangement of a courtyard to decode the name of the landlord, whom he calls by his name without ever having heard of him—the person is certainly surprised about this knowledge, which belongs to the realm of a technique concerned with dissecting characters (*chaizi* 拆字; 主人驚出, 954c28). The emperor tests Fayuan 法願 (fifth century CE), who later became a monk, on his physiognomy skills. He tries to mislead Fayuan by changing the dress of people whose social standings vary widely. To the emperor's surprise, Fayuan's predictions are unaffected by their costumes (帝異之, 969c11).

While the physiognomical message is followed by a direct prediction without any counseling regarding how to avoid the harsh destiny connected to it, monks are also able to interfere with and prevent upcoming calamities, especially regarding the regulation of meteorological events. The emperor consults monks such as Vajrabodhi (Jin'gang Zhi 金剛智, around 700 CE) when regular methods of rainmaking fail. The monk erects an altar and performs rituals with which he evokes strong winds and pouring rainfall. "Afar and nearby people were caught in fear" (遠近驚駭, 996c22).

The realm of the court is one of prestigious ambivalence: Monks are heavily dependent upon the emperor's grace. This may be why negative predictions concerning the ruler are generally encrypted. These encrypted messages can

20 Kieschnick 1997, 79.

only be interpreted in the retrospective. They may seem favorable at first sight but are revealed as fatal afterwards: Yixing is asked about the future of the country and answers the astonished emperor (帝驚, 996a21) that the country will ultimately experience good fortune (*ji* 吉)—which is the name of its last emperor and alludes to the dynasty's downfall.

It is not only under these exposed circumstances that diviners of the future encrypt their messages. They can appear outwardly dull and make an unintelligible impression, like the monk Huaijun 懷濬 (late ninth century CE), resembling figures otherwise known throughout *fangshi* 方士 literature.[21] His behavior in a village attracts the attention of the prefect, who tests him. Finally, the prefect is pleasantly surprised (*yi* 異) by the monk's wise poetry (州將異而釋之, 1009c7). Travelers who have to pass through the canyons of the Yangzi River on their business trips receive a few lines from him, which he does not explain further. In the retrospective, these lines often hold true. The narrator marks this behavior as strange: "Most of his strange actions were like this" (其他異跡多此類也, 1009c22).

The retrospective might evoke suspicion in the modern reader: Does the collective memory only preserve predictions which proved true? What do we know about the accuracy of a diviner, if we learn about his predictions only afterwards, through positive selection? Such questions reveal a pitfall, as they separate the miracle from its narrative and discursive background. Interdisciplinary studies on miracle tales state: "It is the act of telling which constructs the miracle as such. The miracle has an impact through its telling and interpreting. The effect of a miracle is closely related to the way in which it is understood."[22] Kieschnick, together with Keith Thomas, calls these miracles "retroactive stories" that provide a "sense of stability in the face of radical change,"[23] legitimating an emperor's reign through retrospective prophecy.

## 4 Convinced by Amazement

What is, finally, the convincing moment in the biographical narrations that inspires amazement and evokes trust in Buddhism?

In the selected passages, monks cause astonishment and even fear through behavior that reveals the utmost competence: They know their own life course according to the karmic laws of cause and effect. They are able to understand

21 DeWoskin 1983.

22 Korte 2001, 13, as quoted in Balabanova 2014, 416.

23 Kieschnick 1997, 76.

instant success on the complex, entire basis of its conditions of possibility. They can cause the appearance of Buddhist relics through pure sincerity according to the principle of stimulus-response; they predict the future spontaneously or by using various methods, apply divinatory techniques such as physiognomy and character dissection, ritually manipulate the weather and are in control of their bodies, from multilocalization to traveling beyond the limitations of time and space. Their dead bodies testify to their virtue by resisting cremation or reappearing after death.

"Divine" monks are paragons of competence and control. Through their "divine" power, they convincingly display the strength of Buddhism. That such an all-embracing competency causes amazement and attraction seems reasonable: Becoming Buddhist or receiving the help of "divine" Buddhists makes it possible to gain control over one's life and future.

Amazement at the workings of karma, amazement at a hidden sophisticated knowledge according to which the world functions, which even without believing in it, proves true in the course of a whole life, and amazement at the supernatural, divinatory, miracle-working abilities of monks all show facets of what the emperor intended to do with the SSZ—to testify to the miraculous power of eminent Buddhist monks.

Still, these experts in no sense apply only knowledge specific to Buddhism. The picture presented here is certainly selective, due to the relatively narrow approach of considering only those passages that directly cause the amazement of the public. There may be other narrative devices channeling the reader's attention and triggering his or her inner discourse in how far he or she wants to identify with role models and connected concepts of belief. In addition, the narrations cover several centuries and broad regions. The picture can only be inconsistent. What can be seen through it, however, is a perspective on what is perceived as amazing in the sense of "*shen*" and the sense of "*shenseng*," translated variously as "divine," "spirit," "thaumaturge," or "miracle-working" monks.[24] What are these miracles about and how can one characterize the miraculous in these narrations?

Kieschnick and others have noted that the terms "miracle" as well as "supernatural" may not be appropriate for describing the Chinese understanding of the relevancy of these stories: According to Needham:

> [I]t should be noted that for the characteristic and instinctive Chinese world view in all ages there could be nothing supernatural sensu stricto.

24 Spirit-monk is the translation of Campany (2012, 55–56), when translating the *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記, which developed in the context of early medieval Buddhist *zhiguai* literature.

> Invisible principles, spirits, gods and demons, queer manifestations, were all just as much part of Nature as man himself, though rarely met with and hard to investigate.

The sinologist Étienne Lamotte was already avoiding the term "supernatural," replacing it with "supernormal."[25] This avoids the view that miracles abolish the laws of nature, possibly even due to an intervening creator god. Miracle-working monks, as they are presented in the SSZ, form part of the "Chinese vision of organic unity"[26] and are "actively participating in the workings of Nature," as Kieschnick puts it, with reference to Erik Zürcher.[27] "Nature," in our case, includes the social sphere and might also comprise whatever is considered real according to the Buddhist realms of existence. The "divine" competence is revealed as the delicate sensitivity of the monks who interact with, perceive, and influence the world around them in all of its subtleties and on all of its levels. In their environment, their acts might be experienced as miracles. In any case, it is the discrepancy between the daily experience of the narrated audience (and with it the abilities of the intended average reader) and the highly developed capacity of the monks, which is narrated in the form of "amazement." "Being amazed" up to being "fearful" is therefore the expression of gaining a glimpse of an otherwise concealed reality and insight into a deeper cosmic pattern, according to which life seems to unfold but is rarely understood. It is at this point in the narrations that "belief" (*xin*), understood as trust in the power of Buddhism, is instilled in the reader. Witnessing a) the pervasive workings of karma, b) the subtle complexity of cosmic connectivity, and c) a sincerity that combines with supernormal powers revealed in daily life, the imagined reader is amazed and finally convinced to trust in Buddhist teaching.

## 5 Comparisons

Looking at the Buddhism-related contributions in this volume, it becomes clear that as a living religion, Buddhism permeates Chinese and East Asian societies in all their aspects. Tam Wai Lun shows that there is a rich reflection on *xin* as a foundation and precondition for Buddhist practice in Buddhist

25 Kieschnick 1997, 96.
26 Sharf 2005, 79.
27 Kieschnick 1997, 110.

philosophy. It implies in-depth commitment and is therefore seen as the basis of belief development often systematized as followed by understanding, cultivation, and attainment.[28] Christoph Kleine makes clear that *xin* has to be understood as "faith" rather than "trustworthiness" in the context of Pure Land Buddhism. By stating this, he sees a parallel between the Christian notion of *fides* and the Buddhist notion of *xin* and witnesses a semantic change in the notion of *xin* through the influence of Buddhism in East Asia long before the Christian impact. Adam Yuet Chau's contribution explains the prevalence of orthopraxy over orthodoxy in popular religious life of Shaanbei. In all contributions, there seems some kind of oscillation between more cognitive, philosophical notions of *xin* and practical or ritually oriented ones. My paper shows how hagiographic writings involve a structuring moment, in which miraculous happenings cause *xin*. Experiencing miracles, people become Buddhist believers. When approaching miracle tales, a contemporary reader might be restricted by mental concepts of life happening according to the laws of nature broken only by miracles. In a mental world that did not uphold this distinction, an event that goes beyond daily experience is told as leading to in-depth faith. It is worth paying attention to how this experience takes place on several levels, how it is witnessed, cognitively processed, and emotionally experienced. In such a world, one can be "convinced by amazement" irrespective of one's social and religious background. Therefore, I would like to emphasize that any divide between orthopractic and orthodox notions is—in the sources I investigated—a dichotomy alien to the texts itself. The hagiographic writings hint at the emergence of belief as the result of a complex experience that comprises cognitive and emotional elements. And as a structuring device, we see how central these experiences are especially in the communities in which they are narrated. This finding supports what Adam Yuet Chau stresses: One should not just focus on understanding the experience told, and never forget that as narrated experiences they serve the important social function of bearing witness to the power of Buddhism.

## Abbreviations

SSZ *Shenseng zhuan* 神僧傳 [*Biographies of Thaumaturge Monks*]. 1960–1978 [1926–1932]. In *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 [Newly Arranged Great (Buddhist) Canon from the Taishō Era], edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎

28 Cf. Tam Wai Lun's chapter in this volume.

and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tōkyō: Taishō issaikyō kankokai, vol. 50, no. 2064, 948–1015.

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CHAPTER 9

# *Xin* 信 in Morality Books: an Overview

*Vincent Goossaert*

## 1 Introduction

Morality books (*shanshu* 善書) constitute a major genre of religious literature in early modern and modern China; by the sheer amounts and variety of texts, their inclusiveness and engagement with all traditions (Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, sectarian, etc.) and their detailed discussion of both moral theology and practical aspects of life, they form a privileged venture point for examining the history of key religious concepts. The notion of *xin* is no exception, as it is well present from the earliest examples of the genre, with both meanings of trustworthiness in social relations and faith in divine principles (such as retribution). After quickly surveying these usages, I will focus on nineteenth-century morality books, where the concept takes on new prominence, especially as part of the "eight virtues" 八德 moral discourse. I will notably explore the meaning of *xin* in a huge divine law code, *Yuding jinke jiyao* 玉定金科輯要 (Compendium of Golden Rules, compiled on the Order of the Jade Emperor) (revealed in the context of the Taiping war), where a whole section is devoted to *xin*, and thousands of *xin*-related sins are discussed in detail. This will allow me to offer a hypothesis as to the role of *xin* in modern Chinese value systems.

## 2 Morality Books and Spirit-Writing

Morality books as a genre appear during the Song period and have developed continuously since then. They provide the readers (or listeners, when performed) with a guide for action, enjoining them to consider the consequences of all their actions; they are based on the law of moral retribution of good and evil (*baoying* 報應), which recent surveys have shown to be the most widespread common belief in China (and is claimed by many more people than specific religious affiliation),[1] and which is widely echoed in popular culture. Some elements of the morality books are revealed by gods, others are essays,

1 Goossaert & Palmer 2011, 274, on social surveys on beliefs.

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comments, or stories written by identified humans. Some *shanshu* are general while others are devoted to specific aspects of moral theology (family life, sexuality, respect for life, etc.) The number of published morality books is staggering; it represents a very significant part of Chinese book production over time and down to the present day. Collectively, the genre is the site for a continuous production, since the Song period, of moral theology, integrating Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist, "sectarian," and more elements.[2]

The most revered textual elements in the corpus of morality books consist of divine revelations through spirit-writing (*fuji* 扶乩, *fuluan* 扶鸞, *feiluan* 飛鸞, *jiangbi* 降筆). The importance of spirit-writing in modern Chinese cultural, intellectual, and religious life is now fully recognized. A major international project dedicated to the *Daozang jiyao* 道藏輯要 (Compendium of the Daoist Canon), a canon published around 1806, and republished in Chengdu in 1906, which contains a large number of spirit-written texts, has opened the field of Daoist studies to the study of spirit-writing as a (if not the) major avenue for intellectual innovation.[3] Recent collections of modern Daoist texts are full of nineteenth and twentieth-century spirit-written texts. This should put to rest the long-held (and highly ideologically charged) theories of the modern decline of Daoism (and Buddhism). The authority of the gods revealing texts, which creates spaces for innovations impossible or risky in other genres, has made spirit-writing an engine for intellectual innovation throughout the premodern and modern periods.[4]

## 3 *Xin* 信 in Classical Morality Books (Song to Mid-Qing)

A preliminary survey of the use of the term *xin* in the most frequently republished, commented, and anthologized morality books, which we can consider the genre's classics, shows that there were three main uses.

First, the term denotes proper social relations outside the family, especially between friends. In the *Wenchang dijun Yinzhiwen* 文昌帝君陰騭文 (Tract on Hidden Retribution, Revealed by the Imperial Lord Wenchang) (late Ming), the reader is enjoined to "respect his elder brothers and be faithful to his friends" (敬兄信友).[5] In the *Guansheng dijun Jueshi zhenjing* 關聖帝君覺世

2 On the history of morality books, see Brokaw 1991; Sakai 1999; Yau 2005; Goossaert 2012. A major collection is *Ming Qing yilai shanshu congbian*.

3 Lai 2015.

4 Goossaert 2015.

5 Most of the *shanshu* quoted here (unless indicated) are taken from my edition of the original text and (French) translation in Goossaert 2012.

真經 (True Scripture to Awaken the World) (early Qing), he is likewise commanded to "love his elder and younger brothers and be faithful to his friends" (愛兄弟，信朋友). Similarly, *xin* is framed as a parallel to familial virtues in *Lüzu xingxin zhenjing* 呂祖醒心真經 (True Scripture on Awakening the Minds, by Patriarch Lü) (1707), which admonishes "(those who) are not loyal to their lord, not filial to their parents, not respectful to their teachers and not faithful to their friends …" (不忠於君，不孝於親，不敬於師，不信於友).

Second, we find *xin* used in another well-established meaning since ancient times: honoring one's word. For instance, in the earliest extant example of the "ledgers of merits and demerits" (*gongguoge* 功過格, which measure the consequences of each good or bad action), the twelfth-century *Taiwei xianjun gongguoge* 太微仙君功過格 (Ledger of Merits and Demerits of the Stellar Lord Taiwei), we read that "those who fail to honor their word or their contractual obligations will incur one demerit" (言約失信為一過).

Third, by the early Qing at the latest, *xin* also means to trust/believe in a principle. In Guandi's *Jueshi zhenjing* already seen above, we read: "(The wicked) do not believe in the proper Way, but indulge in thievery and lust" (不信正道，姦盜邪淫), and again, "they do not believe in moral retribution, but encourage people to do evil" (不信報應，引人作惡). The *Yuli baochao* 玉歷寶鈔 (Precious Manuscript of the Jade Calendar), a description of the netherworld that most probably appeared ca. 1800 and quickly became one of the most popular and widely reprinted Chinese religious books, has similar formulations: "[P]eople in the world today do not believe in the retribution of actions, and prevent others from doing good" (凡世人不信因果，阻行善事). In such cases (and one could quote many more examples), the object of *xin*—actually, most often, of the lack of *xin*—is the abstract principle that all actions carry retribution. Often, the object of *xin* is a general principle reachable by the human intellect, *li* 理, such as *baoying zhili* 報應之理. One could not be further away from *credo quia absurdum*, or Augustine's *credo ut intelligam*. Indeed, in some passages *xin* is not at all about believing, but about deciding what to use as a moral compass. In the *Jingshi gongguoge* 警世功過格 (Ledger of Merits and Demerits to Awaken the World), revealed by Lüzu in the eighteenth century, we find an interesting negative use of the term, where readers are told not be certain of their own moral reasoning: "If you hear of someone being virtuous, do not doubt (that this is right); if you hear of someone being vicious, do not be certain (that she is a fundamentally evil person)" (聞人有善而不疑，聞人有惡而莫信).[6]

6 *Jingshi gongguoge* vol. 1, 059a, https://www.kanripo.org/text/KR5i0096/ (accessed 19 November 2020).

But the object of this belief/trust can also be a more specific teaching or institution. For instance, in the *Yuquan* 玉詮 (Jade Expositions), an early Qing collection of revelations collected at a spirit-writing altar maintained by Suzhou elite literati, the gods complain that "those who believe/trust in (the teachings of) our spirit-writing altar are few … but (real) Daoists believe deeply in the truth of spirit-writing" (信壇者少 … 道人深信飛鸞).[7]

*Xin* as belief/trust is thus well present in the corpus of morality books, but it concerns ideas and words, rather than gods. Indeed, this usage was already common in medieval Daoist texts, where gods themselves, in their revelations, quite often threaten humans with expressions such as "if you do not trust my words …" (不信吾言).[8] By contrast, gods do not usually ask humans to believe in/*xin* them; rather, they require reverence and worship (*jing* 敬, *feng* 奉). There are exceptions, such as in one early (Song-period) Wenchang revelation, his spirit-written autobiography—not strictly speaking a morality book, but a text closely related to the *shanshu* corpus—where the god berates those who "do not revere Heaven and Earth, do not *xin* the gods, abuse the old and disrespect their elders" (不敬天地，不信神明，狎侮老成，輕慢前輩).[9] It is however quite likely that the meaning here is the existence of gods in general and the need to show them respect, rather than the belief in a given god.

This is not to say that morality book authors viewed disrespecting specific gods (and claiming that they do not exist is certainly an aggravated form of disrespect!) lightly. Indeed, blasphemy or sacrilege against one, or several, gods was considered, in morality books as well as many other types of texts, as a grave crime/sin, most often called *xiedu* 褻瀆. What is noteworthy is that this crime/sin (it is both a sin in morality books and a crime in the imperial penal code) was not categorized under *xin*; the latter is a mental act, whereas sacrilege is a physical act (and would typically come under the category of ritual behavior, *li* 禮).[10]

## 4 *Xin* 信 as an Encompassing Moral Virtue

Apart from having the three distinct but logically related meanings—being a reliable friend, honoring one's word, believing in the truth of moral retribution

7 *Yuquan* vol. 3, 044a, https://www.kanripo.org/text/KR5i0073/ (accessed 19 November 2020).

8 See also Assandri's chapter in this volume.

9 *Qinghe neizhuan*.

10 This categorization is found in Qing-period texts, notably those following the Eight Virtues template, such as the *Yuding jinke jiyao*.

and divine teachings—by the late Imperial period *xin* had come to refer to a generalized virtue, often expressed with the concept of *jingxin* 敬信, "reverence and trust/faith." This compound word can in at least some cases be understood as referring to the combination of an internal, mental attitude (*xin*) and its outward consequences in one's behavior (*jing*); in such a context, *xin* may also be translated as commitment (to morality). A rather early case in our corpus is the *Wudangshan Xuantian shangdi chuixunwen* 武當山玄天上帝垂訓文 (Instructions Revealed by Supreme Emperor of Dark Heavens from Wudang Mountains) (revealed 1302?), a fiery tract revealed by the god Zhenwu 真武, which has been reprinted and anthologized continuously since the Yuan period, and is today routinely chanted as scripture. Therein the god says: "I enjoin you people to be reverent and committed" (奉勸世人敬信).

The centrality of this notion is shown, for instance, by the title of a very popular anthology of morality books, the *Jingxinlu* 敬信錄 (Records of Reverence and Trust), first published in 1749 and often reprinted thereafter.[11] The *Jingxinlu* is a major example of the subgenre of piety books that offer in a short format the essential teachings of Chinese moral theology presented alongside a regimen of daily practice of recitation and self-examination.[12] Adepts follow precise instructions when reciting the *Taishang ganyingpian* 太上感應篇 (The Supreme Lord's Tract on Action and Retribution) every morning, the first of which is to be "intensely committed," *duxin* 篤信, that is to take each and every word that is recited as fully true and important. That is the basis for each action: "When one thought is *xin*, then you sow the seed of virtuous (action based on that) thought" (一念信種一念善根). "If your commitment is weak, you will receive small divine blessings; if it is strong, you will receive abundant blessings. But if you are half-committed and half-doubtful, then in the end you will only defeat yourself" (小信小福，大信大福。如或疑信相參，終成自暴自棄).[13]

The early Qing *Yuquan*, already introduced above, offers several examples of such a use of *xin* as a generalized virtue that characterizes one who maintains both relations of mutual trust with humans and steadfast adherence to general moral principles.

11 *Zengding Jingxinlu*.

12 Goossaert 2019.

13 *Zengding Jingxinlu*, 6a. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90065479.image (accessed 19 November 2020).

> *Xin* is the mother of all virtues, and forbearance is the foundation of all practices. The supreme natural goodness cannot be nurtured without *xin*; the absolute strength cannot be gained without forbearance. You enter (this self-cultivation path) with *xin* and fixate it with forbearance, and the Dao is already there!
>
> 信者眾善之母，忍者萬行之基，無上元良，非信不發。無量堅定，非忍不能。信以入之，忍以止之，道在此矣.[14]

Similarly,

> *Xin* is the root of transcendence, you can reach transcendence through (the practice of) *xin*. *Xin* is the source of virtues, and virtues can be fulfilled through (the practice of) *xin*. *Xin* is the root of ritual, and ritual can be made to work through (the practice of) *xin*. *Xin* is like earth: earth gives life to all beings, and *xin* creates all virtues.
>
> 信爲道本，道由信入。信爲德源，德由信充。信爲法根，法由信運。信者，土也。土生萬物，信生萬善.[15]

## 5 *Xin* 信 in an Eschatological Context

An important element of the spirit-written morality books throughout their history, from the Song to the present day, is their strong eschatological inspiration.[16] In this context, the virtue of *xin* appears as a necessary condition for salvation when one meets the apocalypse. An early and very expressive formulation of this idea is found in the *Wudangshan Xuantian shangdi chuixunwen*, which states:

14 *Yuquan*, vol. 1, 055a, https://www.kanripo.org/text/KR5i0073/ (accessed 19 November 2020).

15 *Yuquan*, vol. 5, 056b, https://www.kanripo.org/text/KR5i0073/ (accessed 19 November 2020).

16 Goossaert 2014.

> The virtuous will get to see the light of day, but the wicked will not survive to witness the Great Peace. Those who are committed will get to cross the apocalypse, but those who do not believe will perish and lose their souls.
>
> 善者得見天日，惡者不見太平，信者得度末劫，不信喪命亡魂.[17]

Eschatological visions continued to imbibe morality books through history, and became particularly prevalent during the nineteenth century, when they were activated during the Taiping War as the best culturally available framework to make sense of the unfolding chaos.[18] One of the most remarkable texts produced by spirit-writing during the war is the *Yuding jinke jiyao* 玉定金科輯要 (Compilation of the Golden Rules, on Order of the Jade Emperor), a huge divine law code that lists in excruciating detail the punishments (expressed in years of life, and various disasters) for every imaginable sin, as well as rewards for do-gooders.[19] The thousand-odd pages of this penal code were revealed in Hunan between 1856 and 1859, by Wenchang, who was given authorization to reveal it to humans from the Jade Emperor. An introduction explains that the Jade Emperor had decided to inflict an apocalypse as early as 1816, then proceeded to ask the gods to compile a precise code so as to decide rationally who should die, when, and how. This code was eventually promulgated in Heaven in 1848, but it took several supplications from Wenchang before the Jade Emperor allowed this information to be made available to humanity, so that at least some people could repent and save themselves. Numerous texts from this period asserted that gods did not cause human deaths in the war randomly or arbitrarily but, in fact, were strictly enforcing a celestial law code (*tianlü* 天律). The revelation of the *Yuding jinke jiyao* is simply the most developed expression of this idea.

The *Yuding jinke jiyao* is organized around the eight virtues (*bade* 八德), a framework for theorizing morality that had emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century and remained prevalent until the mid-twentieth century.[20] The eight virtues are filial piety, *xiao* 孝; brotherliness, *ti* 悌; loyalty, *zhong* 忠;

17 See Nikolas Broy's chapter in this volume for an occurrence of this phrase in a modern sectarian context.

18 Goossaert 2021.

19 On the history of divine codes, see Goossaert 2020. This code, and several sequels revealed in subsequent decades, were adopted and widely diffused during the Republican period by a redemptive society, the Tongshanshe 同善社. On this society, see Goossaert & Palmer 2011, chap. 4. There seems to be no extant original edition of this work; see Wang Chien-chuan's comments in the introduction to *Ming Qing yilai shanshu congbian*.

20 Fan Chunwu 2015.

*xin* 信; sense of propriety, *li* 禮; sense of justice, *yi* 義; integrity, *lian* 廉; and sense of shame, *chi* 恥.

By the nineteenth century, then, *xin* had become one of the core categories for thinking about morality, and the *Yuding jinke jiyao* offers a good hundred pages of very detailed regulations about it, thus describing in remarkable detail the contents and extent of this category. While a comprehensive description would be tedious, the acts that are defined as being not *xin* fall under three main categories: to abuse people's trust (friends, youth, elderly); to renege on one's word; to engage in unethical business dealings (breach of contract).

Furthermore, one of the *Yuding jinke jiyao*'s features is that it details its descriptions by social class. We thus have a class-specific description of what it means to lack *xin* in particular social contexts. For slaves/servants, it basically means to disobey. For merchants, it primarily refers to tampering with scales and measures—a very important crime discussed in all morality books. For scholars, it means failing to serve as an example to others, to not return books, to spread rumors, and to disrespect masters. That *xin* is a virtue for which scholars must set an universal example is well explained by an item in the code punishing scholars whose "commitment to the Dao is not intense enough" (信道不篤) (part of the section on disrespect towards masters). Finally, for officials, it means to abuse the weak, and, interestingly, to steal from temples objects belonging to the gods (*shenqi* 神器).

Many of these descriptions do not come as a surprise; they fall quite naturally under the category of *xin* as social trustworthiness that was in place long before the emergence of the morality books in general, and the Eight Virtues tradition in particular. Some instances, however, may be less obvious to us, and deserve some attention. For peasants, under the heading "Heaven Has Four Seasons" 天有四時, one form of non-*xin* is to treat animals and plants in a way that is contrary to what the season requires (逆天殄物). This is a very ancient idea, going back to the *Yueling* 月令 tradition and the earliest Daoist precepts, but its categorization as a question of *xin* seems new. We may understand that when *xin* had become the generalized virtue of being fully committed to the natural universal moral order, any action that goes contrary to that moral order results from a lack of *xin*.

## 6 Conclusion

This quick overview has shown that when morality books developed from the twelfth century onward, their use of the notion of *xin* inherited all of the meanings of the terms that existed at the time. It thus referred simultaneously

to *xin* as based on reciprocal trust (credit, faithfulness to one's word), but early on also aggregates the idea of asymmetrical trust in an abstract principle. In morality books, one must be *xin* to both one's friends and one's moral principles (based on conviction in the reality of moral retribution). In that respect, *xin* bears comparison to concepts that in other cultures have also been translated as "faith" but cover much more ground, like Latin *credo* and Sanskrit *śrāddha*, the latter being a direct conceptual source for the Chinese Buddhist use of *xin*.

The genre of morality books further elaborated the notion and by late imperial times, *xin*, while always keeping its sense of trustworthiness, had expanded to become a general virtue informing all mental and physical actions, which we might translate as "commitment to natural moral values." This commitment is the result of a rational decision, because natural moral values are knowable by observation and reasoning, but at the same time it is exalted as the foundation of all of one's religious life and eventual salvation.

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## PART 2

# *Early Channels of Transfer: Monotheistic Uses of the Term xin 信 from the Seventh to the Seventeenth Century*

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CHAPTER 10

# From Trust in the Buddha to the Belief in the One God—*xin* 信 as a Buddhist, Manichaean and Christian Concept in Early Medieval China

*Max Deeg*

The advent of foreign religions in China, first Buddhism and during the Tang period Manichaeism and Christianity as well, made it necessary to translate the terminology of their texts into Chinese. Among the various techniques applied in this process one was to use inherited Chinese terms that had a more or less strong semantic overlap with the original foreign word. The paper will start by discussing the semantic equivalences (and differences) of the (possible) respective terms (e.g., Skt. *śraddhā*, *prasāda*, *adhimukti*, Syriac *haimanuta*, Parthian *wāfarīft*) between the earlier Chinese Buddhist translations and their Indic sources. It will trace the use of *xin* and its semantic and possible qualitative (doctrinal) shift(s) in selected Buddhist texts and in the few extant Chinese Manichaean and Christian (Jingjiao) texts from the Tang period.

## 1 Introduction

Examining a word, a term, in a wider historical context in order to come to terms with its different shades of meaning in a diachronic development the traditional philological approach, admittedly developed in an Indo-European comparative linguistic environment, normally is a threefold one:

1. Etymology: looking for the oldest graspable "central" meaning of a word or term—the "true" (*etymos*) meaning projected from Plato's Kratylos onwards.[1]
2. Historical semantics: investigating the meaning of a word or term in concrete textual contexts—since in historical contexts we necessarily are restricted to texts.

1 For an overview on the development of historical, pre-modern etymology, see Deeg 1995; Bronkhorst 2001.

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3. Semantic field ("Wortfeld"): looking at the word or term in its wider semantic environment, comparing it with other words overlapping or related in terms of meaning.[2]

I have emphasized the Indo-European context because we quickly discover limits and differences of these approaches when we move out of the comfort zone of this language family most familiar in terms of structure to us, especially with regard to the first point, etymology.

While this first clearance on the basis of etymology still makes sense for semitic languages with their more or less clear phonetic root structure, languages like the ones belonging to the so-called Sinitic language family send us on rather thin ice, despite the attempts of historical linguists starting with Bernhard Karlgren to show a similar phenomenon in the oldest traceable stratum of the Chinese language.[3] "Etymology" in the Chinese context is rather referring to the structural analysis of the written characters—what Bottéro and Harbsmeier have called "graphic etymology" contrasted with "semantic etymology"[4]—than to determining a "root" meaning of the phonetic aspect of the word.[5] Despite these differences it is, in my opinion, still possible to say something about the meaning of a Chinese word at a particular point in history, provided the sources are accessible and available, before the strong and provable influence of a foreign language through political, cultural, or religious impact, as in the case of Buddhism in China.

The second aspect, historical semantics, raises the question of restricted access which we quite naturally have to the past in linguistic terms. Our knowledge about the semantic development of words or terms, in fact of whole semantic fields, is very much dependent on the sources available—so our knowledge is only as good as our sources. One has to stay aware of this restriction, since even in case of a relatively solid pool of information about the meaning of a word or semantic unit we cannot be sure about how much semantic "terrain" this word or unit did really cover. It could well be that certain important aspects of the semantics are just missing because of the nature of the sources or because of sources which are not longer extant.

The semantic field is another tricky ground since it is not only to be taken for granted that overlap and differentiation occur. Semantic compatibility of terms, even between cognate languages, is not graspable in a one-to-one

2 On etymology and historical semantics, see Seebold 1981.

3 See particularly his *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Karlgren 1957), first published as *Grammata Serica* in 1940.

4 Bottéro and Harbsmeier 2008, 249.

5 See, e.g., Schuessler's etymological dictionary of Old Chinese (2007); on *xin* see p. 539.

correspondence. Just take the fact that German "Glaube" and respective words in other European languages correspond to two English terms, "belief" and "faith." The difference between the two English words seems to be that belief is referring rather to the individual aspect of religion and its practice (I believe that …) while faith is more collective and is used for the entity of doctrines (Christian faith, …). We may keep this semantic distinction in mind when we discuss the terminology in other languages and religious cultures.

English has, as so often, preserved an Anglo-Saxon word (belief) and a Romano-Norman loanword (faith), the latter going back to Old French *feid*, *feit*, *fait*, etc., Latin *fidēs*, which only gets its almost exclusively religious meaning around the fifteenth century.[6] In the European context things appear easier since the respective terms are semantically influenced and shaped by the Christian concepts underlying Greek πίστις, Latin *fidēs* (and other words of the Latin word field such as *fiducia*, *confidentia*, *credulitas*, *religio*, *confessio*). This is, for instance, demonstrable by the fact that all Germanic languages share the word with the prefix *gi-* (Goth. *galaubeins*,[7] OHG *gilouba*, OSax *gilôbo*, AS *gelēafa*, MHG *geloube*, MLG *gelove*, *gelof*), all derived from a Proto-Germanic **luba*, "praise, permission,"[8] English belief—with prefix *bi-*—being a Middle-English innovation (*beleafe*).[9] The non-Christian semantic focus is, however, still graspable and seems to be on "trust, guarantee, credibility, confidence, etc."[10]

As a starting point for my paper which will mainly deal with the term *xin* 信 in non-autochthonous religious contexts, viz., Buddhist, Christian and Manichaean, from roughly the second through ninth centuries between the late Han and the Tang periods, I would like to start with the entry in the early second-century dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, compiled by Xu Shen 許慎, since it was produced at a time when Buddhism had not yet influenced Chinese traditional culture as, let us say, about half a century later.[11] Under the entry *xin* 信 one finds a quite lapidary explanation:

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6 Oxford English Dictionary (online), s.v. *faith*.

7 Verb *galaubjan*: see Lehmann 1986, 141f., s.v.

8 Kroonen 2013, 341.

9 Deutsches Wörterbuch (online edition), s.v. Glaube. On the English word see Partridge 1966, 1741.

10 See for the Latin *fides* De Vaan 2008, 218f., s.v. *fidō*. For more general observations, see the Introduction to the present volume, and for a more theological approach see Jiang's chapter.

11 On the *Shuowen jiezi* and its lexicographical approach see Bottéro, Harbsmeier 2008. For a more detailed study see Barbara Meisterernst's chapter in this volume.

> *xin* means 'sincerity' (*cheng* 誠); [derived] from 'man' (*ren* 人) [and] from 'to speak' (*yan* 言); an associative compound [character].[12]

Following the self-chosen method of semantic equations in the dictionary—"x means y"—in order to demarcate the semantic field of *xin* according to the *Shuowen jiezi* it seems to make sense to look out for examples which use *xin* as an explanans for other words/characters ("y").

As one of the next entries under the "head graph" (radical) *yan* we are confronted with a semantic hermeneutical circle:

> "Sincerity" (*cheng*) means "trust" (*xin*), [derived] from "to speak" (*yan*) [with] the phonetic element *cheng* 成.[13]

There is clearly a legal aspect to the term *xin*:

> Tally (*fu* 符): means "trust" (*xin*). In the [administrative] system of the Han [it] consists of a [piece of] bamboo, six inches long, divided [into pieces that] fit each other; [derived] from bamboo (*zhu* 竹) with the phonetic [element] *fu* 付.[14]
>
> Tally as proof of official status (*qi* 棨), a pass, means "trust" (*xin*). [Derived] from "wood" (*mu* 木) with the abridged phonetic [element] *qi* 啟.[15]
>
> Permission (*yun* 允) means "trust" (*xin*). [Derived] from "child" (*er* 儿) with the phonetic element 吕.[16]
>
> "Sincere" (*xun* 恂) means "trustful heart" (*xinxin* 信心). [Derived] from "heart" (*xin* 心) with the phonetic element *xun* 旬.[17]
>
> "To inspire confidence" (*fu* 孚) means "to groom (*luan* 卵) confidence." [Derived] from "claw" (*zhao* 爪) and from "seed" (*zi* 子). Another meaning is "trust" (*xin*).[18]

12 SJ 1519: 信：誠也。从人从言。會意。 Here and in the following the *Shuowen jiezi* online edition was used: https://ctext.org/shuo-wen-jie-zi/ens (accessed 17 November 2020). Cf. also Meisterernst's analysis of this passage in her chapter of this volume.

13 SJ 1521 誠：信也。从言成聲。

14 SJ 2885 符：信也。漢制以竹，長六寸，分而相合。从竹付聲。 See also Friederike Assandri's chapter in this volume.

15 SJ 3752 棨：傳，信也。从木，啟省聲。

16 SJ 5431 允：信也。从儿吕聲。

17 SJ 6724 恂：信心也。从心旬聲。

18 SJ 1871 孚：卵孚也。从爪从子。一曰信也。

We have to keep in mind, of course, that the *Shuowen jiezi* "provides only meanings that are relevant to the explanation of the graphs used to write words,"[19] but I would say that even this is enough to get an idea what the character *xin* meant towards the end of the Eastern Han period. Here it is striking that the basic concept seems to be compatible with the Western words used for Christian "belief, faith," which refer to mutual trust, reliability, sincerity, originally without the later notion of "surrender in faith" or "unconditioned faith in a Supreme (Transcendent, Almighty …) Being."

## 2 Buddhism

Translation processes—and this is what the transfer of Buddhism from India to China was about in the first centuries—create a quite different dynamics in the development of languages. Beside the possible phonetic and syntactic influences of the original language on the target language it is particularly in the context of semantics where the impact is most clearly traceable. New ideas and concepts from different cultural or religious contexts have to be expressed in a language that may not even have comparative terms, and the creation of a new corpus of expressions, of a new vocabulary in principle goes into two directions: the taking over of the word from the original language into the target language in its phonetic or approximate phonetic shape as a loanword, or the attempt at finding an equivalent term or creating a new word by semantically affinitive or similar elements of the target language. Buddhism is the first major foreign import in Chinese cultural history and its impact on all spheres of culture of society was massive, language not being an exception.[20]

Loanwords like the very basic and probably oldest terms like *fo* 佛/**but*,[21] "Buddha," or *seng* 僧/**səŋ*, "monk, *saṅgha*," had the disadvantage of being completely foreign to the Chinese but at the same time the advantage of being semantically without connotation in the language so that they could transmit the new meaning without interference of any inherited meaning.

Matters were more difficult with inherited Chinese words and terms that had already been used in the religious, cultural, or philosophical discourse for centuries. When Indian Buddhist texts were translated or doctrinal aspects of the new religion were presented, explained, or discussed in texts it was

19 Bottéro, Harbsmeier 2008, 249.

20 Deeg 2010.

21 All Early Medieval Chinese (*) reconstructed pronunciations in this paper are given according to Pulleyblank 1991.

unavoidable to use this inherited Chinese terminology and vocabulary—and unavoidable was semantic change occurring during this process. The most extreme examples of applying semantically and conceptually highly loaded words like Dao 道 for quite new and different ideas like "enlightenment," Skt. *bodhi*, or "full extinction," Skt. *parinirvāṇa*, even struck the Chinese themselves as being a special translational device, and they called this *geyi* 格義, "matching concepts."[22]

In the cases where we have access to the parallel Indic text it becomes clear that, as in a lot of other case, *xin* was used to translate a variety of Indic Buddhist terms: *śraddhā*, "belief, trust," *adhimukti*, "strong inclination, attachment," *prasāda*, "tranquility, faith," *adhyāśaya*, "mental disposition, inclination, will," *saṃpratyaya*, "trust, reliance,"[23] etc.

In the majority of the cases *xin* and derivated binomes seem to translate *śraddhā* or *adhimukti*.[24] In Sanskrit the word *śraddhā* and its Indo-Aryan cognates like Pāli *saddhā* is a so-called root-noun compound, consisting of *śrad-*, a defective noun linked to an Indo-European root for "heart" (**śrad-*), and √*dhā*, "to put, to set" (transferable into a verb *śrad-dadhāti*),[25] therefore meaning something like "to put someone's mind on sth./so., to have trust in sth./so." Again, we have the concept of trust in the other meaning of *śraddhā*, "sacrificial generosity," which obviously depends on the principle "do ut des" and finds its later expression in the so-called brahminical *śrāddha* sacrifices.

Since *xin* in Buddhist texts is too broad a topic to be discussed at full length, and is treated in another chapter in the present volume, I only briefly want to discuss a rather short text, acclaimed however by Chinese tradition to be the oldest translated Buddhist text in China, the "Sūtra of Forty-two Sections"

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22 Victor Mair has recently discussed the term and concluded that it only was of relevance in the Chinese discourse for a short period of time and that the importance given to it is a scholarly projection (Mair 2012). It is, nevertheless, a fact that Chinese Buddhist translated texts contain a plethora of examples following this method of rendering foreign concepts or terms in Chinese.

23 These are the ones given in Hirakawa 1997: 133b., s.v. (no. 132); under this lemma many other compounds are listed which more or less confirm the "translational" range of the simplex. See also Tam's contribution in this volume.

24 See the examples from Dharmarakṣa/Zhu Fahu's 竺法護 translation of the Lotus sūtra, the *Zhengfahua jing* 正法華經 (T.263) from 286 in Karashima 1998, 504f. who lists the intriguing binome *xinle* 信樂 (correct Karashima's *xinyao*); see also the examples in Kumārajīva's translation of the same *sūtra*, the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 (T.262) from 406: Karashima 2001, 306ff.; in Lokakṣema/Zhi Loujiachen's 支婁迦讖 translation of the *Aṣṭāsāhasrika-prajñāpāramitāsūtra, Daoxing banruo jing* 道行般若經 from 179 (T.224): Karashima 2010, 545f.

25 Köhler 1973; Mayrhofer 1976, 386f., & 1996, 663, s.v.

(*Sishierzhang jing* 四十二章經, T.784), attributed by Chinese Buddhist hagiographical tradition to the first two Indian monks in China, Kāśyapa Mātaṅga/Jiaye Moteng 迦葉摩騰 and Dharmarata/Zhu Falan 竺法蘭, but which probably is a later compilation. In this text *xin* occurs six times, and the contexts all suggest the meaning "(to have) trust (in)." As a quintessence of the ten evils of the body, mouth and mind "not having **trust** in the three Venerables (Jewels) and considering heretic views as truth"[26] (*bu xin sanzun, yi xie wei zhen* 不信三尊，以邪為真) is given (T.784.722b.8f.). This trust has to be developed through practice (723a.18f.):

> [If one] practices daily and constantly focuses on the Dao, [then] practices the Dao [one] finally will develop the root of **trust** and the merit from it will be immeasurable.[27]

That *xin* in the text does not refer to an unconditioned faith becomes clear in the following passage (723b.16ff.):

> The Buddha told the *śramaṇa*s: "Be careful to not **trust** your mind; the mind cannot be **trusted** in the end. Be careful to not cling to the cumulation of form (*rūpaskandha*), because the clinging to the cumulation of form [leads] to unfortunate rebirth. Only after you have reached the Way of an *arhat* you can **trust** your mind."[28]

Here it is absolutely clear that *xin* cannot mean "to believe" but only "to trust": one cannot possibly believe—in the strict sense of the word—in one's own mind. A passage which obviously "embraces" the concepts of "trust" and "belief" for the term *xin* is (723c.25ff.):

> The Buddha said: "Now, it is difficult for men to leave the Way of the Three Evils and to become a human; [even] when one has become a human, it is difficult for a man to leave women; if one has become a man, it is difficult to perfect the six senses; [even] when the six senses are perfected, it is difficult to be born in the central region; [even] when one is born in the central region, it is difficult to be worthy of receiving the Way of the

26 My own translations; see also Sharf 1996, 363, who in all cases quoted here translates *xin* with "faith."

27 一日行，常念道、行道，遂得信根，其福無量。

28 佛告沙門："慎無信汝意，意終不可信。慎無與色會，與色會即禍生。得阿羅漢道，乃可信汝意耳。"

> Buddha; [even] when has received the Way of the Buddha, it is difficult to be a gentleman worthy of having the Way, it is difficult to be born in the family of a bodhisattva; [even] when one is born in a family of a bodhisattva and has **trust** in the venerable, it is difficult to be worthy of [being born] in the age of a Buddha."[29]

## 3 Christianity

One might assume that the most ancient Christian texts preserved in the Chinese language promise to provide the closest proximity to the terms "belief" or "faith." Here I will discuss the term *xin* and its occurrence in these sources in a little bit more details, although the result of such a discussion may not be as helpful as one may expect.

The oldest traces of a Christian community in China go back to the Tang period.[30] These first Christians came to China from Iranian territory, Persians and Sogdians, and belonged to the "Church of the East," sometimes and wrongly called "Nestorian"; their church language was Syriac, a Semitic language close to Classical Arabic. This is clearly evidenced by a section of the most famous document of this religion, the stele of Xi'an, written in this language in the Estrangelo script, which does, however, not contain any direct reference to "faith."[31] The adherents of the religion themselves called their religion in Chinese "Radiant Teaching" (Jingjiao 景教).[32]

The Syriac word for faith or belief would be *haimanuta* ܗܝܡܢܘܬܐ.[33] The word is an abstract term derived from Syriac *hēmin* (Heb. *āman*), "to consider sth./so. to be true, to trust,"[34] and again shows the semantic overlap with words for faith in other languages discussed earlier. Interestingly, none of the preserved Chinese Christian texts contains a loanword for this or a similar Syriac term for faith or belief.

One *caveat* should be given at the beginning: since none of the Chinese Christian texts from the Tang dynasty is a direct translation of a text of the

29 佛言："夫人離三惡道得為人難；既得為人，去女即男難；既得為男，六情完具難；六情已具，生中國難；既處中國，值奉佛道難；既奉佛道，值有道之君難，生菩薩家難；既生菩薩家，以心信尊、值佛世難。"

30 For an historical overview of the rise and fall of Tang Christianity, see Deeg 2006.

31 For a discussion of the Syriac portion of the text, see Hunter 2009.

32 It may be noted that the character *jing* 景 in the Jingjiao documents is written in an idiosyncratic way (*yitizi* 異體字), with a mouth pictogram 口 on top and a sun 日 pictogram instead of the mouth pictogram in *jing* 京.

33 Payne Smith 1957, 103b.

34 Katō 1969, 3f.

Church of the East whose liturgical language was Syriac it is a vain endeavour to look for direct parallels and check what Syriac word or term would have been translated by Chinese *xin*.[35] The situation is complicated by the fact that the language of the documents is highly influenced by Buddhist and Daoist terminology and ideas. This is not very surprising since Christianity arrived, according to its own sources, in China in the year 635 in form of the arrival of a Persian Christian monk called Aluoben 阿羅本,[36] at a time when both other religions were influential and striving for recognition through the Tang court. Generally speaking, the term *xin* and binomes containing it are quite rare in the documents.

To start with the most well-known Christian document from the Tang period, die Xi'an stele from the year 781, called "Stone Inscription of the Spread of the Radiant Teaching from Daqin to the Middle Kingdom" (*Daqin jingjiao liuxing Zhongguo bei* 大秦景教流行中國碑):[37] The term *xin* is only found once as part of a binome *zhengxin* 正信, but this occurrence is quite an interesting one:

> [The *mishihe* / Messiah] fulfilled the "Old Law" which was propagated by the twenty-four saints to regulated the families and countries by the Great Way, [and he] instigated the wordless "New Teaching" of the "Pure Wind" of the Trinity, shaped goodness by the **true faith**.[38]

In the parallel style of this passage the true faith (*zhengxin* 正信) of the New Testament (*xinjiao* 新教) is juxtaposed with the Great Way (or Great Scheme) (*dayou* 大猷) of the Old Testament (*jiufa* 舊法). This seems to be the only case where *xin* is used in the sense of a full-fledged belief-system.

Beside the Xi'an stele and a recently discovered inscribed stele in Luoyang the main sources for Christianity in China in the early period are the so-called Dunhuang manuscripts.[39] Eight manuscripts are known so far, two of them in Paris in the collection Pelliot, and seven in Japan with two of them missing but the others "rediscovered" recently as being part of the Takeda Foundation

35 For a discussion of the Christian texts from the Tang period, see Riboud, and Deeg 2015.

36 There are several interpretations of this name; I have tried to show that Aluoben is a transliteration of the Iranian name Ardabān: Deeg 2018, 110f., fn. 89.

37 Among the many studies and translations of the stele, Pelliot 1996 is the best; for a new translation cum commentary in German see also Deeg 2018.

38 Line 14ff. 圓廿四聖有說之舊法，理家國於大猷；設 三一淨風無言之新教，陶良用於正信。

39 These documents have been translated and studied as a corpus by Saeki 1951; a more recent translation is Tang 2002; unfortunately, both works lack a critical historical-philological approach. For a more balanced treatment of these texts see now Zani 2022.

holdings in Osaka. Some of them have been charged with being fakes in the last two or three decades by mainly Chinese scholars, but I am working here on the basis of the assumption that the texts preserved and documented at least reflect Christian sources from the Tang period even though the manuscripts themselves may not necessarily be from that period.

In these documents the term *xin* and its derivational compounds are very unequally distributed. They are not found in the *Daqin jingjiao dasheng tongzhen guifa zan* 大秦景教大聖通真歸法讚 (Praise of Taking Refuge to the Law of the Pervading Truth of the Great Saint of the Radiant Teaching from Daqin). They also are absent in the so-called "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" (*Sanwei mengdu jing* 三威蒙度讚), "Praise of Receiving Salvation from the Three Mighties." Instead, semantically related terms for "relying on, taking refuge to" are found twice: (*meng*)*yizhi* (蒙) 依止 and *guiyang* 歸仰.[40]

*Xin* is not found in "Parable, Number two" (*Yu di er* 喻第二), and only once in the *Yitian lun* 一天論 (Treatise of the One God) in the context of heretics and non-believers, in a passage which very much looks Buddhist and not Christian:

> Because of the misleading of the wicked devil the foolish people do not have the heart to venerate the One God. Because they **believe** in false and inverted views, [they] will first fall on the path of the three evil existences, among evil ghosts. Later they will be born as humans in the world, will be born among [people of] low origin [living in] borderlands.[41]

In the third text of the long scroll, the "Treatise of the World-Honored One [on] Giving" (*Shizun bushi lun* 世尊布施論), *xin* occurs twelve times. In one passage the term is clearly meant to mean "message," which at least seems to indicate that the term was not exclusively reserved to a religious meaning:

> The Messiah rose from death: as explained before, the women had come there and acted as it was the law. After three days the Jews[42] [wanted] to inspect and went to the grave [and when they] came there [it] was broken [and they] clearly saw to [their] bewilderment that the Messiah was gone. Therefore [they] sent a **message** to the scholars (Phariseans).

40 In the Zunjing 尊經, found together with the *Gloria*, a list of "patriarchs" (*fawang* 法王) and texts is included, containing a *Baoxin fawang* 報信法王 and a *Baoxin fawang jing* 報信法王經, but it is completely unclear who this is.

41 以是惡魔迷惑，故愚癡人等無心尊敬一神。信邪倒見，故先墮三惡道中，惡魔鬼中。後於天下生人間，邊地下賤中生。

42 *shihu* 石忽/**dziajk-xwət*, probably based on Sogdian *cxwd* (*čaxuδ*): Takahashi 2013, 16, and Takahashi 2014, 335.

> Just like in olden days in the world the woman had **sent** a false message to Adam whence came this Sin to the world …[43]

But the text also combines *xin* in a specific way with *xiang* 向 in the obvious meaning of "having faith in …, entrusting [oneself] to … (e.g., the Messiah)."[44] There is also the idea that this faith does not need a lot of "investment" but trustful dedication: "[If one] directs oneself to the truth **faith** does not have to be big [as long one] does the work of **faith**."[45]

*Xin* occurs twice in the *Zhixuan anle jing* 志玄安樂經 (Scripture of the Devotion to the Profound Happiness):

> [O] monk Simon! From the beginning the hearts of the living beings are [already] enmeshed in affliction. They hear that the "fruits of non-desire" are on the "Mountain of Happiness." Although they direct their aspiration on cultivation, [their] **spirit and belief** (*qingxin*) is in doubt. Fortunately, their religious assistant acts like a trusted [person] by teaching in parables and [thereby] produces a stair [by which] all recognize the Way [and] wrong tracks are removed.[46]
>
> If there are men and women who rely on what I say, strive to practice the supreme Law, ponder day and night [how] to stay away from all defilements, [how] to purify [themselves to realize their] true nature, [how] clarify [themselves to achieve] perfect knowledge. [When this] is known men finally will be redeemed. This is the benefit arising from knowing this scripture. If men **trust and love** (*xin'ai*), [if they] do not often divide [their] practice, they will be able not to worry about any division on the Way of Brightness, they will be able not to revert to any calamity on the Way of Darkness, will be able to attain happiness in other places, in different sites.[47]

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43 彌師訶從死起，亦如前者說，女人等就彼來處依法。石忽人於三日好看向墓田，將來就彼分明見，彌師訶發迷去。故相報信向學人處。喻如前者女人。於天下寄信妄報於阿談，因有此罪業，向天下來。

44 一切人有信，共向世尊來。 "All mankind **believes** in the coming of the World-Honored One." 有信向彌師訶處，亦不疑慮，起從黃泉，一切人並得起。 "If one **believes** in the Messiah and has no doubts [one] will rise from the 'Yellow Fountain'—all men can rise [from there]."

45 為向實處，亦不須信大，作信業。

46 岑穩僧伽！當來眾心久惑惱。聞死欲菓在安樂山。雖念進脩，情信中殆。賴善知識作彼近親，巧說訓喻，使成梯橙，皆能晤道，鎖除積迷。

47 若有男女，依我所言，勤 脩上法，晝夜思惟，離諸染污，清淨真性，湛然圓明。即知其，人終當解脫。是知此經所生利益。眾天說之，不窮際。若人信

The relatively most frequent use of *xin* is found in the *Daqin jingjiao xuanyuan zhiben jing* 大秦景教宣元至本經 (Scripture of Expounding the Ultimate Origin of Origin of the Radiant Teaching from Daqin) also quoted in the fragmented Luoyang stele inscription. In this quite short text *xin* occurs seven times, among which the term *xin shan* 信善, "to believe in the good," in the context of people who do not believe in the good (*buxinshan zhi tu* 不信善之徒) is found three times. Three more times it is found combined with Dao, "to have trust, to believe in the sacred Dao" (*xin dao* 信道 or *xin shengdao* 信聖道).

The *Xuting Mishisuo jing* 序聽迷詩所經—the title is difficult to understand and to render but is normally given, with Saeki, as "Scripture of Jesus Messiah,"[48]—, a text which contains the most transliterational material, is a very idiosyncratic reading of the Ten Commandments and Jesus' biography in which *xin* occurs eight times. In this text the meaning "to believe (in a faith)" is most evident and in its verbal use closest to the Xi'an stele (不信天尊教者 "those who do not believe in the teaching of the Heavenly Honored One"; 信此教 "believe in the teaching;" 不信經教 "not believe in the doctrine"). The text states that faith or the qualities of faith are bestowed on man by God's power[49] by which they reach a good "karmic" position (*shanyuan* 善緣). One does not only believe in God or the Messiah, however, but also has trust (*xin*) in good action.[50]

It should also be mentioned that in the epitaph of the recently discovered Luoyang epitaph[51] *xin* is found in the clear, however not religiously connotated, meaning of "to trust, to rely on" in the description of the virtues of the deceased, a Sogdian Christian called Xian 獻, a cavalry commander in the Tang army: "Man is **relying** (*xin*) on [his] relatives."[52] When Xian's religious

愛，少分脩行，能於明道，不憂諸離，能於闇道，不犯諸災，能於他方異處，常得安樂。

48 For a new approach to analyze the title in a philological fashion in the wider context of the text see Deeg 2020.

49 天尊有威力，即遣眾生信心清淨，迴向善緣。 "The Heavenly Honored One has the power and bestows the living being with the purity of **faith** [so that they] revert to good condition."

50 即有眾當聞此語，休事屬神，休作惡，遂信好業。 "... then there are beings who will listen to these words [of God], will stop venerating the assembled spirits, stop committing evil and consequently will **have trust** in good deeds."

51 I do not understand why Tang 2016 expresses serious doubts about the Christian identity of the document.

52 人信于戚屬者: Tang 2016, 32. This is obviously a general statement introducing Xian's taking of a wife.

activities are described he is not described as a believer but is said "to serve (*shi*) the 'Brilliant Venerable'."[53]

## 4 Manichaeism

Without any specific expertise in the field of Manichaean studies I would still like, and be it only for the sake of completeness, to discuss some few examples from the Chinese Manichaean texts, the so-called "Hymn Scroll" (*Xiabu zan* 下部讚), the "Compendium of the Teachings of Mani the Buddha of Light" (*Moni guangfo jiaofa yilüe* 摩尼光佛教法儀略), and another untitled Dunhuang manuscript, which belong, like the Christian sources, to the Tang period.[54]

Put in more general terms, despite some influence from Pure Land Buddhism in the description of paradisiac realms,[55] the texts do not reflect the strong emphasis on faith as the Buddhist belief system does. Due to the more cosmological nature of Mani's teaching which aims at freeing the elements of pure light from polluted matter, belief (or trust) (*xin* and its compounds)[56] does not play a major role in doctrine and soteriology of the religion.

The "Hymn," as is to be expected from a text praising the religion, uses *xin* in a meaning that comes closest to "belief" as the precondition for attaining spiritual achievements. The text speaks of the strength of one's "foundation of trust (or belief)" (*xinji* 信基). But it does not seem to be belief which leads to a higher spiritual stage but intuitive understanding of (or awakening to: *wu* 悟) the supreme divine being (*mingzun* 明尊) which leads to acceptance of or the belief in his teaching.[57]

In the Dunhuang manuscript the term *chengxin* 誠信, "honest trust, belief," prevails (11 out of 19; once in the "Hymn"). It is the precondition of spiritual development, and its absence leads to confusion and spiritual decline. In the parable of the "tree of death" (*sishu* 死樹) the roots and branches of this tree are "non-trust, unbelief" (*wuxin* 無信), while the root of the "tree of thought"

53 *Shi jingzun* 事景尊: Tang 2016, 32.

54 Research on these documents were first undertaken by the French scholars Chavannes and Pelliot (Chavannes, Pelliot 1911 & 1913). A German translation of the texts was made by Schmidt-Glintzer 1987. Publications on the subject include Lieu 1992 & 1998, Bryder 1985, Mikkelsen 2002, 2006, 2009.

55 Mikkelsen 2002 & 2009.

56 Mikkelsen 2006, 80.

57 我等上相悟明尊, 遂能信受分別說 "Our superior form realizes the light-venerable and then is able to **believe** the distinct explanation; …".

(*xiangshu* 相樹) is "honest trust" (*chengxin*), and its trunk is the "trust in the [right] view" (*jianxin* 見信).

A kind of definition of *chengxin* is given in combination with the virtue of compassion (*lianmin* 怜愍):

> Included in this compassion there is also **honest trust**. This **honest trust** is the mother of all good, is just like a royal consort [who] can help the king, nurture everything, and is also like the power of fire [which] completely boils the ten thousand things and provides [them] with [their] flavours. [They] are also like sun and moon in many portraits [with their] unfolding light radiating everywhere [and] unfailingly increasing benefit. Compassion and **honest trust** achieve everything from all the merits [coming from them]. And also likewise compassion[58] and **honest trust** are the foundation of the radiant causes of the future and the past of the holy ones, looking through the wonderful gate; and also [as for] the great ocean of suffering in the three worlds treading the narrow path—among one hundred thousand beings there is rarely one person who can enter this path; and if someone enters it [he] will, relying on this Way, be born in a pure land, eradicate suffering, become liberated, will finally be without fear and eternally rejoice in peaceful purity.[59]

Honest trust is one of the virtues advertised as essential to the Manichaean adept, and it is obviously reflected in the trustful mind or "serene trust" (*xinxin* 信心), and is the seventh of the twelve characteristics (*xiang* 相) or "radiances" (*guangming* 光明) of the Light Nous (*huiming* 惠明).[60] Someone who has a trustful mind, is a "believer" (*diannawu*, see below) and has to know—i.e., to adhere to—the five "signs" (*jiyan* 記驗) of the teacher, one of them being

58 Read 怜愍 for 怕愍.

59 T.2141B.1284a.2ff. 其怜愍中，復有誠信。其誠信者，即是一切諸善之母，猶如王妃，能助國王。撫育一切。亦如火力。通熟萬物。資成諸味。又如日月。於眾像中。最尊無比。舒光普照。無不滋益。怜愍誠信。於諸功德成就具足。亦復如是。怕愍誠信。亦是諸聖過去未來明因基址。通觀妙門。亦復三界煩惱大海側足狹路。百千眾中。稀有一人。能入此路。若有入者。依因此道。得生淨土。離苦解脫。究竟無畏。常樂安淨。

60 惠明相者。第一大王。二者智惠。三者常勝。四者歡喜。五者懃修。六者平等。七者信心。八者忍辱。九者直意。十者功德。十一者齊心一等。十二者內外俱明。 "The characteristics of the light nous are: 1. great royalty, 2. wisdom, 3. constant victory, 4. happiness, 5. zeal, 6. equanimity, 7. **trustful mind**, 8. perseverance, 9. honest thought, 10. merit, 11. unanimous mind, 12. complete light within and without."

to have trust or belief (*xin* 信) or a trustful mind (*xinxin* 信心) in the meaning of the two principles (*erzong yi* 二宗義).[61]

The Chinese Manichaean texts, in that respect different from the Christian ones, also contain loanwords for belief or faith. These are transliterations of Parthian or Middle Persian words such as *huyulifuduo* 呼于里弗哆/**xɔ-wuă-li'-put-ta* for *wāfarīft* (*w'wryft*),[62] "belief." Linked to this semantic field are the transliterations *diannawu* 電那勿/**dɛnʰ-na'-mut*, for Middle Persian *dēnawār* (*dyn'wr*),[63] or *tinaba* 提那跋/**dɛj-na'-bat*, for Parthian *dēnāβar* (*dyn'br*),[64] usually translated as "believer," but derived from *dyn*/*dēn*, "religion," with the literary meaning of "holder, bearer of the *dēn*." The oldest term is *tinaba* which is found in Xuanzang's description of Persia.[65] One could ask here why the translator(s) did not use Chinese *xin* or *xinzhe*. In the case of *huyulifuduo* it is clear why the transcription is used since the term is found in a hymn, a part of the "Hymn Scroll," which is completely transliterated from Parthian. *Diannawu* occurs thirteen times in the Manichaean scroll from Dunhuang in a description of the twelve stages a Manichaean trainee, starting from the ranks of "teacher" (*mushe* 慕闍/**mɔʰ-dzia*, Parth. *āmōžāg*), "bishop" (*fuduodan* 拂多誕/** *pʰut-ta-dan'*, Parth. *haptādān*, literally, "seventy") and above, has to master.

In the "Compendium" the lowest rank of the religious hierarchy, the "hearer," or Parth. *niyošāgān* (Chin. *nousha'an* 耨沙喭/**nəwʰ-ʂɛ:-ŋianʰ*), is translated as *yiqie jingxin tingzhe* 一切淨信聽者, the "hearer with completely pure faith"; it seems as if the lowest rank in Chinese had to be explained as having trust or faith in the other ranks and the teaching of Mani, while the higher ranks, from

61 七信心者。若有清淨電那勿等內懷信心性者。當知是師有五記驗。一者信二宗義。心淨無疑。棄暗從明。如聖所說。二者於諸戒律其心決定。三者於聖經典不敢增減一句一字。四者於正法中所有利益。心助歡喜。若見為魔之所損惱。當起慈悲。同心憂慮。五者不妄宣說他人過惡。亦不嫌謗傳言兩舌。性常柔濡。質直無二。"7. **trustful mind**: if there is, among the different stages of pure 'believers', someone who has the nature of a **trustful mind**, [then he] should know that this teacher has five signs [to be followed]: 1. to believe in the meaning of the two principles with a mind [that] is pure and without doubt, to give up darkness and follow the light as explained by the Saint; 2. to have one's mind determined on the precepts; 3. to not dare to increase or decrease the holy scriptures by one sentence [or] one word; 4. to have benefit in the true law, have [one's] mind assist happiness, [and, if one] sees the inflictions of the demons, one should stir compassion and be unitedly concerned; 5. to not falsely expose other people's faults, and also not to slander, spread rumors, speak lies, to always have an affable nature, to be upright and true to oneself."

62 Mikkelsen 2006, 104a; Durkin-Meisterernst 2004, 336, s.v. *w'wryft*.

63 Mikkelsen 2006, 103b.

64 Mikkelsen 2006, 108a.; Durkin-Meisterernst 2004, 151, s.v. *dyn'br*.

65 T.2087.938a.18f.: *tinaba-waidao* 提那跋外道.

the *electi*—Chin. *aluohuan* 阿羅緩/*ʔa-la-wuan*, Parth. *ardāwān*, translated as *yiqie chunshanren* 一切純善人, "completely pure and good man"—to the highest rank of *mushe*—translated into Chinese as *chengfa jiaodaozhe* 承法教道者, "heir of the Law and instructor of the Way"—were defined by their keeping of the rules and the required pure and ascetic lifestyle.

## 5 Conclusion

The basic semantic concept of words for belief or faith in most languages is surprisingly—or maybe not so surprisingly—uniform: it expresses mutual trust and truthfulness. The shift towards a more devotional connotation of belief and faith, weakening the idea of required mutuality, seems to be, in most cases, a semantic change linked to the more general development of the respective religions.

In the Chinese context such a development—a shift from a more general to a religious meaning—of the term *xin* seems to happen in a situation of religious and cultural contact and translation of terms and texts brought about by the arrival of Buddhism. The two "Persian" religions, Christianity and Manichaeism, encountered a changed religious landscape due to the influence of Buddhism, in which terms like *xin* already had expanded their connotative options (semantic range) and were integrated in the doctrinal system of the new religions. Christianity in particular seems to have "downplayed" the role of belief/faith in one god in the Chinese context, while in the Manichaean texts the concept of *xin* in the sense of "trust, belief" may have occupied a more prominent role than in other cultural environments to which the religion had spread.

### Abbreviations

T Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 1982 [1924–1934]. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Reprint Taipei: Xinwenfeng.

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CHAPTER 11

# *Xin* 信 in the Early Seventeenth-Century Chinese Christian Community

*Nicolas Standaert*

The arrival of missionaries and the establishment of Christian (i.e., Catholic) communities in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries are fairly well-documented. There are not only Western sources by missionaries, but also many Chinese sources by both converts and missionaries. The language of exchange among them was indeed Chinese, and due to the widely spread printing culture, many Chinese Christian sources have been preserved. This contribution attempts to understand the different meanings of *xin* 信 in the early seventeenth-century Christian community. The texts that will be presented are to a very large extent the result of interactions, not only between missionaries and Chinese converts, but also between other partners such as the anonymous (Confucian) scholars who challenged or questioned them. Many of the texts are in fact constructed as a dialogue between a Western and a Chinese scholar, a Chinese Christian and a Confucian scholar, a master and a disciple. Although the texts will somehow be artificially divided between "presentation" by missionaries and "reception" by Chinese, they all have multiple authors at their origin and the partner of the other culture is usually included in the text. Therefore, despite being attributed to one author, they are often co-authored.

This survey of *xin* begins with a short overview of sources, followed by the presentation and reception of *xin* in various texts. The term *xin*, which covers a broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from human trustworthiness to religious faith, shall usually be translated as "belief" or "believe" in order to keep some consistency of translation.

## 1 Sources

The flourishing of the publishing and printing industry in Late Ming China played an important role not only in the intellectual changes of that time, but also in the spread of Christianity. In contradistinction to other countries where printing was often introduced by missionaries, Christian proponents in China

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took full advantage of the well-developed printing industry that was already present. Moreover, in China there was no effective institutional structure for systematic prepublication censorship of texts, and there was no church to police publications expounding heterodox ideas. Hence, missionaries and Chinese Christians could publish their ideas without too much hindrance. As a result, the "apostolate through books" (*Apostolat der Presse*)[1] became one of the major means of spreading Christianity among the elite. This is confirmed by the number of texts that were produced in this exchange: *c.*1050 texts in total (imprints and manuscripts) for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They are the major source for research on the notion of *xin* 信.[2]

### 1.1 *Early Translations*

A first question one might ask is how early *xin* was used as a Christian term. The first dictionaries that attempted to settle the vocabulary provide insight into its initial appearance. One of the first texts informing us about the choice of words to translate a concept such as "faith" is the *Portuguese-Chinese Dictionary*, possibly composed between 1583 and 1588, and attributed to Michele Ruggieri S.J. 羅明堅 (1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci S.J. 利瑪竇 (1552–1610) (though their specific role is uncertain). Moreover, (anonymous) Chinese collaborators clearly had their hand in the compilation. This *Dictionary* shows that the Chinese word for the corresponding Portuguese word was settled very early.[3]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fee [= fé] | sin | 信 | (fol. 101v) |
| Fiel | ciu' cie | 忠直良 | (fol. 102v) |
| Fielme'te | cium sin | 忠信 | (ibidem) |

However, this does not mean that in the reverse translation *xin* was always/only translated as "faith" or "belief." For instance, in a document offered to Pope Gregory XIV (who was only pope for a short time: December 5, 1590–October 16, 1591), Ruggieri wrote the characters of the five cardinal virtues (仁，儀 [sic], 禮，知 [sic], 信), which he translates as *amor seu caritas*, *gratitudo*, *humanitas*, *prudentia*, *veritas*.[4] *Xin* is here translated as "truth."

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1 The term was used by Bettray 1955, 181ff.

2 See *HCC*, 600–631.

3 ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 198: facsimile edition in *Dicionário Português-Chinês* (Portuguese-Chinese dictionary/葡漢辭典) 2001, fols. 101v and 102v; *xin* is not used for "letter": carta sciu 書 (fol. 57b).

4 BNC.VE, FG 1276, no. 2; see illustration in Zhang 2015, 198.

### 1.2 *Chinese Primary Sources with xin* 信 *in the Title*

Another initial question one might ask about the sources is whether some books are specifically devoted to *xin*, for instance by having *xin* in the title (which is of course not the only proof). Almost none of the *c.*1050 Chinese works feature *xin* 信 in the title.[5] In fact, only two printed works do so, and both are compiled by Chinese Christians. Michael Yang Tingyun's (Migezi) 楊廷筠 (彌格子) (1562–1627; *jinshi* 1592) *Daiyi pian* 代疑篇 (Treatise on Replacing Doubt) (1621) was originally entitled *Zhengxin pian* 徵信篇 or *Zhengxin lun* 徵信論 (Treatise on Proving Belief).[6] About 25 years later, Han Lin 韓霖 (1601–1644; *juren* 1621) and Matthew Zhang Geng (Madou) 張賡 (瑪竇) (*c.*1570–1646/47; *juren* 1597) wrote *Shengjiao xinzheng* 聖教信證 (Proofs for Belief of the Holy Teaching) (different editions between 1647 and 1685). As will be shown below, these texts are important for the reception history of the notion of *xin*.

One can also refer to another printed work by a missionary: Diego de Pantoja S.J.'s 龐迪我 (1571–1618) *Pangzi yiquan* 龐子遺詮 (The Inherited Explanation by Master Pang) (between 1610 and 1617). It contains an explanation of the Creed and is therefore sometimes mentioned under the varied title *Xing-bo-lu* 性薄錄 (= Symbolum), and even *Pangzi xinjing yiquan* 龐子信經遺詮 (The Inherited Explanation of the Creed by Master Pang), although this title may have been added to a much later reprint.

The manuscripts dealing with *xin* include two texts by Joseph Henry-Marie de Prémare S.J. 馬若瑟 (1666–1736): *Ru jiao xin* 儒交信 (Scholars Exchange about Belief) (between 1700 and 1720) and *Xinjing zhijie* 信經直解 (Direct Explanation of the Creed) (1700–1720).[7] There is also an anonymous manuscript *Xinjing jieshi* 信經解釋 (Explanation of the Creed) (probably early eighteenth century). The author discusses the Creed (Twelve Articles) with his friend Shen during his stay in Beijing.[8] Since these manuscript texts date from a much later period than Late Ming–Early Qing (some partly deal with a Figurist interpretation), they will not be discussed here.

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5 On these works and all the other primary sources mentioned in this contribution, see the Chinese Christian Texts CCT-Database.

6 See *Daiyi pian*, BAV, Raccolta Generale Oriente, III, 219.9; *WX*, 483 at the beginning of the preface by Wang Zheng, it is mentioned 舊題徵信篇; 485 in the preface, he writes that Yang Tingyun 作徵信論二十有四篇.

7 There is also a record of *Zongtu xinjing fenjie* 宗徒信經分解 (Analytic Explanation of the Creed of the Apostles) (between 1582 and 1840), which could refer to *Xinjing zhijie* 信經直解. See CCT-Database, http://heron-net.be/pa_cct/index.php/Detail/objects/2364 (accessed 22 October 2020).

8 See CCT-Database, http://heron-net.be/pa_cct/index.php/Detail/objects/9731 (accessed 22 October 2020).

As the titles reveal, the number of works specifically devoted to *xin* is very limited, and in the case of the manuscripts their spread is as well quite restricted. Of course, this does not mean that faith was not the topic or contents of other works. A short history of the Creed in the early seventeenth century catechetical texts may illustrate what is understood by *xin* and the evolution of texts explicitly dealing with *xin*.

## 2 Presentation

The way in which *xin* was presented by the missionaries can be illustrated by the way the Creed appears in the different Chinese texts they composed. This analysis involves the distinction between natural and supernatural (or revealed) theology, two different ways to relate to Christian faith.

### 2.1 *The Creed in Catechetical Texts*

Before discussing the Creed's presence in catechetical texts, it is useful to point at the difference between natural and supernatural theology, which was part of the background of the missionaries' theological formation in Europe. Natural and supernatural theology differ from each other by the principles on which they are based. Natural theology may be defined as "the knowledge that humans can have of the existence and nature of God by means of reason," whereas supernatural (or dogmatic) theology is founded on revelation and on principles accepted by faith. In line with the scholastic approach developed by Thomas Aquinas, with a strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning as a method of learning, natural theology also constituted an important part of the Jesuits' theological formation. Natural theology's principal object is divided into three groups of questions: 1) the existence of God, 2) the nature of God and knowledge of God's attributes, and 3) divine providence (e.g., creation) and the solution of the problem of evil. When Europeans came into contact with peoples in the Americas and in Asia, the question of faith and human ability to arrive at a knowledge of God by natural reason no longer constituted an "academic" question, but became a real issue in presenting Catholic Christianity to people outside of Europe.[9]

The distinction between supernatural and natural theology influenced the division between two major genres of catechetical texts in which *xin* may appear more prominently: the *Doctrina Christiana* (based on revelation) and the *Catechismus* (based on natural theology; not to be confused with the

9 Witek 1996, 310–311.

modern "catechism").[10] Catechetical texts constitute a genre that has quite different forms and these also changed over time. For the sake of clarity, the two main forms will be exposed here (by using the Latin expression), though the distinction is not always strict (as will also appear from the Chinese examples). The *Doctrina Christiana* includes the most important prayers (the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the sign of the cross), the ten commandments, the Creed, a list of the seven sacraments, the fourteen works of mercy (material and spiritual), the eight beatitudes, the seven capital sins and the seven opposing virtues, and usually other short items, which vary from edition to edition, such as lists of the five senses of the body, the three faculties of the soul, the three theological virtues, and (since 1619) the four precepts of the Church. They deal with revealed truths and the most important mysteries of the faith (as expressed in the Creed) and were intended for literate catechumens, those who prepared themselves for baptism. It was a prescriptive and ritualistic text. The booklet was handed down to a catechumen at the altar during a ceremony, called *shou jing* 受經, "to receive the canonical texts" (i.e., prayers, creed, and commandments). It concluded a period of earlier instruction, which dealt with certain fundamental theological notions.

The second genre of catechetical works, called *Catechismus* in the seventeenth century, was primarily based on natural theology and discussed topics such as: 1) the eternal God created the universe, 2) the righteous God remunerates good and evil, 3) the human soul is destined to eternal happiness or unhappiness, 4) Christianity is the sole true religion, i.e., the true way of venerating God, and sometimes at the end, 5) God became incarnate in the person of Jesus and died for all humans. It was meant for people who were hardly acquainted with Christian teachings. It tried to explain these fundamental notions through argumentation and to convince people of their truth according to the principles of natural reason. Such a catechism was often apologetic in nature and was written in the form of a dialogue. It was much more substantive than prescriptive and much more intellectual and philosophical in approach. A *Catechismus* normally does not include the text of the Creed. One may notice that the content, style, and audience of the *Catechismus* and the *Doctrina Christiana* differ quite strongly from each other. In terms of translation, the *Doctrina Christiana* often attempts to literally translate essential texts of concepts (e.g., Our Father), whereas a *Catechismus* is usually not a direct translation but written in (apologetic) dialogue with the local culture. However, both works relate matters of belief, yet in different ways.

10 This explanation is adopted from the article by Ad Dudink and Nicolas Standaert in *HCC*, 608–609.

### 2.2 *Creed in Chinese*

A chronological overview of the wide variety of Chinese Christian works in which *xin* as Christian faith and belief appears, illustrates well how the missionaries presented the Creed in the early stages of their mission. Together with the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Decalogue, the Creed was among the first texts to be translated into Chinese. They were printed as early as 1584.[11] This original version of the Creed has not been preserved, but one can find a reflection of some of its formulation in one of the earliest texts on Christian doctrine: Michele Ruggieri's 羅明堅 (*Xinbian Xizhu guo*) *Tianzhu shilu* (新編西竺國) 天主實錄 ((Newly Composed) Solid Record of the Master of Heaven (from the West)) (1584).[12] This work, written in dialogue (或問。。。答曰), falls under the category of a *Catechismus*, while still containing a more explicit chapter "Explaining the Divine Matters that Humans Should Sincerely Believe" (*jieshi ren dang chengxin tianzhu shishi* 解釋人當誠信天主事實).[13] The explanation included in this chapter consists of eleven articles (*shiyi tiao* 十一條), which cover some but not all the articles of the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed. The articles on God (1–4) and Jesus (口 + 熱所) (5–11) are more extended, while the articles on the Holy Spirit or the Church are not included. Moreover, the text is not composed as a series of articles to be memorized by heart, but is compiled as a dialogue in a question-answer form, which sometimes contains several further questions for one article. The term *xin* 信 is consistently used for the doctrinal matters one should believe.[14]

The next printed work that introduced Christian doctrine is Matteo Ricci's 利瑪竇 *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (The Solid Meaning of the Master of Heaven) (1603). It is one of the most important works, since it became the foundation for the introduction of the basic Christian teachings, even far beyond the seventeenth century. Even more than *Tianzhu shilu*, it is a typical *Catechismus*, which uses the rational Thomistic argumentation of natural theology to approach Chinese *literati*, by proving the existence of God, the soul, reward and punishment in heaven and hell, and human nature, or by refuting reincarnation. Only the end of the book's last chapter gives a short and not very specific mention of Jesus Christ. There is no mention or even a short summary of the text of the Creed.

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11 30 November 1584, *FR*, vol. 1, 194, n. 3; *FR*, vol. 2, 289, n. 2. For the text of Our Father, Hail Mary, and Decalogue, see *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 82–85.

12 *FR*, vol. 2, 290.

13 (*Xinbian Xizhu guo*) *Tianzhu shilu*, 30b; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 1, 126; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 62ff.

14 The much later seriously revised version of the text, *Tianzhu shilu* 天主實錄 (*c*.1640), has different (and fewer) transliterations and 12 articles in total: *Tianzhu shilu*, 27aff.; BAV, Borgia Cinese, 324.1; *WXXB*, vol. 2, 817ff.

*Xin* 信 is not the major topic in *Tianzhu shiyi*. Still, it is used for three categories of necessity of belief. First, there are a number of matters that the reader should believe (e.g., that the Master of Heaven is supreme and that there is genuinely none beside him (51)).[15] Next, there are things that others believe but that the reader should not believe: e.g., Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) believes the idea that the principle (*li* 理) is the source of things (86); scholars believe in the theory of "all things are one body" (*wanwu yiti* 萬物一體) (245, 255); Buddhists believe in reincarnation (261, 281), and in the Pure Land (262). Finally, there are matters that other people who do not believe should better believe (the *ru* 儒 do not believe that there is a heaven and hell in the world to come as the Buddhist do [129]). The book's overarching aim, however, is "to prove that [the universal teaching of the Master of Heaven] is the true teaching" (*zheng qi wei zhenjiao* 徵其為真教). In order to do so, the Western scholar sets out the principles (*li* 理) upon which he bases himself (22). Though there are a number of things that some people have not seen and therefore tend not to believe (9), "the wise man will have no need to delay belief in something until he has seen it with his physical eyes" (智者不必以肉眼所見之事方信其有) (380). The Western scholar time and again tries to prove the solidity of his sayings (*zheng qi shi* 徵其實): "There are numerous reasons (*li* 理), which, when understood, will dispel all doubts (*yi* 疑)" (140). The Chinese scholar also asks for further proofs: "The things in heaven and earth are most numerous and most complex, and I believe (*xin* 信) that there is one who exercises supreme authority over them. But how can one prove (*zheng* 徵) that he is in fact the creator of all things?" (32) Further in the treatise, the Western scholar provides several solid reasons or principles (*shi li* 寔理) to prove (*zheng* 證) that the human soul is not extinguished with the death of the body (163).

Although scholars use reasoning and Christian argumentation or scripture in providing proofs, they are not the only references. Proofs, or the lack of proofs, can also be found in the Chinese texts. It is one important characteristic of the *Tianzhu shiyi* that Ricci considered that the knowledge that Chinese can have of the existence and nature of God by means of reason is to be found in Chinese classics, which he repeatedly quotes. This is not only true for the existence of God, but also other topics: "In ancient times, during the spring

15 The numbers refer to the (modern) numbering of the paragraphs as used in Lancashire and Hu's translation: *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (*T'ien-chu Shih-i*), 2016 [1985].

and autumn period, people believed that the human soul was not destroyed" (185); or "when one investigates these classical texts, one finds that the sages of ancient times already believed that after death there assuredly was a place of joy reserved for the good. But you definitely cannot discover any proof (*zheng* 徵) to hell in the canonical texts." (392)

The discussion about heaven and hell is a nice illustration of the approach that combines proofs and belief. After understanding the reward in heaven and punishment in hell, the Chinese scholar still raises a question of former worthies, asking why one must believe in heaven and hell. In the eyes of the Western scholar, "anyone who does not believe in the principle of heaven and hell is definitely not a superior person" (*fu xin tiantang diyu zhi li, jue fei junzi* 弗信天堂地獄之理，決非君子). The Chinese scholar asks "Why?," to which the Western scholar replies: "Let me ask you, Sir: Can a person who does not believe in the existence of the High Lord be accounted a superior person, yes or no?" (*bu xin you shangdi, qi junzi ren yu*? *Fou yu*? 不信有上帝，其君子人歟？否歟？). The Chinese scholar answers: "No. The *Book of Odes* states: 'This King Wen, watchfully and reverently, with entire intelligence served the High Lord.' How can anyone who refuses to believe in the existence of the High Lord be called a superior man?" (否。《詩》曰:「維此文王，小心翼翼，昭事上帝。」孰謂君子而弗信上帝者?) (402–406). Through rational argumentation supported by classical references, these conversations intend to show that it is reasonable to believe in core issues of the teaching of the Master of Heaven.

An explicit version of the Creed is not present in the first two texts that belong to the genre of *Catechismus*, *Tianzhu shilu* and *Tianzhu shiyi*. The Creed, however, is present in the Chinese versions of the *Doctrina Christiana*, a genre of text aimed at Christians, neophytes, and catechumens. In the oldest preserved Chinese *Doctrina Christiana* by Ricci and his companions,[16] *Tianzhu jiaoyao* 天主教要 (Essentials of the Teaching of the Master of Heaven) (1605) or the slightly later versions[17] sometimes entitled *Shengjing yuelu* 聖經約錄 (Summary Record of the Holy Text),[18] the Creed is entitled *Shier ya-bo-si-duo-luo xing-bo-lu* 十二亞玻斯多羅性薄錄 (The Symbol of the Twelve Apostles (Symbolum Apostolorum)). The Creed is explained as follows:

16 On the identification of these texts, see Dudink 2002, 38–50. Some authors wrongly attribute later versions (without transliterations) to Ricci, which Dudink proves is wrong.

17 E.g., *Tianzhu jiaoyao*, 4a–4b; BAV, Raccolta Generale Oriente, III, 221.5; *CCT BAV (1)*, vol. 24, 527–528.

18 E.g., *Shengjing yuelu*; ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 126; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 95–96.

> Symbolum is in translation "composed in common." When the Apostles were not yet dispersed, they in common composed and recorded twelve essential matters about the Master of Heaven, so that all followers of the holy teaching would know and sincerely believe them.
>
> 性薄錄。譯言共具也。蓋宗徒未散時。共具紀錄天主事情十二要端。俾凡從聖教者。知而誠信之。

Subsequent to this explanation, the twelve articles follow, each introduced by *wo xin* 我信, as a translation for the performative use of *credo in*. This *Doctrina Christiana* also contains three theological virtues (*xiang tianzhu you sande* 向天主有三德): faith, hope, and love, in which the first *xin* functions as a noun (virtue): "First, belief: to believe in the Master of Heaven" (*yi xin, xin tianzhu* 一信。信天主).[19]

One may notice in this text on the one hand the preferential use of transliterations, even for terms such as Apostles or *Symbolum*, and on the other hand that *xin* 信 seems settled as term for "believe" or "faith" in its different meanings.

One finds the same expression in various works from the 1610s that discuss the Creed. Alfonso Vagnone S.J.'s 王豐肅 (1568–1640) *Jiaoyao jielüe* 教要解略 (Explanatory Summary of the Essentials of the Teaching) (1615) is a direct explanation of *Tianzhu jiaoyao* (*Shengjing yuelu*) (to which he may have contributed) and contains the same vocabulary for the Creed: 十二亞玻斯多羅性薄錄解略.[20] The explanation of the *Xing-bo-lu* 性薄錄 (Symbolum) is exactly the same as in the above-mentioned work. It is followed by an explanation of *xin* 信:

> Faith is the door to the holy teaching, the root of all goodness. Therefore, the holy scripture says that a person who wants to convert to the Master of Heaven necessarily has to start from faith. The facts and principles of the Master of Heaven surpass all principles; they are extremely profound and extremely subtle. Even if one is most intelligent and most clear-minded, what one knows is still limited, and one is not capable of thoroughly investigating its essence. Therefore, everyone who wants to enter the teaching cannot but take the correct transmission of the Master of Heaven as substantial evidence and honestly believe in it.

19 *Tianzhu jiaoyao*, 11a; *CCT BAV (1)*, vol. 24, 541; *Shengjing yuelu*, *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 109.
20 *Jiaoyao jielüe*, *shang juan*, 17b–18a; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 1, 57; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 178–179.

> 信者。聖教之門。眾善之根。故聖經言人欲歸依　天主者。必須從信入也。天主事理。超越眾理之上。極其玄深。極其微渺。人即至聰至明。而所知有限。不能窮究其精【。】故凡入教者不得不以天主之正傳為其實據而篤信焉。

And in the commentary at the beginning of the first article one finds the following explanation:

> 我信全能者。
>
> I believe in [God] the [Father] almighty.
>
> 信者。絕無疑惑而決意傾慕之也。
>
> To believe is to be without any doubt and to admire it with determination.

It must be noticed that the formulation of the terms included in these works changed little over the time and the wording was already settled relatively early.[21] Yet it can also be observed that the title of the Creed is given in transliteration (the equivalent of *Symbolum*). The term *Xinjing* 信經 is not yet used as its title (at the beginning of the Creed), though the term appears in three notes elsewhere in the text when referring to the Creed.[22] The use of *jing* in combination with *xin* can be compared to other titles such as *Tianzhujing* 天主經 (Our Father) or *Shenghaojing* 聖號經 (Sign of the Cross). It appears to be an effort to attribute to these texts a status in the Chinese textual tradition, underscoring not only the classical but also the sustainable and unchangeable character.

Another early work is Diego de Pantoja S.J.'s 龐迪我 (1571–1618) *Pangzi yiquan* 龐子遺詮 (Annotations Left Behind by Master Pang). It is in fact an explanation of the Creed. In this work, the author again refers to the Creed as the Apostles' *Symbolum*, a transliteration which he also uses as subtitle to the treatise.[23]

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21 *HCC*, 610.

22 *Jiaoyao jielüe, shang juan*, 44a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 178–179, 211 (explanation of the Trinity 天主一體三位論); *shang juan*, 49a, vol. 1, 222 (explanation of the Sacraments: 撒格辣孟多解畧); *xia juan*, 26a, vol. 1, 291 (explanation of the theological virtue of faith 信).

23 *Pangzi yiquan*, *juan* 1, 1a; ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 82b; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 3. *Pangzi xinjing yiquan* 龐子信經遺詮: alternative title mentioned in copies such as BnF, Chinois 6854 (reprint at Jingjiao tang 景教堂 (Church of the Luminous Teaching) in Qingzhang 清漳 = Zhangzhou 漳州, dated 1630s/1640s).

> *Symbolum* is in translation "composed together." When the apostles were about to disperse in all directions to spread the teaching, they first put the twelve most important issues concerning the Master of Heaven in scripture. Everyone who follows the teaching with a true heart should sincerely believe [in them]. Therefore, the one chapter of the *Symbolum* is divided into twelve sections, with each section corresponding to one Apostle.
>
> 性薄錄譯言共具也、亞玻斯多羅將散四方敷教、先以天主最要者十二端掇於經中、凡真心從教者所當誠信、故性薄錄一章、分十二節、每節應一亞玻斯多羅。[24]

This is the first time an author mentions that the creed is put into scripture or text (*jing* 經). In addition, in his explanation of "I believe" (*quan wo xin* 詮我信), de Pantoja points out that belief is born from considering a matter true and solid (*zhen shi* 真實) without having seen it. This link between believing and not-seeing is one of the core explanations to be found in the missionaries' texts. De Pantoja uses various illustrations to explain the different aspects of this link, including believing what sages wrote in the classics (without having seen these events of ancient times) or believing that one's parents are indeed one's parents (without remembering that one has seen it).[25] Quoting St. Augustin, he also compares belief to the foundation of a house (*ji zhi* 基址) for the theological virtues, which is completed with the sacraments as tools.[26]

Still another work from the same time period is João da Rocha S.J.'s 羅儒望 (1565–1623) *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng* 天主聖教啓蒙 (Instruction for Children about the Holy Teaching of the Master of Heaven) (1619), which he adapted from Marcos Jorge S.J.'s (1524–1571) *Doutrina Christa ordenada a maneira de Dialogo para ensinar os meninos* (1561, 1566). The latter was a very popular book, written in question-answer style, and aimed at children. This style is different from the previous dialogues, because here the teacher raises the question and the student gives the correct answer, a pedagogical method to facilitate memorization. It was translated in several languages, including Japanese. The text includes an explanation of the "Twelve Articles of the Creed" (entitled *shengxin shi'er jie* 聖信十二節)[27] and the "Fourteen Articles" (entitled *xinde*

24 *Pangzi yiquan*, *juan* 1, 7a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 15.
25 *Pangzi yiquan*, *juan* 1, 7a–8a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 15–17.
26 *Pangzi yiquan*, *juan* 1, 2a–b; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 5–6.
27 *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng*, 20bff.; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 1, 43b; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 416ff.

*shisi tiao* 信德十四條).[28] The latter refers to the fourteen articles of faith (according to Thomas Aquinas),[29] dividing them into seven articles concerning the divinity and seven articles concerning the humanity of Jesus Christ. In these expressions, the word *xin* refers to both the act of believing (*fides qua creditur*) and to what is believed (*fides quae creditur*).

In this work, the transliterations for *Symbolum* or "Apostle" are not used, although many other transliterations are. The translation is quite literal.[30]

師　聖信十二節。是那一個做的。
學　是十二宗徒序列的。
師　他們序列聖信十二節。為甚麽。
學　要我們誠信的緊要事情。
師　聖信是甚麽。
學　是　天主賜與我們亞尼瑪的恩。即能佑人。使他堅心定意。實實信阨格勒西亞説的。真是　天主顯示的事情。
師　我們該信的。是甚麽事情。
學　凡是聖阨格勒西亞。教我們信的。和那聖信十二節的事情。都是第一等極該信的。所以眾基利斯當。該曉得誦念他。

M.: Which one made the twelve articles of the Holy Creed?
D.: The twelve apostles arranged them.
M.: Why did they arrange the twelve articles of the Holy Creed?
D.: As the essential matters that we should sincerely believe.
M.: What is the Holy Creed?
D.: It is a favor that God put in our soul (*anima* 亞尼瑪), it is to enable that humans would with a firm heart and determinate intension solidly believe what the Church (*ecclesia* 阨格勒西亞) tells [us] to be the matters truly revealed by God.
M.: And what are the matters we should believe?
D.: In general, what the Holy Church (*ecclesia*) proposes to us to believe, and the matters of the twelve articles of this Holy Creed are all the primary [things] we should believe. Therefore, all Christians (*ji-li-si dang* 基利斯當) should understand and recite them.

28 *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng*, 25aff; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 425ff.
29 In *Summa theologiae*, Second Part of the Second Part (Secunda Secundæ Partis), question 1, article 8. Thomas Aquinas divides the object of Christian faith into fourteen articles.
30 *Tianzhu shengjiao qimeng*, 21a–22a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 417–419.

M.: Quem fez o Credo?
D.: Os Apostolos
M.: Pera que?
D.: Pera nos informar na Fè
M.: Que cousa he Fè ?
D.: He hum dô[m] de Deos na alma. Cô[mo] o qual cremos firme, & catholicamente tudo o que Deos nos tê[m] revelado, segundo a santa Madre Igreja nos lo insina.
M.: E que he o que somos obrigados a crer ?
D.: Tudo o que a Igreja Catholica nos propõe pera crer de Fè, especialmente os Artigos da Fè que se contem no Credo, o qual todo Chistão he obrigado a saber.[31]

This explanation clearly states the ecclesiastical dimension of what Christians need to believe.

It is unclear when the name for Creed as *Xinjing* 信經 was settled. Occasionally, Christians refer to it with that term (see below under Yang Tingyun). One finds the term as a title in various later versions of *Tianzhu jiaoyao* 天主教要, possibly associated with Francisco Furtado S.J. 傅汎際 (1589–1653) and dating from the 1640s.[32]

> The Creed is called in the original language "*Symbolum*"; in translation this is "composed together." When Jesus was on earth, he chose twelve apostles, and sent them in all directions to spread the teaching. Before the apostles dispersed, they in common recorded the twelve most important matters concerning the Master of Heaven, so that all the followers of the holy teaching would know and sincerely believe in them.
>
> 信經原文曰性薄羅。譯言共具也。盖耶穌在世。擇十二宗徒。使之走四方布教。宗徒未散時。公同具錄天主事情十二要端。俾凡從聖教者。知而誠信之。

31 Marcos Jorge, *Doutrina Christam de padre Marcos Jorge da companhia de Jesu representada por Imagens*, Augsburg (Augustae Vindelicorum): Mang, 1616, 47; Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, http://www.mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11291029-4 (accessed 22 October 2020).

32 *Tianzhu jiaoyao*, 4b; ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 57a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 1, 316; Dudink 2002, 44ff.

Another contemporary example of its use is *Tianzhu shengjiao rumen wenda* 天主聖教入門問答 (Questions and Answers for Entering the Holy Teaching of the Master of Heaven) (1642) by Juan García O.P. 施若翰 (*c.*1605–1665), a *Doctrina Christiana* in question-answer style.[33]

The term seems to have become fully accepted in the Early Qing period. An example is Ferdinand Verbiest S.J.'s 南懷仁 (1623–1688) *Jiaoyao xulun* 教要序論 (Introductory Discussion of the Essentials of the Teaching) (1670):[34]

> Creed
> (…) Therefore what the Master of Heaven says is all true and solid, without error and without cheating. We all should completely believe it, and belief will have merit, no belief sin.
>
> 信經
> (…) 蓋天主所言皆真實。無差訛。無欺誑。吾人皆宜切信，信有功，不信有罪。

This overview of the ways in which the concepts of Christian belief and faith were presented by missionaries to the Chinese shows that not only the vocabulary was settled early, but also that these notions were presented in a relatively consistent way. Missionaries, in interaction with Chinese scholars, early on opted for the word *xin*. This choice facilitated the process of reception but also made it more complex. Their common choices laid the foundation for Chinese terms and concepts that are still used by the Chinese Christian communities today.

## 3 Reception

How did Chinese scholars receive these ideas? *Xin*'s reception by Chinese scholars was multilayered, not only with regard to the content but also to the act of believing. This appears from the tension between believing and doubting, which scholars often explained in metaphorical ways. This section gives an overview of the various ways in which Chinese Christians dealt with questions related to *xin*.

33 *Tianzhu shengjiao rumen wenda*, 48a; ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 173.3; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 463.
34 *Jiaoyao xulun*, 19b–20a; BnF, Chinois 6972; *CCT BnF*, vol. 24, 56–57.

### 3.1 *Multilayered Meaning of What Is Not Believed*

One may begin the reception history with the *Daiyi pian* 代疑篇 (Treatise on Replacing Doubt) by Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (Michael (Migezi 彌格子)) (1562–1627; *jinshi* 1592). It was published in 1621 after the effects of the Nanjing incident (1616–1617) faded. This incident had caused the exile of several missionaries and the gathering of others in Yang Tingyun's house in Hangzhou. In the years after the incident, missionaries kept a low profile and no new books were printed. With *Daiyi pian*, Yang Tingyun took the lead in restarting publications. As mentioned earlier, the work's original title was *Zhengxin pian* 徵信篇 or *Zhengxin lun* 徵信論 (Treatise on Proving Belief). The antonyms "doubt" (in "replacing doubt") and "belief" (in "proving belief") represent the work's content well. The whole book is constructed as a dialogue. In the introductory general discussion (*Daiyi pian zonglun* 代疑篇總論), Yang Tingyun explains how an important Confucian *literatus* (*da ru* 大儒) approached the retired scholar Michael (Mi-ge *jushi* 彌格居士), which is the Christian name of Yang himself, with a number of doubts about ideas brought by the Western scholars or literati (*xishi* 西士 or *xiru* 西儒). In 24 points, this *literatus* expresses that he does not yet believe. In the general discussion, Yang Tingyun lists these points (concluding every time with "… is what I do not yet believe," *weixin ye* 未信也). These 24 topics are next discussed in the 24 chapters of *Daiyi pian*, each chapter starting with ("Answering the item of …," *Da … tiao* 答。。。條).

The topics that the *literatus* does not yet believe and to which Yang provides answers give a good impression of *xin*'s wide variety of meanings, in the sense of what is (not) believed:[35]

1. 造化萬物一歸主者之作用

   The creation of all things completely goes back to the effort of a Master.

2. 生死賞罰，惟係一主，百神不得叅其權

   Life and death, rewards and punishment, solely belong to one Master, and the hundred deities do not get to share his power.

35 *Daiyi pian*, *wx*, 495–498 (*Zonglun*), 491–494 (table of contents).

3. 有天堂，有地獄，更無人畜鬼趣輪迴

   There is a heaven and a hell, and there is no reincarnation as human, animal, or ghost.

4. 物性不同人性，人性不同天主性

   The nature of things is different from human nature, and human nature is different from the nature of the Master of Heaven.

5. 戒殺放生，釋氏上善，西教不斷腥味，何云持齋

   To forbid killing and to release living animals is the highest good for the Buddhists; but if the Western teaching does not cut off the taste of meat and fish, how can they say that they observe fasting.

6. 佛由西來，歐邏巴既在極西，必所親歷，獨昌言無佛

   Buddhism came from the west and Europe is in the far west, [so the missionaries] must have personally passed through it; how do they proclaim that there was no Buddha.

7. 既説人性以上，所言報應反涉粗迹

   When talking about what is above human nature, what has been said about retribution is coarse and superficial.

8. 西國義理書籍，有萬部之多，若非重復，恐多偽造

   There are more than ten thousand books about Western righteousness and principles, but if they are not repetitious then I am afraid many are forged.

9. 地四面皆人 [所] 居，天有多層，重重皆可測量

   The earth is in all directions inhabited by humans, and heaven consists of many layers, which all can be surveyed and measured one by one.

10. 九萬里程途，涉海三年始到

[The Western scholars] only arrived after a travel of ninety thousand *li*, which lasted three years.

11. 從來衣食資給本邦，不受此中供養

So far, their clothing and food have been provided by their home country and they do not receive the supplies from here.

12. 人倫有五，止守朋友一倫，盡廢其四

There are five human relationships, so if one only observes the relationship among friends, one entirely rejects the other four.

13. 禮惟天子祭天，今日日行彌撒禮，非僭即瀆

Concerning rituals, only the Son of Heaven offers to Heaven; now [these Western scholars] daily perform the ritual of mass: if this is not [considered] overstepping one's authority, then it is a show of disrespect.

14. 謂窘難益德，遠於人情

Saying that hardships and difficulties can increase virtue is remote from human feelings.

15. 疑西教者籍籍，果盡無稽，可置勿問[36]

Since the matters of the Western learning to be doubted are so numerous, it can be [considered] totally unfounded and can be put aside without [further] questioning.

16. 天主有形有聲

The Master of Heaven has a form and a voice.

36 "Zonglun" has *jian* 間 instead of *wen* 問 (table of contents): *Daiyi pian*, *WX*, 497 and 493.

17. 天主有三位一體，降生係第二位費略

    The Master of Heaven has three persons in one body and the one who descended and was born is the second *Filius*.

18. 降孕為人，生於瑪利亞之童身

    He descended and was born from the virgin body of Mary.

19. 被釘而死，因以十字架為教

    Since he died after being nailed, they take the cross as teaching.

20. 耶穌疑至人神人，未必是天

    Concerning Jesus, one doubts that he is a perfect person or a divine person; he is not necessarily the [Master of] Heaven.

21. 耶穌為公教，聖神相通功

    Jesus made the universal teaching and the mutual communication of merit among saints and divine persons.

22. 遵其教者罪過得消除

    The sins of those who obey their teaching can be dispelled.

23. 命終時解罪，獲大利益

    The absolution of sins at the moment of death brings great benefit.

24. 十字架威力甚大，萬魔當之，立見消隕

    The power of the cross is very great, so that ten thousand demons who oppose it will be immediately destroyed.

At the end of his list, the Confucian *literatus* states that he does not want to be too narrow-minded or conservative, but what *literati* value is the fathoming of principles (*qiongli* 窮理) and a believing (or trustful) mind-and-heart (*xinxin* 信心). Therefore, if the words become reasonable (*cheng li* 成理) and

not absurd or with strained interpretation, they will be believed and borne out by evidence (*xin er you zheng* 信而有徵).[37]

Yang Tingyun himself does not explicitly discuss the notion of *xin* in this work, but the whole selection of topics already shows the term's multilayered meaning in relation to what is or is not believed (*fides quae creditur*). One can divide the topics into at least three categories, which partially correspond to what was earlier mentioned about the different types of catechisms and the corresponding theologies. The first series includes topics such as the creation of the world by one God, life and death, rewards and punishment, heaven and hell, human nature, reincarnation, and fasting (nos. 1–7). These correspond to the topics (of natural theology) that were discussed in a *Catechismus* such as *Tianzhu shiyi* and that can be accepted through rational reasoning. Next are topics related to the missionaries: their travels, lifestyle, finances, and chastity (nos. 8–15).[38] Noteworthy herein is the topic of the Eucharist, which could be a threat to the imperial authority (no. 13). Also noteworthy is the topic of their books: an entire library of new books had just arrived in Macao in 1619 (no. 8). This second series of topics is more related to specific events, practices, or habits, and not directly to belief systems. Finally, there is a whole series of topics (nos. 16–24, which are all discussed in the *xia juan* 下卷) that can be related to the Christian faith in the strict sense of the word (revealed theology) and that correspond to the Creed as included in a *Doctrina Christiana* such as *Tianzhu jiaoyao*. In his "General Discussion," Yang Tingyun makes explicit reference to the Creed's twelve articles (*Xijing shier xin* 西經十二信),[39] and again explicitly quotes the Creed in the main text: *Xingbolu zhi shier xin* 性薄錄之十二信 (in the chapter on human nature)[40] and as *Xinjing* 信經 (in the chapter on the Trinity), which is so far the first reference to this term found.[41] The expression *shier xin* 十二信 is noteworthy because *xin* here functions as a countable noun (and not as a mass noun), while still referring to what should be believed. The division between topics of belief belonging to what is called natural theology and what is called revealed theology, by arranging the latter in *xia juan*, is not an arbitrary choice. At the beginning of this *xia juan*, Yang Tingyun adopts the distinction between *xingjiao* 性教 ("natural teaching") and *enjiao*

37 *Daiyi pian*, *wx*, 498.

38 Some of these topics are also discussed in the last chapter of *Tianzhu shiyi* (on Western customs, chastity, etc.).

39 *Daiyi pian*, *wx*, 499.

40 *Daiyi pian*, *wx*, 523.

41 *Daiyi pian*, *wx*, 596.

恩教 ("teaching by grace").[42] *Xingjiao* corresponds to the period of the three dynasties and is explained by the concept of *liangzhi* 良知, the innate capacity to know as mentioned in *Mencius* and developed by Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and others; *enjiao* corresponds to God's personal revelation in becoming man in Jesus Christ.

### 3.2 *Belief Explained in the Light of Classical Texts*

If Yang Tingyun hardly discussed the notion of *xin*, other scholars did so more extensively. One way of receiving the concept was to explain it on the basis of Chinese classical texts. The advantage of Yang Tingyun's *Daiyi pian* is its accompaniment by prefaces by two important Christian scholars, Philippe Wang Zheng 王徵 (1571–1644; *jinshi* 1622) and Leo Li Zhizao 李之藻 (Liang'an zi 涼庵子) (1571–1630; *jinshi* 1598), discussing *xin*. Wang Zheng and possibly Li Zhizao as well, wrote their prefaces when the work still carried the provisional title of *Zhengxin pian* 徵信篇 or *Zhengxin lun* 徵信論 (Treatise on Proving Belief). Wang Zheng begins his preface[43] with a quotation of the *Lunyu* in which *xin* takes an essential place:

> 孔子曰:「人而無信，不知其可也。」
>
> The Master said: "To be a human without *xin*, I do not know how one can get on."[44]

*Xin*'s meaning in this sentence is variously interpreted in translation as being trustworthy or truthfulness, while Wang Zheng uses it as introduction to the topic of belief. He explains the quotation as follows:

> Every time [Confucius] says "I do not know," these are always words of deeply rejecting it, it is not just that one would not be able to do it. This is because when the principles of matters appear before you, one can reach them through belief, and only then is there approval in one's mind-and-heart, and when one follows the approval in the

42 *Daiyi pian*, *WX*, 584–586; elsewhere he also uses the term *chongjiao* 寵教, see Standaert 1988, 129–130; Zürcher 1994, 47ff.

43 *Daiyi pian*, *WX*, 483–489.

44 *Lunyu* 11, 22; "I do not know how a man without truthfulness is to get on" (Legge 1992, 153); "I do not see how a man can be acceptable who is untrustworthy in word" (Lau 2000, 17); "I am not sure that anyone who does not make good on their word (*xin* 信) is viable as a person" (Ames & Rosemont 1998, 81).

> mind-and-heart, only then is one able to attend to it in person. [For instance] when one believes that one can eat one's fill with beans and grain, one will surely eat them; when one believes that one can warm oneself with cloth and silk, one will surely wear them as clothes; when one believes that water and fire are difficult to cross, and that the poisonous violet and kudzu flowers may harm one's life, one will surely avoid them. The accomplishment of no matter has ever not started from following belief.
>
> 凡言不知，皆深絕之之辭，非止不可行而已。蓋事理見前，由信得及，然後有心肯，由心肯從，然後能身赴。信菽粟可飽，自必食；信布帛可溫，自必衣；信水火難蹈，堇葛傷生，自必避。萬事成立，未有不從信始。

With the sequence belief (*xin* 信), mind-and-heart (*xin* 心), and body (*shen* 身), this explanation links belief to practice, as is clearly illustrated by examples such as eating and clothing. Wang Zheng next applies these principles to Western Learning, explicitly quoting the three theological virtues and the Creed from the *Tianzhu jiaoyao*:

> Therefore, among the three virtues oriented towards the Master of Heaven in Western Learning, belief is the first. The twelve apostles each expressed what they believed and made the *Symbolum*, and sincerely valued it.
>
> 故西學向天主三德，信為之首。十二宗徒各表所信，為性薄錄，誠重之矣。

By using the metaphors of root and foundation, which also appear in the earlier mentioned texts of presentation, and by adopting a reference to another classical text, the *Liji* 禮記, Wang Zheng develops the theme of the importance of *xin*. This, Wang argues, is also why Michael Yang Tingyun wrote his treatise.

> For a tree to flourish, it relies for its life on its roots; and for a room to become lofty and bright, one has to start construction with its foundation. When the root is pulled away or the foundation is destroyed, even if there is a gardener or carpenter, they will not be successful. Therefore, it is said [in the *Book of Rites*]: "Although teachers do not belong to the five degrees of mourning, if the five degrees cannot get [a teacher], they cannot be

> upheld."[45] Belief does not belong to the five constant relations,[46] but if they cannot get [belief], they cannot be realized. Regarding the case of a scholar aspiring to be a saint and to be [with] heaven,[47] in order to settle down and establish his life, it has never been that he did not start from following belief. This is why Western *literati* candidly lead the way and first opened the gate of belief and Master Michael inherited their ideas and composed a *Treatise Proving Belief* in 24 chapters; there is taste in these words.
>
> 木之發榮，托命在根；室之嵬煥，造端在基。根拔而基壞，雖有場師、大匠不能成功。故曰:師無當於五服，五服不得，則不親；信無當於五常，五常不得，則不舉。學者欲希聖希天為安身立命之事，未有不從信入。此西儒惓惓接引，首闢信門，而彌格子承其意，作《徵信論》二十有四篇；有味乎言之矣。

Wang Zheng next praises Yang for his work, stating that "literati are good at doubting and Michael good at arguing" (*ruzhe shan yi, Mige shan bian* 儒者善疑，彌格善辨), and that his work has wiped out many of the questions that ordinary people felt unresolved. He continues by referring to the topic of believing without having seen, that was earlier mentioned in the *Tianzhu shiyi*. While this topic is explicitly attributed to the Western scholars, Wang Zheng gives other examples from the Chinese classics:

> However, the Western scholars have a saying that for the believer it is the heart-and-mind that is truly passionate, it does not need to see in order to see and does not need to hear in order to hear; if one waits for seeing and hearing and only then believes, then the belief is still very shallow. If one believes that in eastern Lu there is Confucius, but [still] without having seen the saint, one denies that he can be a saint, then when one has seen Confucius, belief still will be useless. If one believes that in Chang'an there is the Son of Heaven, why should one necessarily in person go to the court. When one has met the most revered and respected, one does

45 師無當於五服，五服弗得不親: "A teacher has no special relation (in commentaries *dang = zhu* 主; be in charge of) to the five degrees of mourning; but without his help they cannot be worn as they ought to be." *Liji*, "Xueji" 學記, trans. by Legge 1885, 90–91.

46 Those between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brothers, friend and friend.

47 Cf. Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, *Tongshu* 通書, "Zhixue": 志學: 聖希天，賢希聖，士希賢。C-texts, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=941881 (accessed 20 October 2020).

> not need not to talk about belief. This is the explanation of the word *xin* by western countries.
>
> 抑西士又言，信者心之真嗜，非必見見，非必聞聞，待見待聞而後信，其信猶淺淺者。信東魯有尼父，未見聖如弗克聖；既見尼父，信亦無所用矣。信長安有天子，豈必身至闕廷？既與至尊接，信又不必言矣。此西國「信」字之詮解。

In this paragraph, Wang Zheng applies believing without seeing to something that one can possibly see, while the concept can also be applied to something that one cannot or no longer see (such as creation, or the life of Jesus). To conclude, Wang Zheng elaborates the topic of "dead" and "living" belief by referring again explicitly and implicitly to *Lunyu*:

> And they also state that there is dead belief and living belief. For those with living belief, conduct and explanation happen uniformly and understanding and enjoyment happen at the same time. Confucius said: "With belief he completes it."[48] The principle of well-done from the beginning till end, Qidiao's answer, and the smiling at Wucheng[49] sufficiently match this. Dead belief on the contrary is just a floating longing, its intention is not ardent, its energy not focused, its investigation surely will be withered herein. Regarding the aspiration "to become a saint and heaven," how can it then be attained? I dare and wrote down what I heard, in order to complement what was not complete by Master Michael; I do not know whether it matches or not. That is the preface.
>
> 而又云：有死信，有活信。活信者行解齊到，知與樂好一時都有。孔云：「信以成之」。成始成終之理，漆雕之吾斯，武城之莞爾，足以當之。死信則浮慕而已，衷不熱，力不注，究必中槁焉。於以希聖希天，奚繇至哉？敢並述所聞，以足彌格子之未備，不知有當否。是為序。

48 *Lunyu* XV, 18. "He completes it with sincerity" (Legge 1992, 299); "by being trustworthy [he] brings it to completion" (Lau 2000, 153); "consummating it in making good on one's word (*xin* 信)" (Ames & Rosemont 1998, 188).

49 Allusions to: "The Master was wishing Qidiao Kai to enter on official employment. He replied: 'I am not yet able to rest in the assurance of this.' The Master was pleased" (子使漆雕開仕。對曰：「吾斯之未能信。」子說) (*Lunyu* VI, 5 (6), trans. by Legge 1992, 174). "The Master having come to Wucheng, heard there the sound of stringed instruments and singing. Well pleased and smiling, he said: 'Why use an ox-knife to kill a fowl'" (子之武城，聞弦歌之聲。夫子莞爾而笑，曰：「割雞焉用牛刀？」) (*Lunyu* XVII, 4, trans. by Legge 1992, 319).

The quotation from the *Lunyu* to explain "living belief" again links belief to practice and also to emotions. This paragraph confirms how Wang Zheng, in explaining the concept of *xin*, combines explanations that are often associated with a Christian or Confucian tradition, and refers to the textual tradition of both traditions. One may assume that *xin* in the quotations from *Lunyu* foremost has the anthropological meaning of trustworthiness, to which Wang Zheng gives the new interpretation of belief. Yet this belief is always related to concrete practice.

### 3.3 *The Relationship between Belief and Doubt*

There were other ways of receiving and discussing the notion of *xin*. While Wang Zheng focuses his preface on belief, Li Zhizao focuses his[50] on its antonym doubt, or better on the relationship between belief *xin* 信 and doubt *yi* 疑, a theme that was present in the two variant titles of Yang Tingyun's work. Li Zhizao also begins his preface with a quotation referring to a classical text, the *Zhongyong* 中庸:

> 聖人之道，無疑鬼神，斯不惑後聖。
>
> In the way of the sages, one has no doubts even before the spirits, and one has no misgivings even if later sages arise.[51]

This sentence is part of a much larger paragraph, which starts with a statement of Confucius about the rituals of Xia, Yin, and Zhou. This text's author argues that the sovereigns who keep them in mind will have few errors under their government. Yet he continues as follows: "However excellent may have been the regulations of those of former times, they cannot be attested. Not being attested, they cannot be believed, and not being believed, the people would not follow them" (上焉者雖善無徵，無徵不信，不信民弗從).[52] This sentence explains why Li Zhizao may have chosen the quote, since the passage refers to *zheng* 徵 and *xin* 信, which were part of the original title of Yang Tingyun's work. The *Zhongyong* passage continues explaining that the sovereign's way is rooted in himself, with attestation by the people, examination

50 *Daiyi pian*, *WX*, 471–482.

51 *Zhongyong* 27, 29; C-texts, https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong?searchu=%E8%81%96%E4%BA%BA%E4%B9%8B%E9%81%93&searchmode=showall#result, (accessed 20 October 2020).

52 *Zhongyong* 29; transl. Legge 1992, 425.

of his conduct by mirroring it with the ancient sovereigns, and confrontation with heaven and earth.

> He presents himself with [his institutions and regulations] before spiritual beings, and no doubts about them arise. He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, and has no misgivings. His presenting himself [with his institutions] before spiritual beings, without any doubts arising about them, shows that he knows Heaven. His being prepared, without any misgivings, to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, shows that he knows men.
>
> 質諸鬼神而無疑，百世以俟聖人而不惑。質諸鬼神而無疑，知天也；百世以俟聖人而不惑，知人也。[53]

This background shows that Li Zhizao's quotation needs to be understood in the connotation that his quotation had for scholars who knew these texts by heart.

Li Zhizao explains the quote by stressing the importance of a believing mind-and-heart and by putting doubt into perspective. For the latter he does so by also quoting *Shiji* 史記:

> If a believing mind-and-heart is not reached, then "doubt about matters will not lead to fame and doubt about action will not lead to success."[54] I have not yet heard about sharing with him the way and enter.
>
> 若信心不及，則「疑事無名，疑行無功。」未聞與道有入。

Yet Li Zhizao does not attribute any strong negative connotation to doubt in itself, and Michael Yang Tingyun is an example of someone who practices doubt:

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53 *Zhongyong* 29; transl. Legge 1992, 426; C-texts, https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong?searchu=%E8%B3%AA%E8%AB%B8%E9%AC%BC%E7%A5%9E&searchmode=showall#result (accessed 20 October 2020).

54 *Shiji* 史記, *juan* 68:「疑行無名，疑事無功。」 C-texts, https://ctext.org/shiji/shang-jun-lie-zhuan?searchu=%E7%96%91%E8%A1%8C%E7%84%A1%E5%90%8D&searchmode=showall#result (accessed 20 October 2020).

> Yet Master Michael is hurriedly hoping that people doubt and is worried that people do not doubt, and he replaces the doubt that he expresses for them. What is the basis for what he says? Henceforth, when the way is within reach to people, it is still not in its utmost reaches.[55] It is not that the sage is at peace in not knowing and not being able, and that he leaves aside what can be known and can be realized. It is only that he daily works hard in order to seek knowledge until he reaches the end of knowledge; therefore, he does not dare to relax one breath.
>
> 而彌格子急急望人疑，又恐人不疑，而代為之疑。遵何說哉？盖道之近人者，非其至也。非聖人安於不知不能，而遺其可知可能。惟日孳孳以求知，至知終；故一息不敢少懈也。

In Li Zhizao's eyes, Yang Tingyun's doubt is part of a process that is aimed at knowledge. Further in his preface, Li Zhizao maintains the positive role of doubting, but considers belief as the end:

> Therefore to hope that people search to doubt and search to debate it, and in common doubt and in common debate, how would one not be in a hurry about it! It starts with having doubt and ends with settling belief. Once there is this one belief, one does not doubt again.
>
> 以此望人求疑求辨，共疑共辨，安得不急急哉！始乎有疑，終乎定信。自是一信之後，不復再疑。

This preface adds a new dimension to the concept of *xin*: Li Zhizao views it not just as an opposition between doubt and firm belief, but rather as a process or method of which doubt is an essential part.

These prefaces refer to the relationship between belief and doubt/non-belief, a relationship that appears not only in the structure of Yang Tingyun's work, i.e., a dialogue between someone who expresses his non-belief (or not-yet-belief) and a master who expresses his belief, but also in the alternative titles, between "proving belief" and "replacing doubt." One may point

55 Cf. *Zhongyong* 12: "Yet in its utmost reaches, there is that which even the sage does not know … there is that which even the sage is not able to carry into practice there" (及其至也，雖聖人亦有所不知焉 … 及其至也，雖聖人亦有所不能焉), trans. Legge 1992, 392.C-texts,https://ctext.org/liji/zhong-yong?searchu=%E5%8F%8A%E5%85%B6%E8%87%B3&searchmode=showall#result (accessed 20 October 2020).

out that the relationship between both terms belongs to an issue about *xin* in the Neo-Confucian anthropology. *Xin* belongs to the five cardinal virtues (*wu chang* 五常: *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, *zhi* 智, *xin* 信) but not to the four sprouts (*si duan* 四端: *ren* 仁, *yi* 義, *li* 禮, *zhi* 智, with each a corresponding "passion": compassion, shame, deference, and discerning right and wrong). In a discussion between Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the question is raised why *xin* is not included in the four sprouts and why it does not have a corresponding passion. As Angus Graham explains, Cheng Yi argues that there is no passion corresponding to *xin* because as long as we have a principle inside us there is no belief in it; it is only when we doubt one alternative that we come to believe in the other. In the same way, in the opinion of Cheng Yi, as long as I take it for granted that I am facing East there is no consciousness of believing that "that is East"; it is only when doubt arises that I come to disbelieve it and to believe that "that is West": "It is only because there is disbelief that there is the word 'belief'" (*wei you bu xin, gu you 'xin' zi* 為有不信，故有「信」字).[56] This background explains the value scholars such as Li Zhizao, Wang Zheng, or Yang Tingyun give to doubt or disbelief.

### 3.4 *Belief as a Foundation*

Another way in which Chinese Christian scholars explain *xin* is the use of metaphors. As mentioned earlier, *xin* is one of the key issues in *Daiyi pian*, but the meaning or use of *xin* itself is not a topic in that work. In Yang Tingyun's *Daiyi xubian* 代疑續篇 (Sequel to the Treatise on Replacing Doubt) (1635), however, one chapter is more explicitly related to *xin*. The chapter is entitled *Ding ji* 定基 (Establishing a Foundation).[57] In it, the author develops for *xin* the metaphor of a house foundation (alongside the metaphor of plant roots), similarly to Wang Zheng's preface but more extensively. His major point is that "the foundation of the heavenly studies needs to be sought in belief" (*tianxue zhi ji, qiu duan yu xin* 天學之基，求端於信). Just as in Wang Zheng's preface, Yang refers to the *Lunyu* quotation ("To be a human without *xin*, I do not know how one can get on"), the theological virtues, which put *xin* as the foundation, and the twelve articles in the Apostles' Creed to illustrate this.

56 Graham 1958, 54–55; *Henan Chengshi yishu* 河南程氏遺書, *juan* 18; see also *juan* 15 and 22 *shang*. C-texts, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=774488 (accessed 20 October 2020).

57 *Daiyi xubian*, *juan shang*, 26b–29b; BnF, Chinois 7111; *CCT BnF*, vol. 6, 412–418.

> This being the case, why is belief so important? Because the way of humans is close by and easy to see, is apparent and obvious, therefore one need not to worry about not believing. Only in their relationship to the way of the Master of Heaven are humans spontaneously unable to believe; it is not easy to believe but one cannot but believe. Therefore the teaching of the western teachers earnestly puts belief first.
>
> 若是乎信之為重者何？蓋人道近而易見，顯而著明，不患不信。惟人於天主之道，自不能信，不易信，而又不可不信也。故西師之教，諄諄以信為先。

Thus, Yang here primarily interprets *xin* not as an anthropological attitude of trust between humans, but as the belief of humans in heavenly matters. In the following paragraphs, he answers three questions: why humans are unable to believe, why it is not easy to believe, and why one cannot but believe. In his answer to the first question, Yang Tingyun explains that topics such as the great Lord becoming human, suffering, and then returning to heaven were never transmitted before and therefore cannot be adopted all of a sudden. For the third topic, he insists that one cannot but believe in order to realize the way, even combining it with another reference to Confucius, namely his statement that "When I hear the way in the morning, in the evening I would be able to die" (孔子曰:「朝聞道，夕死可矣」). Especially noteworthy is that in his answer to the second question, Yang Tingyun introduces the notion of grace (*e-la-ji-ya* 額辣濟亞):

> But how can human effort realize this [solid belief]; therefore the High Lord necessarily adds his favor and help, this is what the classics call "grace." With each fraction of illumination, one progresses a fraction of insight; first it is because of love for belief that one obtains grace, and subsequently it is through grace that one's belief increases. Every time that I do obtain grace or I do not obtain it, I check it by having love for belief or not have love for belief. Therefore, the completeness of the love for belief of us humans entirely depends on the High Lord providing it. It is not something that we can achieve through our human limited effort; therefore, one says that it is not easy to believe.
>
> 然人力何能，必上主加之寵佑，經所稱「額辣濟亞」者。得一分光照即進一分明悟，始因信愛而獲寵，繼因寵而增信。凡我之獲寵與不獲寵，驗於我之信愛與不信愛而已。蓋吾人信愛之全，悉繇上主畀之，非吾人之微力所能致也，故曰不易信也。

With this explanation, Yang shows how belief is not simply acquired interiorly by one's own effort, but also imparted exteriorly by divine grace. The fact that grace is also mentioned in transliteration shows how this idea is strongly inspired by the Christian tradition. In the final paragraphs of this chapter, Yang Tingyun returns to the theme that "belief is only a matter of making a foundation; by following one's belief, the quintessence progresses in its efforts, and multiplies the layers" (然信僅作基之事，循其信而精進其功，複多階級). He explains that in order to enter the teaching, belief is also the foundation:

> By using this good merit, one accomplishes this virtue of belief; again by relying on the power of this belief, one accomplishes this good amount, and then belief will not be an empty belief but the foundation will never be destroyed, and reaching higher levels will by itself be a necessity.
>
> 用此善功，滿此信德，複藉此信力，完此善量，則信不為空虛之信，而基永無壞，上達自可必矣！

Yang Tingyun also explains the progressive development of belief, which develops accompanied by rituals, i.e., the sacraments:

> For those entering the Teaching of Heaven, if one does not yet believe, one seeks belief, and if one already believes, one seeks deeper belief. One can only get baptized once the foundation is established, and subsequently one will be delivered from sin; in the next step one receives the holy communion, deeper step by step, more refined step by step, one cannot but be fully single-heartedly devoted.
>
> 入天學者，未信求信，已信求深信。築基已就，則始而領洗，繼而解罪，進而領聖體，一節深一節，一步細一步，不可不專心致志。

In the concluding sentences, Yang asks the question of the *Yijing* 易經: "What about *xin*?" (《易》鼎象所詰，「信如何也。」).[58] He answers:

58 *Xiangzhuan* 象傳 to the hexagram Ding 鼎: "How can (the subject of the line) be trusted?" (信如何也), trans. by Legge. C-texts, https://ctext.org/pre-qin-and-han?searchu=%E4%BF%A1%E5%A6%82%E4%BD%95 (accessed 20 October 2020).

> Once the virtue of *xin* is lost, all the virtues are gone. When the foundation of a construction is not stable, the walls will collapse. When a house is inclining, who will really use it? It is already collapsing and it will be too late for regret.
>
> 信德一失，諸德俱喪。築基不堅，而牆垣頹倒。棟宇欹傾，誰實使之？及已顛壓，悔無及矣。

### 3.5 *Belief as a Root*

As already apparent from previous quotations, scholars also used the root of a plant or a tree as a metaphor for belief. This metaphor is developed in one of the conversations between Giulio Aleni 艾儒略 (1582–1649) and the Christians of Quanzhou in 1637, as recorded in Li Jiubiao's 李九標 (?–1646?) *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (Diary of Oral Admonitions) (1630–1640), a work published a few years later than *Daiyi xubian*. This work is an extensive record of missionaries' conversations with converts and interested literati in Fujian selected from the ten-year period of March 13, 1630, to July 4, 1640. Discussing a wide variety of topics, this account gives a unique insight into Christianity as a living religion in early seventeenth-century China. *Xin* is the topic of a conversation that took place in Quanzhou 泉州, on Thursday, February 21, 1637.[59]

> On the twenty-seventh [of the first month] all the friends had gathered. The master told them: "I have long been without instruction. [No doubt] you have made good progress in the work of self-cultivation, but you must not allow yourselves to become arrogant. Compare it with a tree: Once planted it will grow steadily from day to day, without requiring constant attention. But why are some trees unable to grow? Surely because their roots are shallow. If you want to know how deeply a tree is rooted, just look whether its foliage is withering or rich, for what it is within is bound to be manifested without, and by looking at the outside you can check what is inside. My dear Sirs, for years you have accepted the teaching, and you are aware of your own progress. In order to gauge the intensity of your motivation, you just have to discover how deeply your belief is rooted."

59 *Kouduo richao* VII.1 (1b–2a); ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 81; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, 458–459; Zürcher 2007, vol. 1, 525. In the first month of the tenth year [of Chongzhen], the *dingchou* 丁丑 year, in spring, Master Ai again went to Wenling 溫陵 (= Quanzhou), coming from Puyang 莆陽 (= Putian in Xinghua Prefecture). I have slightly adapted Zürcher's translation.

廿有七日，諸友畢會。先生謂衆曰：「違教多時。諸子薰脩精進，毋容贅矣。譬之木焉、栽植不嘗見，亦日加長矣。然有不能加長者曷？必根淺也。夫欲知其根之淺深，視其葉之衰茂。蓋誠中形外，繇外可以證內者，必然之理也。吾子奉教有年，工夫自知循進。然于用功疎切，亦足覘信根之若何耳。」

The metaphor underscores how the outer manifestation is deeply rooted inside. The conversation continues on the theme of belief:

> [Yan] Erxuan (= Yan Weisheng 顏維聖) said: "You speak of 'having accepted the teaching,' so we are not without belief; and you speak of 'many years,' so our belief is not superficial."
>
> The master said: "But there are different kinds of belief. What people nowadays call 'belief' is not real belief, it only deserves to be called 'not doubting.' If I tell them that the doctrine is like this, they will not doubt, and if I tell them that it is like that, they will not doubt either. But real belief is something quite different. Why? Suppose a man is travelling at night, and someone warns him, saying: 'At your left there is a high mountain and at your right there is a deep ravine; if you fall into it you are lost.' That man will be mortally afraid, and he will not dare to doubt. But once the morning has dawned he sees everything clearly with his own eyes, and then he will have great belief. It is the same with our belief in the Lord. At first we do not [dare to] doubt, but in the end we have great belief. However, without the Lord's grace it is not easy for us to be enlightened by the virtue of belief."

爾宣曰：「既云奉教，匪有不信。又云有年，信匪不切矣。」

先生曰：「信亦有不同。蓋今人所謂信，非可言信也、僅可謂不疑耳。語之教旨如此而不疑，語之教旨如彼而不疑。至論眞信、則有異焉。何也？人有夜行者或告之曰：左係高山，右係深陵，一墮不可復救。其人懼甚，不敢疑也。迨東方已燦，豁然目睹，則大信矣。吾人之信　主也亦然，始之不疑，終之大信。及具信德之光，非深獲主恩，正未易易也。」

This text is interesting because it does not oppose "doubt" to "belief," but distinguishes "not doubting" from "true belief" or "great belief." The latter is a virtue, which is not only the result of one's own effort but also of the Lord's grace.

So far, we have seen different ways of convincing the other of belief: rational methods, instructive ways (as in catechetical texts), and the use of metaphors. Narrative methods, with the reference to Biblical passages, are rather

exceptional, though not entirely absent. One finds an example right at the beginning of *Kouduo richao*, in an encounter between Aleni and Li Jiubiao:[60]

> After a while I [= Liu Jiubiao] told him [= Aleni] how I contracted a disease last year and how I had prayed to the Great Lord for protection; at first I [appeared to] receive it, but finally I did not. The master said: "Anciently when Jesus was explaining the Way in the mountains, the apostles returned earlier, sailing the sea. Suddenly a typhoon started raging, and their ship was about to sink. Then Jesus, walking on the sea, came to their rescue. Peter, one of the apostles, saw him from afar. He said: 'My Lord, I am going to accompany you!' Jesus said: 'Come!' Peter jumped into the water, and his feet did not sink into it. But as after some time he became aware of the boiling and billowing waves, he suddenly started doubting, and at once he sank. But Jesus grasped his hand and raised him, saying: 'How shallow is your belief!' By this he meant to say that if you have great belief you will not sink, but even the slightest doubt will make you drown. What you, dear Sir, have experienced could well have been of the same kind!"
>
> 有頃，余述客歲致病之繇，與籲祈 大主，始蒙祐而終不然之故。先生曰:「昔耶穌講道山中，宗徒航海先歸。忽颶風大作，船將沉，耶穌涉海往救之。宗徒伯鐸祿者，望見曰:吾 主乎，吾將往從焉！耶穌曰:來！伯鐸祿遂躍入水中，其足不沉。徐見波濤噴湧，心忽生疑，遂溺。耶穌挈其手拯之。曰:子何信之淺哉？是之謂大信不沉、少疑即溺。吾子得無類是乎？」

In this story, the insistence on "great belief" without the slightest doubt relates to the confidence one has in a person and in the Great Lord's protection. In some exceptional cases, this also relates to doctrine. This appears in a work by Li Jiubiao's brother, Li Jiugong's 李九功 (?–1681) *Shen si lu* 慎思錄 (A Record of Meditations) (1682). Zürcher points out that one of the most striking features of Li Jiugong's Christian worldview was the emphasis he laid on belief (*xin*), the unquestioning acceptance of the divine message. In this, he markedly differs from most other Christian literati writers. Some of his statements are quite radical, such as:

60 *Kouduo richao* 1.3 (1b–2a); *CCT ARSI*, vol. 12, 458–459; Zürcher 2007, 193–194. Bible passages from Mt. 14:22–33; Mk. 6:45–52; Jn. 6:16–21.

> The utmost principle of the Teaching of Heaven relies only on the direct transmission by the creator. We naturally should put belief first and understanding (*ming*) last; we must not do the reverse, for belief is the guide of understanding, and understanding is the reward of belief. Putting belief first is like opening a dark room and letting the light of heaven come in. If one puts understanding first, there will only be the light of a glow-worm in the room; with the door firmly closed the whole day, through which way could the light of heaven enter? This is the difference between humility and arrogance, and between being aware and being lost. How could one not warn against it?
>
> 天教至理。惟恃造物主真傳。自宜先信後明。不必先明後信也。盖信為明之引。而明為信之報。先信者。譬如暗室漸啟。天光從而入焉。若必先明。則如室中僅存螢火。而永晝長扃。天光何由得入。此謙與傲之異情。即悟與迷之異效也。可不警哉？[61]

### 3.6 *Long Travel as Reliable Proof for Belief*

What makes the act of believing reliable? The second important work with *xin* in the title, *Shengjiao xinzheng* 聖教信證 (Proofs for Belief of the Holy Teaching) (1647–1685), adds an extra dimension to the discussion about belief by Chinese Christians. It is a relatively short text preceded by a preface and followed by *Yesuhui xilai zhuwei xiansheng xingshi* 耶穌會西來諸位先生姓氏, which is a list of Jesuit missionaries, each with a short biography and a list of their publications. The text is not primarily about the content of belief (*fides quae creditur*), but about what makes the act of believing (*fides qua creditur*) reliable. What are the reliable proofs for this teaching coming from the West? Han Lin 韓霖 already exposes this theme in the preface:[62]

> There were fellow students asking me: "The teaching of the Master of Heaven originally arrived from foreign countries and distant areas, and Chinese scholars who understand principles believe and follow them, what do you have to say about it?" I answered: "Because it arrived from far and distant places, this makes it precisely a major proof that it can be believed, and one should devote one's efforts to strife for clarity for their reason [to do so], only this reason will make one believe and follow them. Henceforth, when the *literati* from the far West came from a distance of 90,000 *li*, with no other plan than to spread the teaching, then

61 *Shensi lu, di yi ji* 第一集, 5a; ARSI, Jap. Sin. 1, 136; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 9, 155, Zürcher 2005, 84.
62 *Shengjiao xinzheng*, *WXSB*, vol. 1, 269–270.

> there must be a correct and deep reason residing in them, and this can be investigated. The more I investigated, the more clearly I saw its truth and solidity, therefore I could not but believe and follow them."
>
> 有同學友問於余曰:「天主教原從外國遠方傳來，諸公中華明理之士，輒信從之，何說耶？」余曰:「因從遠方傳來，正以此為大可信之據，當務求明於理，惟此理為應信從耳。蓋大西諸儒，來自九萬里而遙，並無別圖，特為傳教，必有至正至深之理寓其中，為可察焉。余愈加詳察，愈明見其真實，故不得不信且從之。」

In short, the reason to believe is not in the first place a rational argumentation about the content, but the fact that missionaries have travelled a long distance to announce it. The beginning of the main text[63] develops this theme by differentiating between interior and exterior reasons to believe:

> The one who does not believe when it is appropriate to believe is an obstinate person, and the one who believes when it is not appropriate to do so is a fool. The teaching of the Master of Heaven is most true and solid. It is appropriate to believe and follow it. There are two reliable proofs for it, one exterior and one interior.
>
> 宜信而不信者。固執人也。不宜信而信者。愚人也。夫天主教為至真實。宜信宜從。其確據有二。一在外。一在內。

The interior proofs refer to the content of belief as recorded in the Christian texts. Notwithstanding the difficulties, this content can be believed because the topics these texts contain "all belong to a reliable discourse which is in complete accord with the right principles" (在內者。則本教著述各端。俱屬極合正理之確論). The exterior proofs, on the contrary, refer to results that can be observed, "they can easily be seen in the efforts, behavior, tracks, and vestiges of this teaching" (其在外之確據。以本教之功行踪跡。目所易見者). *Shengjiao xinzheng* primarily develops the exterior proofs as manifested in the fact that the missionaries travelled to China, produced books, lived, died, and were buried there (which are to a certain extent similar to the series of questions on the missionaries in Yang Tingyun's *Daiyi pian*). These exterior proofs appear in the first three sections of the *Shengjiao xinzheng*, also constructed in a type of dialogue. The reasoning is rather straightforward: 1) There is no greater proof that something can be believed than when people risk their lives

63 *Shengjiao xinzheng*, *WXSB*, vol. 1, 273–290.

in order to testify their words (世人肯冒死以証其言。則可信之據。莫大於此). The Western scholars from the Society of Jesus who left their country and endured many hardships in their travels are an example of it. 2) It is not a matter of one or two persons, or one time or one place. They spread all over the world, and even to China, not only now but also in the Tang period, as manifested by the Nestorian stele in Shaanxi. 3) The words of a few hundred or thousand ordinary persons are not as believable as the principles and discourse of one illuminated wise person. The Western scholars not only studied books and obtained degrees, but also published a number of books, in which they treat different studies related to the investigation of things, fathoming of principles, human nature, and the calendar (*gewu qiongli xingming lifa deng xue* 格物窮理性命曆法等學). The Master of Heaven's teaching is a great way that complements Confucianism and cuts Buddhism short (*bu Ru jue Fo zhi dadao* 補儒絕佛之大道). This explanation shows the intimate link between *Shengjiao xinsheng* and the list *Yesuhui xilai zhuwei xiansheng xingshi*. The list of these missionaries, with a description of their life and publications, serves as illustration of the statement that their teaching can be believed because they came from afar.

The content and the transmission are ultimately related, but also explain why belief is related to something transmitted to others without one having seen it with one's own eyes. This is true for the past, but also for present events. In addition, some classical arguments are used, in line with the three standards, models, or norms (*fa* 法, *yi* 義/儀 or *biao* 表) for deciding a dispute. These standards, adopted by many traditional scholars from the Mohists, mark an argument as convincing when the events related to it have been recorded in ancient texts, when they can be verified in the common people's experience because many believe them, and when they have brought about order and regulations:

> Someone asked: "Concerning the Master of Heaven incarnating and performing miracles, one not only obtains it through transmitted hearsay. How can one know whether it is true or false?" I answered: "Every time there are true proofs that can be believed but one firmly does not want to believe, then the human relationships also will get altered. Just like the father who gave life to me, on what basis can I know [that it is him]. Nothing more than simply his fostering and nurturing the family household is a proof that one can believe it. Again, in the whole universe those who have never seen the sovereign of this country are numerous. But that a country has a sovereign on top, there have never been those who did not know it. Also nothing more than simply because he takes care of the

> order and regulations, this is a proof that one can believe it. And again, in ancient times there were the matters of Yao, Shun, and others, who has ever seen them? But because they have been transmitted in records and documents, they also are not without a proof and can be believed. If one necessarily needs to have seen it before one can believe it, then it will not be the same for a different generation. Even if the Master of Heaven would incarnate today, and even for all the people from all the cities, towns, villages, and minor villages from all the countries in the whole world, and nobody would not have seen him, he still would not be seen by later generations, and again it would not be a sufficient proof to believe it. But since he was seen with physical eyes, this is something to rely on. Now that in all provinces in China one has opened tombs for the Western scholars and burns incense in various churches, cultivates and spreads the teaching, this can help as a proof."
>
> 或問:「所謂天主降生。行諸奇跡。不過得之傳聞而已。真偽何由知乎。」答曰:「凡有可信之真據。而堅不肯信。則倫常亦將有變。如生我之父。我何由得知。不過因撫育家室。據而信之。又普天之下。未見國君者甚眾。然國有君上。未有不知者。亦不過因臨御規模。據而信之。又上古堯舜等事。誰人目擊。因載籍相傳。亦無有不據而信之者。倘必以目見為可信。則世代不同。天主即降生於今日。縱使天下各國都邑鄉鄙之人。莫不既覩且覿。究竟于後世未見者。復不足以為可信之據矣。但既以肉目所見。方為有憑。今中國各直省。後開諸西士之墳墓并現在各堂焚修傳教者。可援証也。」

The text then continues with the example of Francis Xavier, the first missionary to arrive in the Ming dynasty, and also the first name mentioned in the list *Yesuhui xilai zhuwei xiansheng xingshi*. Symbolically, this arrival was the start of an interaction that resulted in *xin* as a Christian concept in China.

## 4 Conclusion

The focus on the topic of *xin* or on texts in which *xin* appears more prominently can be misleading for understanding its place or importance in the early seventeenth-century Chinese Christian community. First, *xin* in the sense of "faith" is not necessarily the first topic that missionaries addressed to their audiences. Not only did they often address other topics, but even if they wanted to present Christian faith, there were many intermediate steps before they presented the core topics of "faith." In a similar line, "faith" is not a central topic

in texts recounting the spread of Christianity in China, such as Matteo Ricci's and Nicolas Trigault's *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* (1615). Second, *xin* is not necessarily the primary motive for conversion. Studies on different types of conversion show that there are at least five dimensions at play, in which one or more may be more important than another: affective, intellectual, ethical or moral, religious, and sociopolitical.[64] Likewise, Chinese Christians had very different motives to become adepts of the Heavenly Learning or to follow the Master of Heaven's concrete teachings, and faith was not necessarily the decisive motive. Finally, *xin* was not necessarily the most important characteristic associated with Christianity as a religion, or better with religion in general. Other aspects of the "cultural imperative,"[65] i.e., conforming to what was considered *zheng* 正 in the religious, ritual, social, and political sense, were more important. The common question used today ("Which religion/teaching do you believe in?" *Ni xin shenme jiao* 你信什麼教？), using the expression *xinjiao* 信教, was not raised in the seventeenth century.[66] In this context, one should also notice the absence of some (modern) words related to the topic of "faith": virtually no references to *xinyang* 信仰[67] or to *mixin* 迷信[68] have been found in the corpus of these Christian texts.

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64 Rambo 1993, 146–147 (adopted from Donald J. Gelpi).

65 Zürcher 1994, 4off. In anti-Christian texts such as Ouyi Zhixu's 藕益智旭 (1599–1655) *Pixie ji* 闢邪集 (1643) or Yang Guangxian's 楊光先 (1597–1669) *Bu de yi* 不得已 (1665), *xin* is hardly an explicit topic of discussion.

66 Only three occurrences were found in the Christian texts in *Scripta sinica*: *Pangzi yiquan*, *juan* 3, 20a; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 2, 165: "Only those who are sincere towards believing the teaching can benefit [from grace]" (惟誠於信教者。能享之). Manuel Dias 陽瑪諾 (1574–1659), *Shengjing zhijie* 聖經直解 (1642), *juan* 4, 43b (in a note to Gospel reading for 封齋後第三主日); *WXSB*, vol. 4, 1886: "In case heaven responds to [Jesus'] order, we should immediately make known that we can believe the teaching, and praise the holy miracles" (倘天應命。吾即揚能信教。頌稱聖跡也). Li Jiugong 李九功, *Wenda huichao* 問答彙抄 (between 1670 and 1680), *juan* 4, (釋不孝之疑); ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 34/37, 2/2–2/4; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 8, 447: "Therefore, all scholars who believe the teaching can only give birth to children by the orthodox way, and the high Lord will certainly protect them" (是以凡信教士。只用正道生子。上主自必佑之). In one more occurrence in the preface of Su Maoxiang 蘇茂相 (1567–1630) to Giulio Aleni, *Sanshan lunxueji* 三山論學紀 (*c.*1629), *xinjiao* does not function as a compound: *WXXB*, vol. 1, 422: "Their countries over time came to respect and believe the teachings and the laws" (蓋其國歷來尊信教法).

67 In all the Christian texts included in *Scripta sinica*, the term *xinyang* only occurs once: in Yang Tingyun's *Tianshi mingbian* 天釋明辨 (posthumous, 1645), 45a; BAV, Raccolta Generale Oriente, III, 221.2; *WXXB*, vol. 1, 329 in the context of the Buddhist cosmological belief in 3000 worlds (*sanqian daqian shijie* 三千大千世界): "If in this way one venerates the Buddha, and in this way one leads people to believe, in the end one only makes a game out of it" (以此尊佛。以此導人信仰。總之只成戲論耳).

68 Of all the Christian texts included in *Scripta sinica*, the term *mixin* only occurs in an anonymous text *Xing mi pian* 醒迷篇 (Treatise Awakening Deception) (*c.*1650); ARSI, Jap. Sin.

Texts by both missionaries and converts discuss the importance of *xin*, but rarely address in depth what is meant by *xin*. Still, these texts can give a sense of the meanings associated with *xin* and with the process through which they came into being. Regarding the process, missionaries and Chinese scholars early on opted for the word *xin*, so they neither created a new word nor used a transliteration or loanword (unlike transliterations such a *symbolum*).[69] Right from the beginning, a choice was made for a Chinese word (emic term). By this choice, a new variety of meanings was added to the semantic variety that *xin* already had within the Chinese language field. This multilayered significance was the result of interaction between various partners, not only between Western missionaries and Chinese converts, but also a wide variety of sympathizing or opposing Chinese scholars. Chinese scholars quoted passages from the Classics in which *xin* appeared; missionaries linked *xin* to matters that one believed without having seen them. Both abundantly used metaphors, especially those of foundation and root. Significant in this regard is also the use of the antonym of belief, i.e., doubt, and the negation of both, not believing and not doubting, which corresponded to characteristics of traditional Chinese anthropology. In general, one could state that the more explicit Christian meaning was grafted on the existing Chinese meanings.

The result is a wide variety of traditional basic (everyday) meanings of *xin* that are also used for Christianity, such as trust, trustworthiness, or believing someone about something, as could be observed in the topics related to the missionaries in the list of chapters in Yang Tingyun's *Daiyi pian*. But *xin*'s meaning is also related to the belief system of the teaching of (the Master of) Heaven. In this context, writers made a distinction between natural theology (or *xingjiao* 性教) and revealed theology (or *enjiao* 恩教/*chongjiao* 寵教), though both cannot be completely separated. In matters pertaining to natural theology, such as belief in a God who created the universe or the existence of retribution in heaven and hell, the role of rational argumentation is relatively important. Texts by both missionaries and Chinese Christians attempt to convince the other partner in the dialogue by exposing how reasonable (*li* 理) these contents of belief are and by encouraging them to fathom these (reasonable) "principles" (*qiongli* 窮理). References to Chinese ancient history and classical texts also function as significant arguments. The matters of revealed theology relate to the Christian faith in Jesus Christ in the strict sense

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I, 150; *CCT ARSI*, vol. 9, 245 (*mulu*) & 269 (title): 論人迷信神佛; 253: 人為何迷信邪說; 279: 西國習佛教者少。今已滅盡。惟中国人迷信不知。有何益; 292: 因而迷信佛僧也; 311: 而迷信神佛; 341: 訛傳迷信; 371 (title): 人迷信風水地理; 373 (title): 人迷信命理; 377: 今人專一迷信于鬼神.

69 On these different translational strategies for catechisms, see Flüchter 2017, 32.

of the word. Chinese Christians adopt the view that this faith is not only the result of one's own effort but provided as grace by God. There are, however, many different degrees of *xin*, and it takes some time before one reaches the level of deep belief (*shenxin* 深信) or great belief (*daxin* 大信) or before one has a heart that believes (*xinxin* 信心).

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**Abbreviations**

ARSI, Jap. Sin. Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Japonica-Sinica Collection, Rome. See also: Albert Chan. 2002. *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica-Sinica I–IV*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

BAV Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome. See also: Takata Tokio, rev. and ed. 1995. Paul Pelliot, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits et imprimés chinois de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*. Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

BnF Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. See also: Maurice Courant. 1902–1912. *Catalogue des livres chinois, coréens, japonais, etc.* 8 vols. Paris: Ernest Leroux.

BNC.VE Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, National Library, Rome.

*CCT ARSI* Nicolas Standaert (鐘鳴旦) and Ad Dudink (杜鼎克), ed. 2002. *Yesuhui Luoma dang'anguan Ming Qing tianzhujiao wenxian* 耶穌會羅馬檔案館明清天主教文獻 (Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus). 12 vols. Taipei: Ricci Institute.

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*FR* Pasquale d'Elia, ed. 1942–1949. *Fonti Ricciane*. 3 vols. Roma: La Libreria dello Stato.

*HCC* Nicolas Standaert, ed. 2001. *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume One (635–1800)*. Leiden: Brill.

*WX* Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1965. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian* 天主教東傳文獻 (Collection of Texts Related to Catholicism Moving Eastwards). Zhongguo shixue congshu 中國史學叢書 24. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju.

*WXSB* Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1972. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian sanbian* 天主教東傳文獻三編. Zhongguo shixue congshu xubian 中國史學叢書續編 21. 6 vols. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju.

*WXXB* Wu Xiangxiang 吳相湘, ed. 1966. *Tianzhujiao dongchuan wenxian xubian* 天主教東傳文獻緒編. Zhongguo shixue congshu 中國史學叢書 40. 3 vols. Taipei: Xuesheng shuju.

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CHAPTER 12

# Theology, Ethics and Textual Sensitivity: the Multiple Notions of *xin* 信 in Chinese-Islamic Texts

*Dror Weil*

## 1 Introduction

Recent literature on Islamic scholarship in China, and in particular on the scholarship that emerged from the sixteenth century onwards, sheds fresh light on the polyglot and multicultural environment in early modern China's[1] local communities.[2] Recent studies suggest that the global circulation of knowledge was not limited to the court and upper echelon of the early modern Chinese society, on one hand; and on another, they provide an alternative narrative to the one that asserts a certain European monopoly on the global flow of information and the introduction of "occidental knowledge" to East Asia. While these studies provide insightful analyses and English translations of some of the main textual outcomes of China's Islamic scholarship and accord it its due historiographical recognition, much research is still required on the processes by which knowledge that derived from Arabic and Persian texts was presented for, read and interpreted by Chinese readers.

By focusing on the usages of the term *xin* 信 in Chinese Islamic texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this chapter will survey some of the inherent features in the processes of translating and acculturating Islam in late imperial China. It will bring out some of the underlying tendencies, anxieties and ideologies that characterize this form of literature. In particular, it will show the pronounced alignment of Chinese Islamic literature with Confucian ethics, the complexity of articulating Islamic theological concepts in Chinese, and the commitment to develop critical methods for textual scholarship.

1 Throughout this chapter, I will use the terms "early modern" and "late imperial" interchangeably to refer to the long period between the late-fourteenth and late-eighteenth centuries that corresponds to the reigns of the Ming (1368–1644) and the first half of the Qing (1644–1911) dynasties.

2 See for example the Ben-Dor Benite 2005, Murata 2000, 2009, 2017, Frankel 2011, Tontini 2016, Petersen 2018, Shen 2021, Weil 2016, 2020a, 2020b, and forthcoming.

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The broad semantic field that the term *xin* offers made it a suitable term for Chinese-Islamic authors to designate simultaneously and interchangeably three main meanings. It is the political and inter-personal value of "loyalty" either to the ruling dynasty or to one's fellow men, an intertwining aspect of Chinese-Islamic and Confucian ethical discourses; the articulation of the Arabic term *īmān* ("faith in Allah")—a central pillar of the Islamic faith that draws a marked distinction between Muslim believers and members of other faiths; and, the assessment of a certain text as credible, authentic and authoritative—an outcome of a critical approach to knowledge. These three notions of the term *xin* will be further expounded in what follows.

## 2 The Contours of Chinese-Islamic Literature

In the late sixteenth century, a growing openness to accommodate new ideas in China, characterized by a surge in printing and the spread of local schools,[3] met with an increase in the activities of Sufi orders in Transoxiana and a rise in the frequency of visits by preachers and travelers from different parts of the Islamicate world to China. These foreign visitors brought ideas and texts that sparked the interest of Chinese Muslims and non-Muslim savants alike, and, in turn, became objects of scrutiny in local schools that were established to develop methods to study such texts.

Hu Dengzhou 胡登洲 (1522–1597), a Chinese-Muslim literatus from the north-western province of Shaanxi founded such a school in his hometown with the objective of training disciples to read Arabic and Persian texts. Hu's disciples and their disciples expanded Hu's project and opened local schools in the Shandong, Jiangnan and even Yunnan regions. They taught the foundations of Arabic and Persian grammar and a selection of texts on Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence, logic, and rhetoric.[4] An integral part of this scholarship was the diligent search for Arabic and Persian texts in private libraries or in the possession of foreign visitors. These texts were then copied by hand and analyzed for their grammar and contents. The textual and linguistic emphases of the pedagogy in these schools drew a significant distinction between them and earlier forms of Islamic education in China.

3 On the surge of printing and publishing in the sixteenth century, see Ōki Yasushi 1991 and Ōki Yasushi 2009, Brokaw 2005, McDermott 2005, Schneewind 2006, Meskill 1982.

4 On the development of the Chinese-Islamic literature during from the mid-sixteenth century and its major proponents, see Ben-Dor Benite 2005, Stöcker-Parnian 2003, Weil 2016.

The texts taught in these schools included a considerable number of works on Islamic theology (*kalām*), law (*fiqh*), and mysticism (*'irfān*). These works comprised lengthy and subtle discussions on the foundations of the Islamic faith in terms of the belief in God and the Islamic creed, as well as guidance to gnostic paths. Students in these schools studied these theological texts in their original Arabic and Persian languages, and employed various methods of marginalia, interlinear annotations, and other para-textual devices to expound the meanings of the texts as well as understand their grammatical substructures.[5]

In the 1640s several members of this Chinese-Islamic network, mainly in the culturally prosperous Jiangnan region, hoped to expand the scholarship beyond the walls of their local schools by publishing Chinese translations of Arabic and Persian texts and original Chinese works on Islam. The transition to writing in Chinese entailed a process of deliberation and experimentation on the ways by which the subtle insights that Chinese-Muslim scholars gained from reading texts in their original languages could be translated into Chinese. During this process, the traditional culture around the reading and copying of the Arabo-Persian manuscript was subsumed under the local Chinese environment of woodblock print. Manipulations of fonts, marginalia and para-textual spaces in printed books attempted to compensate for the rich use of marginalia and interlinear annotations in traditional manuscripts.

Moreover, the alteration of language entailed dilemmas and challenges inherent to textual translation, namely, how to articulate the vocabulary of the original texts in Chinese. The authors borrowed and adapted terms and phrases from the long established Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist canons. They were also influenced to some degree by works in Chinese that the Jesuits and other European missionaries compiled during that period.[6] Among the terms that Chinese Islamic works employed, to name a few, are *jing* 經 ("[authoritative] scripture") as a designation for Islamic religious texts and in particular the Qur'an; *tian* 天 ("Heaven") that took the meaning of divinity; *zaohua* 造化 ("making and transforming") for the Islamic theory of creation; and *shengren* 聖人 ("sage"), to designate the Islamic prophets. Transliterations of Arabic and Persian terms were used for a series of untranslatable terms, such as *yi-ma-na* 以媽納 (from *īmān*, "faith in Allah"), *ni-ye-te* 你葉忒 (from *niyyat*, "intention [in performance of Islamic ritual]"), and *du-a* 覩阿 (from *du'ā'*, "invocation of God").

5 See Weil 2016 and 2022.

6 For the Jesuit discourse see the chapter by Nicolas Standaert in this volume. On intellectual exchanges between the Jesuits and Chinese-Muslim authors, see Ben-Dor Benite 2012.

The process of negotiating meanings and terms was not only a linguistic exercise, but it also mirrored more than anything an attempt to naturalize Chinese-Islamic scholarship and self-fashion it as a legitimate Chinese school of thought. Seeking legitimacy, Chinese-Islamic authors aligned their scholarship with the discourse of the imperially-endorsed Cheng-Zhu school of Confucianism by highlighting their adherence to Confucian ethics. To show that, they appropriated a series of Confucian concepts, such as *zhong* 忠 ("loyalty") and *xiao* 孝 ("filial piety") and included them in their descriptions of Islamic ethics.

At the same time, Buddhist and Daoist terminologies provided a well-established lexicon of Chinese terms that could be easily adapted and manipulated to meet Islamic definitions and theories. Chinese-Islamic authors appropriated such terms and infused them with new meanings and etymologies. The terms *qingzhen* 清真 ("pure and true,") and *qingjing* 清淨 ("pure and clean"), for example, were re-introduced with the meaning of "Islamic," giving away their Buddhist origins in favor of an associative connection with the Islamic description of Allah as pure and true and the Islamic emphasis on bodily purity.[7] Accordingly, the Islamic worship hall, the *masjid*, became known in Chinese as *qingzhen si* 清真寺; the term *guixin* 歸信 ("to submit to and have faith in") took the meaning of "adhering to the Islamic faith"; *zhaijie* 齋戒 ("purifying abstinence")—a term that is widely used in Buddhist and Daoist texts was adapted to have the meaning of "fasting for Ramaḍān"; and the Buddhist *sansheng* 三乘 ("The Three Vehicles,") was appropriated to refer to the tripartition of the Ṣūfī program: *Sharī'a* ("established law"), *Ṭarīqa* ("school") and *Ḥaqīqa* ("truth").

The growing visibility of European missionaries in the Jiangnan region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not go unnoticed by Chinese-Islamic scholars living and writing in the very same region. Chinese-Islamic scholars read the missionaries' publications, and compared and contrasted the missionaries' theologies with their own Islamic teachings.[8] The Russian Archimandrite and sinologist Pyotr Ivanovich Kafarov (known as Palladius) (1817–1878), who studied the Chinese-Islamic literature in the mid-nineteenth century, even suggests that the arrival of the Jesuits' and their Chinese

7 Interestingly, the inscribed stelae from the Jewish synagogue in Kaifeng, the earliest of which is dated to 1489, use these lexemes to denote the practice of Judaism, and refer to their worship hall as *qingzhen si* as well. See White 1966.

8 On the Jesuit-Islamic dialogue in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Ben-Dor Benite 2012.

publications were strong incentives for Chinese-Muslim authors to begin to publish their works in Chinese.[9] In contrast to the visible contribution of the Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist discourses to the development of the discourse on Islam in Chinese, the effects of the Jesuits and their works is still unclear and requires further study.

## 3 The Socio-Ethical *xin* 信

The aspiration of Chinese-Islamic authors to widen the readership of their works through translation into Chinese was, in many ways, preconditioned on a demonstration of their adherence to the contemporary Confucian orthodoxy. To that end, they took great pains to demonstrate that Confucian ethical precepts are in fact organic components of Islam. They did so by dedicating lengthy discussions to the Confucian set of ethical values in their works, and by demonstrating, using borrowed Confucian terminology, that these shared ethical precepts were effectively realized in the history and contemporary practice of Islam in China.

One of these precepts is *xin* (translated in this context as "loyalty" or "faithfulness"). Chinese-Islamic authors used the term and its derivatives such as *zhongxin* 忠信 (literally, "loyalty and faithfulness") or *xinxin* 信心 (literally, "faithful mind") to echo a Confucian socio-ethical value. These terms were used in relation to adherence to an institution of authority, in particular loyalty to the emperor or the ruling dynasty, or within the context of interpersonal relations, loyalty to one's family or fellow men.

Wang Daiyu 王岱輿 (fl. mid-seventeenth century), one of the precursors of Chinese-Islamic literature, for example, mentioned *xin* in several of his discussions on the proper practice of Islam. Although *xin* appears in Wang's discussions not as a central theme, not even as one of the listed social and personal merits, yet its importance within the context of interpersonal propriety is accentuated. Wang's 1642 work, titled *Zhengjiao zhenquan* 正教真詮 (Real Commentary on the True Teaching) describes the importance of *xin* as an integral part of one's ethical disposition without which "the way of heaven and the way of man would not be complete." *Xin* is listed alongside other socio-ethical values such as piety (*xiao* 孝), propriety (*li* 禮) and righteousness (*yi* 義) that stand at the core of Confucian ethics. Wang writes,

9 Quoted in Ben-Dor Benite 2012, 522.

> In all these matters—filial piety and respecting elders, loyalty, and *faithfulness* (***xin***), propriety and righteousness, modesty and shame—if there is any lack and deficiency, then the way of heaven and the way of man will not be complete. We cannot call this listening to the mandate.[10]
>
> 凡孝弟忠信，禮義廉恥之間，但有虧損，即于天人之道不全，即不得謂之聽命.[11]

Faithfulness, according to Wang's theory, arises together with other socio-ethical values from the Innate Wisdom (*benzhi* 本智)—the faculty to which Wang ascribes an individual's ability to "distinguish right from wrong, discern true from false, know oneself and recognize the Lord,"[12] somewhat similar to what we would call a moral compass. The realization of faithfulness is therefore conditioned on what Wang calls the clarity of the innate wisdom. He explains this relationship in his catechism *Xizhen zhengda* 希真正答 (True Answers to the Very Real, pub. 1658), where he writes,

> If the Innate Wisdom is not clear, Humanity and Righteousness will not be thorough, Propriety will not be suitable, and Faithfulness [xin 信] will not be complete.
>
> 若本智不明，仁義不徹，禮不中節，信必不全.[13]

Faithfulness thus constitutes a manifestation of one's Innate Wisdom, or moral compass. Not displaying faithfulness indicates a deficiency in the senses of Propriety, Humanity and Righteousness as well. Therefore, Wang warns against befriending unfaithful (*wuxin* 無信, literally, "without faithfulness") people, as they will let a person down in a time of need. He writes,

> You should not go near someone who has no faithfulness, for he will abandon you on a dangerous ground at the most important time.[14]
>
> 無信者不可近，彼當緊要之時，即棄人于險地.[15]

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10 Murata 2017, 163. The Chinese transliteration in parenthesis and the italicization are my addition. The phrase *tingming* 聽命, which is translated by Murata as "listening to the Mandate," could be read as well as "obedience to the Order [of Heaven]".

11 Wang 2015b, 16:122.

12 Wang 2015b, 16:95. For an alternative translation, see Murata 2017, 120.

13 Wang 2015a, 16:209.

14 Murata 2017, 173.

15 Wang 2015b, 16:128.

The appropriation of the Confucian ethical notion of *xin* into Wang Daiyu's view of Islam is captured in a preface written by Ding Yan 丁彦, one of the editors of Wang Daiyu's printed works. Ding quotes Wang's statement that Islam greatly venerates the Way of Heaven and advocates for the values of Loyalty, Faithfulness, Piety and Friendliness in an utmost similar manner to Confucianism.[16]

The dogmatic ode "Panegyric to the Sages" (*Shengzan* 聖讚) by the Chinese-Muslim scholar Ma Zhu 馬注 (1640–1711) in his *Compass to Islam* (*Qingzhen zhinan* 清真指南, pub. 1683) resonates the same notion that places adherence to loyalty and faithfulness at the fore of Islam's socio-ethical precepts, suggesting the widespread endorsement of that ethical value into the local version of Islamic ethics.[17] Moreover, a biography of Ma Zhu, assumably written by one of his disciples, and which was appended to a printed version of his *Compass to Islam*, further illustrates the centrality of *xin* as a socio-ethical precept in the teaching of Ma. The biography includes the following statement

> Hearing the Teacher's teaching, but not obeying the Lord or respecting the Sages amount to deserting the Teacher; hearing the Teacher's teaching, but showing disloyalty to the ruler or piety to the parents amounts to deserting the Teacher; hearing the Teacher's teaching, but not revering educators or exercising faithfulness towards friends amount to deserting the Teacher; hearing the Teacher's teaching, but not loving one's parents or showing compassion towards the people amounts to deserting the Teacher. The Teacher possessed the minds of Sincerity, Obedience, Loyalty, Filial Piety, Reverence, Faithfulness, Compassion and Love. He lived in solitude, not rendering service to his family or the state apparatuses, and that is the reason why God showed his kindness towards him.
>
> 聞先生之教而不順於主、遵於聖者，皆棄於先生者也；聞先生之教而不忠於君、孝於親者，皆棄於先生者也；聞先生之教而不敬於師、信於友者，皆棄於先生者也；聞先生之教而不愛於親、慈於眾者，皆棄於先生者也.先生具誠、順、忠、孝、敬、信、慈、愛之心，而居龍潛豹隱之會,不為家國用，此主所以厚先生也.[18]

Liu Zhi 劉智 (1660–1730), a prolific Chinese Muslim scholar, provided a more nuanced explanation on the relevance of the Confucian concept of *xin* to the

16 Wang 1642, 9v.
17 Ma 2015, 16:774.
18 Ma 2015, 16:529–30.

practice of Islam. Liu, who published a series of works on Islamic theology, praxis and history as well as translations of Arabic and Persian works during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, took painstaking efforts to reconcile theoretical differences and demonstrate the compatibility between the Islamic and Confucian ethical and cosmological frameworks. He published in 1710 a work explaining the meanings of the five pillars of Islam under the title "Explaining the Five Meritorious Actions" (*Wugong shiyi* 五功釋義). In that work, Liu Zhi elaborates on the relationship between the five foremost fundamental religious duties in Islam (which he calls "The Five Meritorious Actions," *Wugong* 五功)—namely, testimony to faith in Allah (CH: *nian* 念, AR: *shahāda*), five daily prayers (CH: *li* 禮, AR: *ṣalā*), fasting during the month of Ramaḍān (CH: *zhai* 齋, AR: *ṣiyām*), giving alms (CH: *ke* 課, Ar: *zakā*), carrying out pilgrimage (CH: *chao* 朝, AR: *ḥajj*)—and the foundation of Confucian ethics. He explains that Human Nature (*xing* 性) is comprised of five virtues: *ren* 仁 ("benevolence"), *yi* 義 ("righteousness"), *li* 禮 ("propriety"), *zhi* 智 ("wisdom") and *xin* 信 ("faithfulness"). These five virtues, as well as the five virtues of the faculties of Heart-Mind (*xin* 心) and the Intellect (*zhi* 智), are realized only when balanced. The role of the Islamic Five Meritorious Actions is "to amend any inclination and restore the balance."[19] Elsewhere in that work, Liu places *xin* within a larger framework of fivefold natural correspondences, employing the Confucian cosmological framework that orders and links natural phenomena into a series of five phases. In describing the corresponding relations of the Islamic duty of pilgrimage, Liu suggests that pilgrimage belongs to the category of human nature (*xing* 性) and corresponds to *xin* among the five virtues of human nature.[20]

Liu Zhi not only incorporated the concept of *xin* into his general description of Islamic ethics, but he also used the concept in his rendering of Islamic history, to show that this ethical value had long been an integral part of Islam. In his Chinese translation of a Persian biography of Prophet Muhammad,[21] Liu employed the compounds *xinxin* 信心 ("faithful mind")[22] and *zhongxin* 忠信 ("loyalty and faithfulness") in describing high-moral standing. An example of such usage appears in a passage reporting the death of an early convert to Islam. Liu Zhi translated there a quote attributed to the prophet Muhammad with a clear allusion to a famous Confucius' maxim and includes the compound

19 Liu 2005c, 15:253.

20 Liu 2005c, 15:261.

21 On this translation see below.

22 Elsewhere in that work, Liu Zhi used this compound with the meaning of "reliable." See part 3 of this essay.

*xinxin* 信心 to highlight the high moral standing of the convert. Liu's translation reads: "The prophet lamented: 'When a person is faithful, he can hear the Dao in the morning, and die by night'" (聖人嘆曰:若人信心，朝聞道，夕死可矣).[23] By embedding the Confucian ethical value of *xin* in his narration of Islamic history, Liu Zhi naturalized the concept of *xin* in his overall rendering of Chinese Islam.

The use of *xin* as an organic Islamic ethical concept displays the commitment of Chinese-Islamic authors to localize their discourse and their anxiety to demonstrate its compatibility with the orthodox ethical program of Confucianism. The term *xin* provided them with a prism through which they could reinforce a Confucian image of Islamic praxis.

## 4 The Theological *xin* 信

If the use of *xin* described above arose from a commitment to couch Islam in the orthodox Confucian ethical discourse, a second usage of the term displays the painstaking process to bring across an intrinsic pillar of a monotheistic religion, very much foreign to the Chinese cultural landscape. The movement to translate Islamic scholarship into Chinese entailed long and complex negotiations of meanings and finding ways to articulate long-established concepts and theories in Chinese. How to bring across the meaning of faith in the monotheistic God, taking account of the rich Islamic discourse that had grown around it, was among the most perplexing and intricate challenges that authors expounding Islam in Chinese had to overcome.

*Xin* constituted one node in a semantic web of Chinese terms that Chinese Islamic scholars used to define and expound the Arabic term *īmān*, faith in Allah as it is realized in the practice of Islam. Other nodes on that web include *jiao* 教 ("teachings") or *zhengjiao* 正教 ("correct teaching"), *renzhu* 認主 ("acknowledgement in the Lord"), *guizhen* 歸真 ("returning to the truth"), *li* 禮 ("ritual"), *dao* 道 ("the Way"), and *jingshi* 敬事 ("reverence and worship"). Some authors even coined a transliterated form of the Arabic *yi-ma-na* 以瑪納 (other spellings appear as well). This web of terms, so it seems, allowed the authors to adopt a rather atomistic view of the concept of faith, and bring across its meaning by translating its specific manifestations. *Xin* and its derivatives appear as popular nodes on that web, and they seem to be commonly used by authors as a simplified way to translate *īmān*.

23 Liu 2005b, 14:119.

A late seventeenth-century Chinese translation of a Persian theological treatise provides a good example for the appropriation of *xin* to denote the concept of *īmān*. The Persian text, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's (d. 1256 AD), *Mirṣād al-ʿibād* was an early attempt to systematize mystical Islam in writing, and became a popular read even outside the Kubrawī order that its author belonged to.[24] Wu Zunqi 伍遵契 (1598–1698) completed his translation of the work in 1678, and gave it the Chinese title *Guizhen yaodao yiyi* 歸真要道譯義 (Translating the Meaning of the Essential Way to Return to the Truth).[25] Wu discusses the concept of *yi-ma-na* in the Editorial Notes (*fanli* 凡例) section of the work. He articulates the Arabic concept using the Chinese compound *guixin* 歸信 (literally, "to submit to[26] and have trust in"). It reads, "*yi-ma-na* denotes the mindset [literally, 'the heart's light'] of submitting to and having trust in the true God" (以媽納乃歸信真主之心光).[27] Similarly, Wu defines the term *mu'min*, an Arabic participle from the same grammatical root as *īman* that denotes a holder of the Islamic faith. Wu transliterates the Arabic term as *mo-min* 摩敏 and explains its meaning using the term *guixin*. He writes: "*Mu'min* is a person who submits and has faith [in God]" (摩敏乃歸信主之人).[28]

In another work, titled *Xizhen mengyin* 修真蒙引, co-authored by Wu Zunqi and Zhou Shiqi 周士騏, the authors provide a list the six mental states, or "attestations" (*zhengyan* 徵驗) as they call them, that constitute preconditions for *yi-ma-na*. The first two of these attestations include derivatives of the term *xin*, namely *guixin* and *chengxin* 誠信 ("sincere faith"). They write:

> There are six attestations for *yi-ma-na*: The first is submission and faith in the unseen. That is, God has no form nor sight or sound, but the unceasing creation of the myriad things on Heaven and Earth relies in its entirety on the one God. The second is sincere faith in the Later World's judgement. For a person who dwells in this world, when there is morning, there must be night; and when there is sleep, there must be awakening. Therefore, if there is This World, there must be a Later World. Whoever does good, will rejoice; and whoever does evil will be punished. This is a definite principle. Hence, God sent all the prophets to inform people in

24 On the text and its English translation, see Algar 1982.

25 Wu Zunqi's 伍遵契 (ca. 1598–ca. 1698) work is a translation of Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī's theological treatise, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād* (The Path of God's Bondsmen), into literary Chinese.

26 An alternative reading of the term *gui* 歸 is "to return." It might refer here to the Sufi notion of "returning to God"—a notion that is present as well in the full Persian title of the original work.

27 Wu 2005, 16:343.

28 Ibid.

> readiness of the reward and punishment in the Later World and correct their ways. The third is fear of God's punishment. The fourth is hope for God's mercy. With fear, one can correct his wrongdoings, and with hope, one voluntarily seeks good and corrects his wrongdoing, and *īmān* lies within seeking good. Hence it is said *īmān* lies between hope [for mercy] and fear [of punishment]. The fifth is obedience. That is, carrying out immediately all of God's commands. The sixth is an observance of prohibitions. That is, not to disobey any of God's prohibitions. That is the crux of obedience and cannot be unobserved.
>
> 以馬納的徵驗有六：一曰未見歸信，意謂真主無似像，勿見聞，但看天地萬物造化無窮，俱憑止一真主；二曰誠信後世斷法，人生在世，有晝定有夜，有夢必有覺，有今世定有後世，善則慶，惡必懲，此一定之理，是以真主欽差一切聖人，將後世之賞罰預先曉諭使人便於趨避；三曰懼怕主罪；四曰指望主慈，懼怕則能改過，指望自欲趨善改過，趨善則以媽納在其中矣，故曰以媽納在指望與懼怕之中，五曰領命，凡主命令即遵行，六曰奉禁，凡主禁止不違犯，此係順逆關頭不可不慎.[29]

*Xin* is described is a state of mind with varying levels of intensity. In their work, Wu and Zhou use the term *chengxin* and *chengxin xin* 誠信心 ("the state of mind of a sincere faith") to describe a mental stage in a practitioner's attainment of *imān*. They write: "At a first stage, one has [to attain] sincere faith at heart. [Having attained] sincere faith, one's tongue will praise [God]" (始有心間誠信心，誠信則舌上誦念).[30] *Chengxin*, as this usage suggests, is a high-intensity state of *xin*.

In addition to its rendering of the concept of *īmān*, the term *xin* was used to translate other states of mind that display close attachment or adherence. In his translation of *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, Wu Zunqi uses the term *xinxin* 信心 ("faithful mind") to translate the Arabo-Persian term *ʿaqīdah* ("the Islamic creed" or "Islamic correct belief"). Devotion to a creed or dogma might seem to be of lesser intensity than faith in God, however, by using the term *xin*, the Chinese translator equated the two. In a description of the twenty attributes that a disciple (*murīd* in the Persian original and *menren* 門人 in the Chinese translation) is required to keep in the company of his master to acquire his master's wisdom, the original Persian text reads as follows:

29 Wu and Zhou 2005, 15:13.

30 Ibid.

> The fourth is correct belief [*ʿaqīda*]. The morīd must hold the belief of the People of the Sunna and Community, avoiding all innovation and adhering to the school of one of the Imams of former generations. He should be untainted by anthropomorphism, abstractionism, Shi'ism, and Mu'tazilism, but also free of fanaticism, not regarding as unbelievers any group that prays toward the qebla, nor considering it permissible to utter curses.[31]

Wu's Chinese translation uses the terms *xinxin* and *chengxin* to render the same passage:

> The fourth is faithful mind [*xinxin*]. One must possess a sincere faith [*chengxin*] in the community of tradition, avoid heresies, and be untainted by the illicit [teachings of] *te-shi-bi-he* [<*tashbīh*, "anthropomorphism"], *te-er-tui-le* [<*taʿṭīl*, "abstractionism"], *la-fe-zu* [<*rafż*, "rejection," refers here to "Shiism"], *mu-er-ti-ze-le* [<*muʿtazila*], cannot speak of any person who [prays] towards [the kaʿba] as subversive, and cannot create cliques or divide into [exclusive] schools.
>
> 第四件是信心，須要在聖行會同之人的誠信上，遠避異端，從特十必核特而推勒拉非足，木而踢雜勒，邪類上無干，不可把但凡朝向之人，往背逆上論，不可結黨分門戶.[32]

As states of mind, *guixin* and *xinxin* are used without a specified object. *Chengxin*, however, in the above passage is used with a specified object—sincere belief in the Islamic community. Similar usages of the term *xin* and its derivatives with designated objects are found in Chinese Islamic texts, where the authors wish to describe a person's devotion to or faith in the Islamic prophets and in particular in Prophet Muhammad. Ma Zhu's discussion of the nature of prophethood in his *Qingzhen zhinan* provides an example of such usage. Ma writes: "Since people have called them sages from antiquity to the present-day, the whole world believes (*xin*) that they are sages" (所以古今稱之為聖，天下信之為聖).[33] Another example appears in the translation of a quote of Prophet Muhammad reminiscing his early follower, Abū Bakr's devotion to him. The quote is translated in Liu Zhi's Biography of the Prophet

31 Algar 1982, 261. The transliterations are by the translator, and my additions are in parenthesis. For this passage in the original Persian, see Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī 1933, 144.

32 Wu 2005, 16:422.

33 Ma 2005, 16:541.

Muhammad, where he employs the term *guixin* to describe Abū Bakr's devotion to the Prophet. Liu translated the quote as follows: "The first who had faith (*guixin*) in me was Abū Bakr" (首先歸信我者，額補白克爾也).[34]

In his work on Islamic practice and ritual titled Islamic practice and rites, titled *Tianfang dianli zeyao jie* 天方典禮擇要解 (Selected Commentaries on "Islamic Rituals and Rites," published in 1710, see below), Liu introduced two categories of *xin*: *zongxin* 總信 ("collective faith") and *fenxin* 分信 ("specific faith"). These two categories are in fact a translation of the two theological concepts, known in Arabic as *īmān mujmal* and *īmān mufaṣṣal*, respectively. Liu provides the following general declaration of faith as a definition of the former: "I have faith in the Lord as He is; In his subtle attributions and respectful names. I accept all of the Lord's laws" (我信主本然，以其妙用尊命，我承主一切法則).[35] The term *xin* appears at the beginning of declaration and stands in parallel to the verb *cheng* 承 ("to accept" or "to undertake"). The latter category, as its name suggests, provides a more detailed list of the objects of faith. Liu renders it as follows: "I have faith in the True Lord, faith in all the angels, faith in all the scriptures, faith in all the sages, faith in the Latter World, faith in divine retribution and reward, and faith in resurrection after death" (我信真主，信一切天神，信一切經書，信一切聖人，信後世，信善惡有定自主，信死後復生).[36] The term *xin* appears repeatedly in front of the objects for belief for emphasis as it is not so in the Arabic original version of that declaration.

This second meaning of *xin* provided Chinese Islamic authors with a way to convey the meaning of faith in the monotheistic God to the unfamiliar Chinese readers, as well as to describe the state of mind that is akin to a sincere faith in Allah, his prophets, or the Islamic creed. Whereas the socio-ethical usage of *xin* drew its meaning from the Confucian discourse, this second usage of the term adapted its connotations to the interpretation of Islamic theology. A third usage that pertains to the nature of the textual scholarship that Chinese scholars of Islam pursued is described below.

## 5 The Textual *xin* 信

Chinese Islamic scholarship from its onset in the sixteenth century and throughout the process of translating its texts into Chinese was, to a large

34 Liu 2005b, 14:110.
35 Liu 2005a, 15:80–1.
36 Liu 2005a, 15:80–1.

degree, textually bound. The searches for forgotten Arabic and Persian texts in Chinese libraries or newly arrived with visiting foreigners, as well as the activities of copying, collating, and annotating these texts stood at the core of this scholarship. The expansion of the Islamic archive and the increase in the number of available texts brought to light the diversity of interpretations of the Islamic dogma and practice. This, in turn, produced disputes among Chinese Islamic scholars and communities of practitioners on the accuracy of theological theories and proper practice. It also generated anxiety among scholars to distinguish authoritative and legitimate texts from fraudulent or subversive ones. An additional meaning of the term *xin*, as found in the compound *kexin* 可信 (literally, "trust-worthy"), provided Chinese Islamic scholars with a way to mark certain texts as reliable, authentic, and trustful.

The issue of textual authority and the authenticity of certain written records had for Chinese Muslim scholars deep theological meanings, as it involved the discussion on the status of the Qur'an as a divine record of the revelation. Attempting to define that status, Ma Zhu includes in his *Qingzhen zhinan* the following rhetorical question, using the term *xin* to assert the authenticity of the Qur'an: "The Qur'an is the book of the Lord of all things. It is the discussion of [the nature] of things by the Lord of all things. Just like when a scholar talks about his literature or a farmer discusses his produce, how could it be untrustworthy (*bu kexin*)?" (天經，物主之書也。以物主而言物，若士之論文，農之論稼，烏有不可信乎?).[37] As a written tradition originating in the divine revelation, the Qur'an's authority, according to Ma, cannot be questioned. Elsewhere in that work, Ma compares the authority of the Qur'an as a revelation to that of the Confucian tradition. The transmission of the Confucian tradition, according to Ma, just like the Qur'an, relied on writing and hence it maintained its authority. Ma writes: "It is said that he [Confucius] transmitted authentic [knowledge] and not dubious [knowledge], that is to say, that he relied on scriptures and not on [oral] transmission" (盖謂傳信不傳疑，據經不據傳).[38]

This notion of authority that emerges from a reliable transmission is expressed as well in Liu Zhi's discussion of the Islamic Tradition, the *Sunna*, where he quotes the statement: "[The Islamic Tradition] has been unceasingly transmitted, and its truly unchanging grandeur has been firm and magnificent for myriad generations" (亹亹相傳，洵不易之宏規，垂萬世而貞盛也).[39]

37 Ma 2005, 16:508.
38 Ma 2005, 16:542.
39 Liu 2005a, 15:65.

Liu goes on and expounds the meaning of this statement. He uses the term *xin* to explain the quality of tradition expressed by the attribute *xun* 洵 ("truly"):

> "Unceasingly" means constant and without stop; "truly" means reliable. Our teachings have been passed down from A-dan (<Ādam, Adam) through Shi-shi (<Shīth, Seth), Nu-hai (<Nūḥ, Noah) and Yi-bu-la-xin (<Ibrāhīm, Abraham) and down to some hundred generations of prophets, until it reached Mu-han-mu-de (<Muḥammad), who gathered the great accomplishments. Later wise men and disciples have expounded [the tradition's] main ideas and continued to transmit them for seven thousand years until this day. Its system is as grandeur today as it was in the past, and even more extensive, prosperous, widespread, and far-reaching. Its magnificence is sufficient to continue for myriad generations. Today as it was in the past. No doubts about it.
>
> 亹亹不倦不絕之意，洵，信也。吾教自阿丹，歷施師，努海，易卜剌欣而下數百代聖人，接踵相繼，迄穆罕默德為集大成。後賢後學，闡其要旨，傳者不倦，受者不絕，至今閱七千餘年，制度規模，視今猶古愈延愈盛愈播愈遠，其足以垂萬世而隆，今古也，復奚疑哉.[40]

Liu Zhi, whose studies focused on meticulous readings of Arabic and Persian commentaries on the Qurʾan, Ḥadīth collections, biographies of Prophet Muḥammad (*sīra*, plural *siyar*), theological works and other texts, was very sensitive to the textual authenticity of his sources. The meticulous nature of his work and his attentiveness to the quality of his source is displayed in detailed bibliographies of his Arabic and Persian sources appended to two of his *magna opera*—his work on natural philosophy titled *Tianfang xingli* 天方性理 (Nature and Principles in Islam, pub. 1704) and the one on Islamic practice and rites, titled *Tianfang dianli zeyao jie* 天方典禮擇要解 (Selected Commentaries on "Islamic Rituals and Rites," pub. 1710). In his various works, he included editorial prefaces in which he discussed the methodologies he employed in interpreting and translating his sources. In a few cases, Liu used the term *xin* to refer to his assessment of his sources.

In 1724, Liu completed a translation of a Persian biography of the Prophet Muhammad. The original text was written by Saʿīd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Masʿūd Kāzarūnī (d. 1357) in Arabic and translated into Persian during the

40 Liu 2005a, 15:65.

author's life.[41] The title that Liu gave to his translation was *Tianfang zhi sheng shilu nianpu* 天方至聖實錄年譜 (literally, "Veritable Records and Chronological Tables on the Life of Islam's Most Revered"). The compound *shilu* 實錄 ("veritable records") is borrowed from the official chronicles of China's imperial court and reveals Liu's view of his source. In his introduction to the work, Liu discusses his methodology and objectives in writing history, defining history as reliable accounts of the past. To express the notion of reliability of historical records, he employs the term *xin*. Liu writes:

> These Veritable Records are [a work of] history. [Works of] history serve to illuminate and be reliable [*xin*]. I have meticulously surveyed [the literature], and omitted any *zazhuan* (literally, "miscellaneous biographies," texts with questioned historiographical reliability), *xiaoshuo* (literally, "minor discourses," often refers to literary novels) or extraordinary and abnormal discourses. I omitted accounts of the sages' miraculous acts that do not have didactic value. In addition, I omitted from this work the sayings, laws, and rites of the Prophet [Muhammad] that I mentioned in other works.
>
> 是錄即史也，史以昭信，徵往察來，其有雜傳小說，希異不經之談，悉置弗錄，其有聖人感應神奇，非可為教戒者亦弗錄，至聖人所說經律教典，另有分著，不載錄中.[42]

An interesting appendix to the work is titled "Methodology of Reading the Biography of the Prophet" (*Du Zhisheng lu fa* 讀至聖錄法). In that short essay, Liu describes four reading skills that are required for reading historical records such as the biography of Prophet Muhammad. Among these skills, Liu includes *xinxin* 信心 ("faithful mind"). Liu's usage of *xinxin* as the following passage shows differs from those described above, and seems to refer to an epistemic state of mind in which one trusts the source he reads: "The early Wiseman 'Imād said: 'Readings the [historical] records of the Prophets require the possession of four types of capabilities: the first is the faithful mind [*xinxin* 信心], the second is the ability to discern, the third is enlightened intellect, and the fourth is high wisdom'" (先賢爾馬篤曰，讀聖人錄須具四種力，一曰信心，二曰辨才，三日明智，四曰高識).[43] Liu goes on to define what he means by *xinxin*:

41 On that work, see al-Kāzirūnī, 2001.

42 Liu 2005b, 14:43.

43 Liu 2005b, 14:39.

> Trustful mind means to wholeheartedly and sincerely believe [*shixin chengxin* 實心誠信] without any doubts the accounts on deeds and sayings of the sages that go beyond the normal. Those who cast doubt are not the prophets' followers.
>
> 信心者，凡間見聖人所事所言出乎尋常見聞之外者， 實心誠信， 不可疑議，少有疑議即非聖人之徒也.[44]

This third usage of *xin*, as shown in the passages quoted above from Ma Zhu and Liu Zhi, represents an anxiety about heterodoxy and heteropraxy and a resulting sensitivity to the authenticity of texts and validity of knowledge that prevailed among Chinese Muslim scholars during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The term *xin* and its derivatives mirror new critical approaches to textuality and knowledge and honest attempts to devise and systematize ways to assess textual authenticity, religious authority, and the validity of transmitted knowledge.

## 6 Conclusion

Three usages of the term *xin* appear in Chinese Islamic literature, mirroring tendencies, anxieties and programs that characterized the development of Chinese literature on Islam. The socio-ethical meaning of *xin* brings to light the aspiration of Chinese Islamic authors to portray Islam as fully compatible with Confucian ethics; second, the theological meaning of *xin* allowed authors to bring across the perplexing notion of the belief in the monotheistic God; finally, the textual meaning of *xin* was part of a framework that sought to assess the credibility, authenticity, and authority of written sources of knowledge.

The investigation of the different usages of the term *xin* provides a lens into the intellectual and socio-political development of literature on Islam in China, and in turn, into the history of local scholarship in early modern China. It introduces some of the processes by which foreign knowledge was introduced to a Chinese audience, the intricate negotiations of meanings and methods of expression that were integral parts of these processes. This investigation aims to supplement the available research on early modern China's polyglot and multicultural landscape and further shed light on the intellectual engagements between China and the Islamicate world.

44 Ibid.

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# PART 3

## *From the Christian Milieu to the Entry into the General Lexicon of Modern Chinese: Late-Qing to Republican Uses and the Role of Japan*

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CHAPTER 13

# Negotiating between Chinese Religious Beliefs and Christian Faith: Timothy Richard's (1845–1919) Understanding of "Faith"/*xin* 信 and Approach to Comparative Religion

*Thomas Jansen*

## 1 Introduction

Concepts such as "religion," "faith" or "belief" cannot be taken for granted, they have their own complicated histories. As a result, much scholarly effort has been devoted to analyzing the constructions of "religion" as an anthropological, social, and historical category in China, revealing how the concept has been invented, challenged, modified, or rejected in different historical situations. By comparison, the translation and use of the terms "faith" or "belief" in a Chinese cultural context have received scant attention from scholars working in the areas of Chinese religions, Chinese Christianity, or mission studies.[1] I contend that references to "Chinese Christian faith" or "Chinese folk beliefs" in English-language scholarly or non-scholarly writings are generally employed with an implicit assumption that "belief" or "faith" mean roughly the same things and work in similar ways in Chinese religions as in confessional-based monotheistic religions. This assumption is, of course, highly problematic. The Chinese Lutheran Christian Paulos Huang, for example, describes the paradoxical tensions he experiences in his life between the Protestant doctrine *sola fide, sola gratia* (justification by faith and God's grace alone), and the Confucian emphasis on self-cultivation:

1 For a historical exploration of faith in Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Morgan 2015. William Cantwell Smith proposes that faith "shall signify that human quality that has been expressed in, has been elicited, nurtured, and shaped by, the religious traditions of the world. This leaves faith unspecified, while designating its locus. We do not yet say what it is, but indicate where we are to look in order to find out." Smith 1979, 6.

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> As a Lutheran Christian, theoretically I understand well that "salvation" is absolutely the work of God rather than the result of human merit. Nonetheless, it has really not been easy to grasp the relationship between justification and sanctification in real life. Confucian self-transcendence seems so natural and normal to me and for many other Chinese Christians. Justification by faith and through grace becomes so easily just a mere theory. Therefore, like so many other Chinese Christians, in practical life, I am afraid of being lazy in fulfilling my own duty, which has been endowed to me by Heaven/God. Every time when I focus on my own deeds, I realize that sola gratia is my hope. Once I have peace and certainty with salvation, I will again paradoxically try to self-cultivate.[2]

Furthermore, as the above quote makes clear, the pair "faith"/"belief" relates primarily to the discursive and scriptural modality of practicing religion which prioritizes the composition and use of texts while downplaying other modalities, such as the personal-cultivational, the liturgical, or immediate-practical.[3] Paulos Huang's difficulty in reconciling these two modalities—one predominantly Christian, the other predominantly Confucian—is therefore no coincidence. The meaning and role of "faith" is likely to be different in a religious culture with a strong ethos of personal cultivation and efficacy-based religiosity compared to a culture that predominantly follows a confession-based understanding of religion.

By exploring "faith" in the Chinese context I by no means intend to downplay or minimize the central role that faith has played in the cross-cultural process of transmitting Christianity to China (and other world regions).[4] The importance of "faith" as a doctrine, personal attribute, and missionary goal is clearly evident from the number of Christian missionary societies and organizations that carry the word "faith" in their name: "Apostolic Faith Mission," "Christian Faith Mission," "Faith Mission," "Faith Fellowship," "Faith and Love Mission," "Hepzibah Faith Mission," "Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith," or "Society for the Propagation of the Faith."[5] My aim is to problematize the use of a concept that is likely to be understood differently even

2 Huang 2009, x.

3 I use Adam Chau's model of "five modalities of doing religion." Chau 2019, 25–33.

4 Andrew F. Walls (2002) has subtitled his influential work *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. However, "faith" as used in the title refers to the Christian teachings in general rather than focus on the different meanings the term might have had in different historical and cultural contexts.

5 See the list of acronyms of missionary societies and religious organizations in Tiedemann 2009, xxiii–xxxiv.

by actors in the Western Christian traditions—the shared emphasis on "faith" across many missionary societies should not be mistaken as a total unity of understanding—let alone when it is translated and potentially adapted by individual religious actors in response to the demands of a non-Christian cultural setting. For example: What happens to the Christian concept of "faith" when it is transposed into a Chinese religious context? Does the faith/*xin* lexicon mean the same, or much the same, in English and Chinese sources or not? Does faith/*xin* operate in the same ways in their respective socio-cultural and linguistic contexts?

The writings of the Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard (1845–1919), who spent 45 years in China in the service of the Baptist Missionary Society (1870–1915), provide a good basis to address these questions. In the following pages I will present two related arguments: The first one is that Richard expanded the understanding of "faith" by opening the concept up to non-Christian experiences and understandings, rather than projecting a narrow Christian interpretation of faith onto the Chinese religious landscape. My second argument is that Richard's interpretation of faith can be traced back to his Welsh upbringing and the influences he received during the Welsh spiritual revival of 1858–60. Richard's Welsh religious upbringing and experience are important because they shaped his approach to modernization and thus indirectly modernization discourses within the Chinese elite.

Born in Ffaldybrenin, a small Carmarthenshire village near the historic university town of Lampeter, Richard spent most of his adult life in China as a missionary in the service of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). From 1870 to 1915, Richard first worked as famine relief administrator in Shandong and Shanxi province, then as journalist and newspaper editor in Shanghai. His involvement in the political and social reform movement in the late nineteenth century gained him access to Chinese elite circles, including the imperial court.[6] As a translator of books and pamphlets on current issues from English into Chinese, he reached large audiences across the country. His innovative and sensitive approach to working in a foreign culture inspires missionaries and charities working in China until this day.[7]

Richard's life and work in northern China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century offers, as Andrew F. Walls has commented, "a convenient

6 Apart from Richard's autobiography (Richard 1916), Soothill 1924 is still the most comprehensive overview of Richard's political involvement, while Kwong 1984 discusses specifically his role in the 1898 reforms.

7 The Shanxi-based Evergreen Service, founded by Norwegian missionary Peter Torjesen (d. 1939), mentioned a Timothy Richard Fund on its website until at least 2014.

paradigm of the experience of the missionary movement as a whole."[8] The evolution of Richard's missionary thought encompasses, and often anticipated, main developments in the Christian transmission of the faith. First-hand encounters with numerous Chinese religionists, including the leaders of sectarian groups who operated on the fringes of the officially tolerated religious spectrum, and the experience of a receptive audience at a temple fair at Huilong Shan ("Returning Dragon Mountain") in present-day Dengwen, Shandong, in 1872, convinced Richard that the most promising way to the hearts and minds of his Chinese audiences was to frame explanations of the gospels in terms familiar to them and by addressing Chinese concerns, what he called "Chinese difficulties."[9] These early-won insights set Richard on the path of intensive study of the cultural and religious milieu of the Chinese people. He learned from Chinese sectarian religions as well as from his fellow missionaries. The absorption of "indigenous impulses" (Kaiser)[10] into his mission practice, in addition to what he had learned from other missionaries and through his first-hand experience of Welsh non-conformity,[11] led him "to the conclusion that what God would have was the adaptation of Christian truth to the wants of China, not mere imitation of Christian institutions transplanted from the West."[12]

> I had noticed that the Chinese had a method of their own in carrying on education and the propagation of their religious doctrines. Their [sectarian] societies were self-supporting and self-managing. It occurred to me that the best way to make Christianity indigenous was to adopt Chinese methods for propagation.[13]

Richard supported a two-way model that would combine substantial local organizational autonomy and active participation by local Chinese Christians in the affairs of their local churches with linguistic and cultural acculturation on part of the missionaries.[14] This approach, which clearly conceived

8 Walls 2002, 238.

9 Kaiser 2019, 68.

10 On the various indigenous influences on Richard's missionary practice see Kaiser 2019, 68–94; Ng 2012, 111–132.

11 See below for a discussion of how Welsh non-conformity shaped Richard's approach to missionary work.

12 Kaiser 2019, 47.

13 Richard 1916, 55; Kaiser 2019, 79–80.

14 It is worth noting that local self-management and self-support had been practiced by the China Inland Mission and other evangelical missions from early on.

missionary work as a two-way process, required constant interaction between the missionary and local believers as well as the willingness to adjust one's position or views. It is in this context of intercultural engagement that we may hope to gain insights into how an understanding of "faith" evolved between Christian missionaries and Chinese religious communities, Christian or sectarian. Richard's striving for empathetic acculturation as a missionary method was his main motivation for presenting the Christian teaching to Chinese audiences in their own language. Richard's extensive use of the Chinese medium to propagate the Christian faith provides the textual basis that allows us to observe Richard's translation of key Christian terms to a Chinese context. It is these writings to which I will now turn.

## 2 Explaining Christianity to the Chinese, and China to the West

Timothy Richard's appreciation of Chinese customs was regarded as quixotic by most other missionaries.[15] Not surprisingly, Richard's accommodationist attitude led to tensions with his fellow missionaries in China, particularly those of the China Inland Mission (CIM), founded by Hudson Taylor (1832–1905) in 1865. As one of the earliest "faith missions," the China Inland Mission required of both ministers and converts that "their faith must be in God, their expectation from Him."[16] This requirement described primarily the expected attitude towards missionary finances rather than questions of salvation. Hudson Taylor was instrumental in strengthening the emphasis on "living by the faith" as a guiding concept of the CIM. The fourth principle of the CIM, also known as the "faith principle" stated: "Missionaries receive no salary, but expect that God will supply their every need through the hands of his children ('faith principle')."[17] God hears and answers believing prayer without the help of any humanly contrived means. In other words, strengthening one's faith was a core spiritual demand both for the missionaries themselves and their Chinese converts. Richard's approach to mission work raised concerns both within and outside the BMS. Vocal critics, such as fellow Baptist missionary Arthur Sowerby (1857–1934), were concerned that Richard's emphasis on building schools, orphanages and hospitals (indirect mission) threatened to

15 The theological conflict between Richard and other missionaries is documented most comprehensively in Kaiser 2019, 159–222.

16 "Principles and Practices of the China Inland Mission," quoted from Kaiser 2019, 174. On the early history of the faith mission movement, see Fiedler 1994, 32–69.

17 Fiedler 1994, 33. See Pfister 2003 for a comparison of the missionary approaches of Taylor and Richard.

undermine the central role that faith (direct mission) had, gradually replacing it with a "materio-spiritual" worldview that focused instead on "all the comforts of western civilization, all the triumphs of modern science and engineering, all knowledge, and everything that is profitable, as an essential part of the Kingdom [of God]."[18]

The rising tensions within the Protestant missions in China erupted at the second General Missionary Conference in Shanghai in 1890. A paper delivered by the American Presbyterian missionary Gilbert Reid, entitled "The worship of ancestors," led to a storm of protest and tumultuous scenes at the conference. A resolution was carried to denounce the idolatrous practice of ancestor worship and strike Reid's paper from the published conference proceedings. Reid's formal protest was backed by only one person: Timothy Richard. "Accommodation to the customs and religious beliefs of a kingdom in obvious decay was considered both unmanly from the Christian soldiers' [sic] point of view and unnecessary."[19] However, the early example set by Reid and Richard had a huge influence on the liberal movement in Protestant missions over the coming three decades, despite the rejection his approach of empathetic acculturation received in some quarters within the missionary community.[20] Such differences of opinion within missionary circles led to Richard's departure from Shanxi. In June 1890, he accepted an invitation to write for and edit *Shibao* 時報 (The Times), a Chinese language newspaper based in Tianjin. This step was the beginning of Timothy's most productive period and greatest public influence. Among educated Chinese of the late nineteenth century, he was primarily known as contributor to another Chinese language periodical, *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 (A Review of the Times).[21] This monthly magazine was the flagship publication of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge Among the Chinese (SDCK; Guangxue hui 廣學會), the head of which Richard became in October 1891.[22] Published in the safe and liberal atmosphere of the International Settlement in Shanghai, the monthly magazine carried not only increasing amounts of news, both domestic and international, but a large and comprehensive body of political commentary as well as sources of new knowledge to "inform

18 Quoted from Kaiser 2019, 190–91.

19 Lian 1997, 173.

20 See Lian 1997. The position of Richard's critics is comprehensively discussed in Kaiser 2019, 159–222.

21 From 1874–83, *Wanguo gongbao* was called *The Chinese Globe Magazine* in English; between 1889–1907, it had the English subtitle *A Review of the Times*. For an introduction to *Wanguo gongbao*, see Zhang 2007, 46–61.

22 The SDCK was founded by Alexander Williamson in 1887.

and enlighten" the Chinese educated readership through the promotion of Western science.[23]

Richard was a hugely prolific author and translator. His translation (1913) of the famous Chinese novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西游記), based on a true story of a Buddhist monk traveling to India in search of the "true religious scriptures," has been re-published in a new edition in 2008.

Richard himself wrote or translated an estimated 100 of the SDCK's 250 publications, mostly on political and social reform.[24] Forty-one of Richard's essay were published under the auspices of the Chinese imperial court in 1898 in a collection with the title *A New Compilation of Essays on Administrative Statecraft under the Reigning Dynasty* (*Huangchao jingshi wen xinbian* 皇朝經世文新編). Richard's writings appeared alongside the writings of other key Chinese reformers of the day, men like Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865–1898). A second, no less important pillar of Richard's fame was his translation—produced with the help of Chinese editor Cai Erkang 蔡爾康 (1852–1920)—of Robert Mackenzie's *The Nineteenth Century: A History* (1880). The Chinese abridged translation appeared in serial form between March and September 1894 in *Wanguo gongbao*. The book edition published the following year was circulated in millions of pirated copies throughout China.[25]

Mackenzie's book narrates essentially the success story of the main capitalist countries in Europe, depicting the progress of the century from a state of barbarism and ignorance to the victory of science, enlightenment and democracy. In the wake of national crisis, Chinese readers were eager to absorb the lessons from Europe's "success story."

The theme of salvation, which is intimately linked to faith, as will be discussed later, also appears in a series of articles entitled "Jiushi jiaoyi" 救世教益 (On the Benefits of the Teaching that Saves the World). The text appeared in the journal *Wanguo gongbao* in several instalments in 1891–92. It was also published in the journal *Zhong Xi jiaohui bao* 中西教會報 (Missionary Review)

23 Writing from Shanghai to BMS Secretary Alfred Baynes in 1892, Richard suggested distributing SDCK literature at the 200 examination centers in China. Richard to Baynes, 8 July 1892, BMSA CH/3.

24 Yang 2014, 149.

25 The printing was sponsored by Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909) while Kang Youwei submitted a copy to the Guangxu Emperor who studied it thoroughly (Lai 2012, 57). Six pirated editions were found in Hangzhou and nineteen types of illegal copy in Sichuan (Zhang 2007, 59). The book was required reading for the Changsha literary examination, which is why 4000 copies were sold in two weeks.

between 1891–92.[26] In 1907, "Jiushi jiaoyi" made it onto the list of the most popular Christian texts in Chinese between 1812–1907.[27] According to Gilbert Reid, Richard's tract was different from other contemporary Christian texts in that the latter mostly dealt with the "life to come than with the life that now is, talking more about saving a man's spirit (*jiu linghun* 救靈魂) than saving man or men." By contrast, "Jiushi jiaoyi" was written to "make the *literati* more favorably inclined to Christianity. It remains to show to them that God, as well as Mr. Richard, is anxious to save them."[28] Slightly ahead of the Chinese version an English version entitled "Historical Evidences of Christianity for China: On the Benefits of Christianity" had appeared in the missionary journal *The Chinese Recorder* between 1890–91. It had been written in response to Viceroy Li Hongzhang's 李鴻章 (1823–1901) question: "What good can Christianity do for a nation?"[29] The English and the Chinese versions are not exact translations of each other and differ substantially, even though their content is largely the same. This suggests that they were conceived as separate publications written with distinct audiences in mind.[30] Comparing both versions shows where Richard adapted his message to his Chinese audience.

The title of the Chinese version uses the descriptive term *jiushi jiao* (teaching that saves the world) for "Christianity" instead of the more common transliteration *Jidujiao* 基督教. Interestingly, in the *Zhong Xi jiaohui bao* edition the name of the author is given as Jiushizi 救世子, the "Master who

26 I only had access to the *Zhong Xi jiaohui bao* version. The individual articles of the seven-part series in English appeared in the *Chinese Recorder* in the following sequence (Chinese titles added for convenience of the reader): "The Material Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu yi 救世教益有益於藝), "The Intellectual Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu wen 救世教益有益於文), "The Political Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu zheng 救世教益有益於政), "The Social Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu su 救世教益有益於俗), "The Moral Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu de 救世教益有益於德), "The Spiritual Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu dao 救世教益有益於道), "The Present Benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu jin 救世教益有益於今).

27 Lai 2012, 289–90.

28 Gilbert Reid quoted from Lai 2012, 57. See also Richard 1916, 86. Reeve (1912, 40) quotes Richard: "Instead of using the name Jesus, which to the Chinese would only be the name of one of the uncivilized foreigners, I translated His name and called Him Saviour. I introduced other changes, such as the use of Chinese religious terms, instead of foreign ones, so as to make the Gospel commend itself better to the Chinaman's conscience."

29 Richard 1916, 207.

30 In the *Chinese Recorder* version Richard prefaced the later parts with a note saying: "This, like the former articles on the Historical Evidences of Christianity, were written for the Chinese. It is mainly for those who are daily engaged in the presentations of Christian truth to the Chinese that it will have interest. But it is hoped that it is of some interest to the general reader as well.—T.R."

Saves the World," whereas the *Wanguo gongbao* edition uses Richard's Chinese name, Li Timotai 李提摩太. The source for *jiushi jiao* is unclear, but it is possible that the choice of term was inspired by the *jiushi tang* tablet donated to the Taiyuan church in 1878.[31] Another possibility is that the references to salvation/savior were deliberately chosen to appeal to the popular religious and sectarian milieus and their millenarian expectations regarding the advent of a new age. Whatever the reasons might have been, the choice of *jiushi jiao* and Jiushizi chimes with Timothy Richard's program of salvation for China which he had set out in his call for Samaritans for China (see below).

## 3 Historical Instances of Faith, Hope, and Charity

Section 6 of this lengthy text deals with the "spiritual benefits of Christianity" (Jiushi jiaoyi you yi yu dao 救世教益有益於道), specifically with the "growth of faith" (*sheng xin* 生信), the "growth of hope" (*sheng wang* 生望), and the "growth of love" (*sheng ai* 生愛)[32] or "charity," as Richard translates *ai*. The Chinese version is hardly recognizable as a Christian tract at all, as it is cloaked in the garb of traditional Confucian thought. The following quote is from the opening section of the text:

> In the past, Mencius said: "I too wish to rectify people's hearts, put an end to heretical teachings, impede perverse practices, and banish licentious speech in order to carry on the tradition of the three sages."[33] The Teaching that saves the world (Christianity) wants the same today.
>
> 昔孟子有言曰:「我亦欲正人心息邪說距詖行放淫辭以承三聖者。」今救世教亦然.[34]

The text goes on to explain that while people's hearts are originally the same, "heretical ideas and wild behavior" are being transmitted because of the limitations imposed by geographical location and local customs (*ren xin sui tong er xian yu di you yu su yizhi xieshuo hengxing zhuanxiang shoushou* 人心雖同而限於地囿於俗以至邪說橫行轉相授受). Having subsequently listed erroneous

31 Kaiser 2019, 220, n. 166. Donation of the tablet is mentioned in Williamson 1957, 41.
32 Alternatively, *sheng ren* 生仁 is used.
33 *Mengzi*, Teng Wen Gong II, 14.
34 "Jiushi jiaoyi: you yi yu dao," vol. 1, no. 10, 6.

beliefs in different world regions, Richard states the salvational promise to those who place their faith in Christianity:

> [...] These heterodox beliefs (*yiduan zhi xinjing*)[35] are therefore greatly damaging for the people, the state, and the entire world. The Christian beliefs are different. If people were able to follow them, they would not have to worry about how many evil spirits there are, how many taboos, how many fetishes, or how much evil *qi*. Instead, by giving themselves over to the almighty and all-powerful god, all these threats can be completely wiped out and myriad good things will emerge by themselves. Therefore, reverting to the great source of the Dao starts from Heaven. This is why all Christians believe that God (*shangdi*) has created heaven, earth, and all things; that God has given birth and nourished all countries and generations, and that he has established the means to rescue the whole world (*pushi wanguo*).
>
> 此異端之心經所以大有害於人與國與世也而救世之心經則不然人苟能遵奉救世心經則不懼有多少邪神多少塔部多少非提西多少邪氣但奉全權全能之上帝俱能掃除無遺而萬善自生也故溯道之大原本出於天所以救世教人皆 以爲上帝創造天地萬物生養萬國萬代又設法救普世萬國.[36]

*Xin* is used thirty-five times in "Spiritual Benefits of Christianity," mostly in the binomen *xin zhu* 信主, which appears twenty-eight times in a relatively short piece of text. According to the English version of the text *xin zhu* means "faith in God," but the phrase could equally be understood as "faith/trust in the ruler," thus hiding any obvious Christian associations. The second binomen that occurs frequently is *xin xin* 信心, a "faithful heart."

One of Richard's strategies to illustrate and evidence the indispensability and ubiquity of faith is to overwhelm the reader with a list of what he called "instances of faith." Richard uses historical examples ranging from ancient China to the Roman empire, from ancient Egypt to Napoleonic France to make his case for the role of Faith in God across the entire temporal and geographical span of human history.

As the main title "Historical Evidences of Christianity for China" indicates, the purpose of this series of articles is to provide proof of the efficacy of the

35 *Xinjing* 心經, literally "the norms of the heart-mind," referring to the central tenets of a faith that a believer is supposed to know by heart.

36 "Jiushi jiaoyi: you yi yu dao," vol. 1, no. 10: 7.

Christian faith for a Chinese readership. The use of what he called "moral evidences" was one of Richard's innovations in missionary practice designed to convince Chinese audiences of the truthfulness of the Christian faith. Richard was deeply influenced by the eighteenth-century religious philosopher Joseph Butler (1692–1752)[37] who had conceived of nature and common life as a self-evident moral system established by God. All human beings had the ability to recognize the moral nature of this system by virtue of their own divinely given moral faculties. Consequently, Butler insisted that the truthfulness of Christianity can be demonstrated through "the moral experience of the individual man" and "the facts of the experience of society."[38] Richard later found Butler's views confirmed by his own experience that concrete examples of superior Christian ethics and practical merit carried far more weight with Chinese religionists than references to the *Bible* or to miracles and prophecies:

> When I learnt that the Confucianists asserted that their *Book of Changes* was also the word of God, it was necessary to find something more convincing than the mere assertion that the *Bible* was the word of God. Then it was clearer than ever to me that our Lord Jesus Christ's method was not on these lines, but lay in appeals to conscience and reason [...] as evidenced in the Sermon on the Mount and the final judgment described in Matthew 25. [...] *If we could excel the Chinese in charity to the sick, the poor, the suffering, and in giving education*, then we should possess evidences which the Chinaman's conscience would approve and follow.[39]

Contrary to his theological training, revelation in the *Bible* became a supplement to natural knowledge, at least in his missionary practice: "I avoided the ordinary evidences of miracles and prophecy which I was taught to rely on in my theological training at home, ... [and] so I proceeded to dwell on the moral evidences."[40]

The focus on providing "moral evidences," on historically verifiable examples ("proof") of Christian moral achievements explains the peculiar style in which "Historical Evidences for Christianity" were written, both in the English and Chinese versions. They are essentially a collection of historical events grouped together according to world regions (Africa, Polynesia, Europe,

37 See Kaiser 2019, 32, 85.

38 From Ronald Bayne's introduction to Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed* (1906, xviii). Quoted from Kaiser 2019, 32.

39 Richard 1907, vol. 1, 85. Quoted from Kaiser 2019, 86. Emphasis added.

40 Reeve 1912, 44; Kaiser 2019, 97–125.

America, Asia—although in varying sequence). Not coincidentally a map of the world is shown in the second volume of *Wanguo gongbao* to underscore the global dimension of Christianity's impact on humanity. While the English version uses Christian chronology ("in AD 51," "in BC 334"), the Chinese text refers to imperial reign dates, e.g., "in the time of Han Wudi" (Han Wudi *nian jian* 漢武帝年間), thus grounding the text firmly in a traditional historical framework familiar to a Chinese reader. Interestingly, Richard occasionally uses Chinese reign dates to refer to events in other world parts, for example: "The Germans were another great people. During the Han dynasty they had no literature."[41] Or, "The early missionaries in Britain, during the Tang dynasty (618–905), taught the people how to make nets for better fishing."[42] Comparable phrases in the Chinese version are: "During the Warring States period in China, the Greek king Alexander the Great" (*Zhonghua zhanguo shi Xila wang Da Yalishan* 中華戰國時希臘王大亞力山) or "During the Jiaqing period the French emperor Napoleon …" (*Jiaqing nianjian Faguo huang Nabolun* 嘉慶年間法國皇拏波倫). It is possible—perhaps even likely? (see below)—that Richard used this mixing of timelines deliberately. One aim might have been to familiarize his readers with parallel eras or events in different world regions (similar to the use of parallel timelines today), another to suggest to his startled readers in East and West that regional and chronological differences are merely conventional, exchangeable markers in an essentially unified moral cosmos instituted by God. Whatever the reasons, the core argument presented throughout the series of articles is that Christianity excels in all areas of life—material, intellectual, political, social, moral, and spiritual—as is evidenced by numerous historical examples covering most of the known world. "Where the Holy Spirit is there must be growth,—*progress on all lines*."[43]

What Chinese religionists are encouraged to have faith in or put their trust in is not primarily the transcendent God whose divine grace is revealed through the life of Jesus Christ as narrated in the Holy Scripture.[44] The objects of faith are first and foremost the historically verifiable, practical this-worldly effects Christians have been able to produce through their deeds over the course of many generations, including numerous instances where Christian prayers for

41 Richard 1890b, 229. "We will not describe the Christian schools in Syria and Asia Minor, which were so celebrated in the later Han dynasty." Richard 1890b, 232.

42 Richard 1890a, 145.

43 Richard 1891c, 498. Emphasis in the original.

44 Regarding the evangelical usefulness of the Bible, Francis H. James commented: "Taking into consideration the condition of the Chinese and the nature of the contents of the Bible there seems to be no reason to expect the circulation of such a book without explanations to produce a beneficial effect." James 1890, 152.

divine assistance have been answered. The figure of Jesus hardly plays any role in the text, nor does Richard in his apologetic appeal "to miracles and fulfilled prophecy to confirm the uniqueness of God's revelation in the Bible and thus the truthfulness of Christianity," unlike Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1736).[45] What this example shows is the extent to which "faith" has become part of, to use Adam Chau's terminology, both the discursive-scriptural and the efficacy-based modalities of practicing religion. A good example of how "faith in God" worked in an efficacy-based context is provided in the following story:

> In Tokyo, Japan, there is a man belonging to the Japanese Christian Church who felt he had a call from God to do a great work for the [benefit] of his fellow-countrymen. But before doing much, he felt he must first learn more, and decided to go to the United States. He remained in one of the best Christian colleges for several years, then visited the most important places in Europe, Palestine, Egypt and India, and finally returned to Japan, having found that God had supplied his needs everywhere; his Lectures on Japan being well received wherever he went. He now wanted to build the biggest place of worship in the capital of Japan, but had not sufficient money. He prayed to God and sought subscriptions from good men. A fine church was put up, but a great storm came and blew it down. He was not disheartened, but put up another, promising the builders that he would pay them on a certain day. He begged for money in all directions, but when the morning for payment came, he still lacked 500 dollars. He prayed to God, saying that it was in obedience to His call he left home travelled to foreign lands; it was in obedience to Him he had put up the Church, in order to do good to his countrymen; now he prayed Him to come to his rescue, as he had done his very best. He then went to breakfast. When at breakfast the post came in with a letter for him. In it was a cheque for 500 dollars! All this was done by *Faith in God*.[46]

The story is reminiscent of *zhiguai* 志怪 (records of strange events) stories in which the plight of the main protagonist is often resolved through divine intervention in response to a prayer or act of worship. Witness the *do-ut-des* attitude that pervades the narrative: The supplicant had responded to God's command, spreading the Christian message diligently while having the interests of his fellow humans at heart. Now that he faces a difficult situation as a result of his commitment he can reasonably expect to be rescued by divine intervention,

45 Kaiser 2019, 85.

46 Richard 1891b, 199. Emphasis in the original.

which promptly arrives. The story confirms to the Chinese reader in familiar terms that the Christian moral universe, like the Chinese one, is governed by a causal mechanism between deed and reward, and that this mechanism operates reliably. Simultaneously, the idea of the efficacy of faithful prayer can be traced back to the Welsh revivals in the middle of the nineteenth century.

## 4 Revival, Faith and Prayer

Growing up in rural southwest Wales during the time of the great spiritual revivals of 1858–60, the sense of spiritual urgency and a fervent conviction that salvation was attainable by faith took hold of all age groups but particularly young people and children, including the fourteen-year-old Richard. Following attendance of a church service by an itinerant preacher in March 1859, young Timothy was baptized with fifty-one others on April 10, 1859. An extraordinary spirit of prayer, a spirit of union among all Christians, and a strong missionary impulse were the three main hallmarks of the revival.[47] As for the importance of prayer, one contemporary report states:[48]

> The great fruit of this revival is prayer. It was preceded by prayer, and it issues in prayer, which remains its chief agent. In previous awakenings, the ministry of the Word was the chief means … but the particular means of this present movement is "the prayer"; everyone is coming to believe in the efficacy of prayer.

The importance of prayer received a theoretical foundation through the work of Charles Finney (1792–1875), an American Presbyterian minister, revivalist, and second president of Oberlin College. Finney's *Lectures on Revival* (orig. publ. 1835) were extremely popular in Wales after a Welsh translation appeared as early as 1839. Finney had argued that a spiritual revival is not reliant on a spontaneous and unexpected outpouring of the divine spirit in the community. It can instead be staged, provided the correct techniques are being used.

47 One Presbyterian convention in Philadelphia identified the following shared indispensable characteristics of a revival: "[…] self-examination; repentance for sin; a vital faith in God's plan to save sinners and in His willingness so to do; persistent and importunate prayer for an outpouring of the Spirit; education in the truths of the Bible; direct effort on the part of the Christians to bring others under the influence of the gospel; the faithful and practical preaching of the truth; together with complete dependence on the sovereignty of free grace for every success." Evans 1967, 30.

48 Quoted from Evans 1967, 109.

*Lectures on Revival* are essentially a handbook on how to successfully launch a religious revival. In his fifth lecture, entitled "The Prayer of Faith," Finney—referring to a passage in Mark 11:24[49]—elaborates on four main aspects of prayer:

I. That faith is an indispensable condition of "prevailing prayer" (faith does not only relate to miracles; but to any effectual prayer that ensures the blessing);
II. What it is that we are to believe when we pray (we believe for what we have evidence);
III. When we are bound to exercise this faith, or to believe that we shall receive the thing we ask for;
IV. That this kind of faith in prayer always does obtain the blessing sought.[50]

According to Finney, faith is indispensable in any prayer seeking to secure a response ("prevailing prayer"); it relates to any situation (e.g., China will rise again), not only biblical miracles. Such faith must be based on rational, observable evidence (e.g., Christianity has helped many nations to prosper, so why not China too). Faithful prayer is always efficacious, meaning it always yields the desired results, provided the two essential conditions (faith, evidence) are met and the seeker of benefits pursues his or her goal actively:

> You must first obtain evidence that God will bestow the blessing. How did Daniel make out to offer the prayer of faith? He searched the Scriptures. Now, you need not let your Bible lie on a shelf, and expect God to reveal His promises to you. "Search the Scriptures," and see where you can get either a general or special promise, or a prophecy, on which you can plant your feet. Go through your Bible, and you will find it full of such precious promises, which you may plead in faith.[51]

Richard did not explicitly acknowledge Charles Finney as an intellectual influence, making it is difficult to know whether he consciously applied the lessons from *Lectures on Revival* in his own missionary practice. However, Richard praised Finney's spectacular success as a preacher in his "Moral Benefits of Christianity."[52] It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the nexus between

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49 Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. (Mark 11:24)

50 Finney 1835, 30.

51 Finney 1835, 30. Emphasis added.

52 Richard 1891a, 27.

faith, "historical evidences," and national revitalization in Richard's writings owes at least some intellectual debt to Charles Finney. Richard's approach to China's modernization is essentially an attempt to implement Finney's strategy to generate a spiritual revival. Richard's faith-language is deeply influenced by and consistent with the ideology and practice of spiritual revivalism. Modernization for Richard is to a large extent dependent on moral reinvigoration, a matter of faith and a nation's confidence in her own ability. The "instances of faith" discussed above aimed at convincing Chinese audiences of the possibility of salvation, both personal and as a nation: Other nations have transformed their fate with the help of faith in God, and so can China, even though the road is long and arduous.

Faith is part of a triad whose other elements are hope and charity or love. Following the evidence for the "growth of faith" (*shengxin* 生信), the text provides similar moral instances demonstrating the "growth of hope" (*shengwang* 生望) and the "growth of charity/love" (*sheng ren/ai* 生仁/愛). Richard describes the relationship between the three as follows:

> Their *Faith* gives Divine strength to weak men, and confidence and joy instead of fear. *Hope* looks to the promises of God for the salvation of the world, which the Christian knows will never fail, and this gives him perseverance; in spite of apparent failure he expects consummation. *Charity* makes God's unspeakable love in Christ Jesus the pattern, therefore abounds in goodwill and kindnesses to all. In addition to ordinary knowledge and virtue, the Christian has the spirit of God in his heart, and through meditation and prayer has communion with God. Christians serve God in the kingdom of heaven as Ministers of States serve earthly monarchs. Christians may truly be called the nobility of heaven.[53]

The corresponding passage in the Chinese text reads as follows:

> These are the beliefs (*xinjing*) with which the Teaching that Saves the World teaches people about the right path of Jesus. If people store these beliefs in their hearts, they themselves can develop faith, hope, and charity. Faith (*xin xin*) is like a branch from another tree grafted onto this tree, but it may not immediately live. Hope is like a tree that has already received a graft, and, protected by a cotton bag, the root and the [new] branch will join to become one tree. Charity is like a tree onto which a new branch has been grafted and which has already come alive and

53 Richard 1891b, 174. Emphasis in the original.

> produced ripe fruit, thereby growing faith, hope, and charity. In the following [I] attach a record of such instances.
>
> 此救世教以耶穌正道教人之心經也。人果存心經於心中自可生信心望心仁心然。信心如同人將他樹枝接於此樹而未必立時即活。望心如同樹已接畢外用棉包護日久根枝合而為一樹。仁心如所接之樹既活已經結果成熟而所以生信生望生仁者爰附錄其事於左。

The list of examples that makes up the rest of the text provides the evidence for the causal relationship between faith in God and success of the nation. In his preface to the Chinese translation of Robert Mackenzie's *The Nineteenth Century*, Richard writes:

> China refused to intermingle with other countries, going against God's intention of equal treatment of every member [in the international community], and caused the inflicting of revenge on itself … . China's lack of understanding of God's will, and its refusal to befriend other nations and to show respect to good people [missionaries?], was the main reason for its successive defeats in recent history.[54]

Richard's main motivation in translating Mackenzie's book is to support his core proposition: because they had faith, the European nations were able to secure victory over China. The choice of his pen name "the savior" (Jiushizi 救世子) leaves no doubt that Richard considered it his mission to turn China's fate around, with Christianity as his salvational tool. In the pamphlet "Wanted: Good Samaritans for China" (1885) Richard writes candidly about the need to save China from the oppression by the modern West:[55]

> When the work of raising the uncivilised to the state of the civilised is accomplished, there will remain another world of so-called law and order to be circumnavigated mentally, not to discover clubs and spears, arrows and poison, iron chains and earthly dungeons locked up by fetish creeds, but infinitely more diabolical and barbarous implements of modern warfare, causing violent and terrible deaths; and to discover a slower and silent, but not less sure, working of so-called law and order—modern treaties—gradually draining people of the life-blood of their prosperity, backed up by the modern creed of selfishness. We have to re-study the

54 Translation from Kuo 2013, 244.

55 Richard 1885, 1–2.

> principle of the kingdom of God, and come once more among the civilised nations to defend the sufferers against their oppressors, and point them to an ideal kingdom which all must uphold and reverence, until the kingdoms of this world shall have adopted as their international code that which declares that there shall be war no more. The work of civilising and saving savage lands was comparatively easy, for these were only a small part of the world, and the distance between them and modern civilisation is more in outward form than in difference of moral principles, though that difference was considerable in some instances. In this higher work, which by the swift march of God's providence now opens before us, we have the whole world—political, commercial, and much that is religious—to elevate to a new platform; to change its principles so as to compel all sincere reformers to leave their Socialism, Feminism, Nihilism, Unions, Leagues, and such like pet schemes, aye, and even their diplomatic intrigue, and join us. For we have not only the promise, but also a long list of historical proof of possessing and enjoying the life that now is and that which is to come. The following remarks about China will show how sadly she needs godly men, with the spirit of Salvation in them, to come and be her best friend in her present time of helplessness.

It is worth noting that Richard's understanding of faith did not necessarily imply belief or acceptance of specific Christian doctrinal positions. When he lists what Christians "believe" in, Richard (or the person who edited Richard's Chinese) does not use the verb *xin* but the verb *yiwei* 以爲, "to hold that" or "to think that." In other words, by using the word *yiwei* he emphasized the cognitive aspect of adhering to central Christian tenets of belief, including the possibility of imperfect understanding, while linking emotional commitment, inner attitude, and trust in a positive response to the words *xin* 心 or *xin xin* 信心.

## 5 Faith as a Generically Human Religious Experience: towards a Comparison of Religions

Some of Richard's pronouncements seem rather bizarre from today's perspective. His tendency to compare wholly unconnected events from different time periods, to find similarities over vast geographical distances, and his indiscriminate use of important concepts for phenomena in different cultures has led to raised eyebrows among some of his contemporaries. Today, we would also be much less confident than Timothy Richard in holding up Europe as a shining

beacon of historical progress, effective governance, and economic success to be admired and emulated by the rest of the world.

The criticism that Richard interpreted things through the lens of Christianity and did not try hard enough to understand Chinese culture on its own terms has a point. I would agree that Timothy Richard's treatment of Chinese material can or indeed does give the impression that he focused on what fitted his Christian bill, often conveniently ignoring local interpretations that did not seem to support his missionary agenda. For example, in his preface to a recent edition of Richard's translation of *Journey to the West*, Daniel Kane notes that Richard "often translates the Jade Emperor as God, The Taoist Celestial Palace and the Buddhist Paradise as Heaven and Maitreya, the Buddha-to-come, as the Messiah. Messengers are angels, Taoist immortals and Buddhist bodhisattvas are all saints, and the Buddhist/Taoist paradise is populated with such Old Testament figures as cherubim and seraphim."[56] Richard's chapter "outlines" deal with what is advertised on the title page: "The Origin of the Universe, The Evolution of Monkey to Man, The Evolution of Man to the Immortal, and Revealing the Religion, Science, and Magic, which moulded the Life of the Middle Ages of Central Asia and which underlie the civilization of the Far East to this day." The vocabulary of modern scientific investigation (laboratory, experiments, trials, elements, fundamental laws, forces) is woven into the traditional religious-philosophical discourse of the original story (demon, evil spirit, pill of immortality, mind, matter, life). This is what creates almost comical effects, for instance when Richard comments on Monkey's ability to travel vast distances in a flash: "The speed of electricity anticipated."[57]

It is worth pondering how these comments should be understood. Is the reader asked to believe that the monkey king had discovered the speed of electricity (300 meters/second)? Or that the distance of 18,000 Chinese miles is a scientifically accurate calculation of the speed of lightning? These literal readings are not likely in the case of someone who had promoted and introduced science education in China and lectured on science topics. Richard was very conscious—he said it in the subtitle of his translation—that the novel was an "epic and allegory." The issue at stake here is obviously not scientific knowledge but the problem of translation and translatability of new concepts and terms. Translation and comparison were two key methods to establish historical

56 See Kane's introduction to Wu 2008, xxii.

57 Richard 1913, 267. In the first chapter, the celestial Jade Emperor is said to have used a sort of telescope to look down onto earth after having been alerted by light emanating from the eyes of Stone Monkey. Richard commented: "The telescope was invented by Galileo only in 1609 AD, therefore the Chinese must have had some kind of telescope before we in Europe had it." Richard 1913, 3.

connections between China and the rest of the world. The publication of a co-authored Chinese-English *Dictionary of Philosophical Terms* in 1913,[58] the same year that the translation of *Journey to the West* appeared, is further evidence for the key role that translations between English and Chinese played in Richard's work. "Translation" for Timothy Richard was not limited to finding the correct lexical equivalent in the target language. Translation meant "cultural translation," bringing one culture closer to the other by interpreting it, by finding correspondences that are intelligible and resonate with target audiences on a spiritual level. On several occasions Richard considered novels to be the best medium for achieving his goal. In his foreword to the translation of *Journey to the West*, Richard writes:

> It is not a textbook of science, but it is a great collection of rare experiments in human experience on the working hypothesis of the wisest philosophers of the mediaeval East. It describes creation in seven days, or periods, or kalpas. When first written it matched in interest those experiments made with ether and radium in our days. The author regards whirlwinds, blizzards and cyclones as the highways, or express trains, of spiritual forces, carrying terrible destruction to all who oppose them, but of unfailing help to those who are to be saved.[59]

In his search for a common human experience Richard cuts across geographical boundaries as well as chronological divisions. He makes reference to people and events in East and West, in the past and in the present. He compares the writing of a medieval Chinese Buddhist novel with scientific experiments in the twentieth century. He frequently uses phrases from different linguistic contexts to express one and the same thing—"in seven days, or periods, or kalpas"—emphasizing commonality and shared experience across cultures and historical periods. In his writing style Richard was indeed guilty of repetition and redundancy.[60] However, these stylistic idiosyncrasies are not due to inability or eccentricity, but instead pursue a clear goal: the search for a universal religion that is able to reflect and represent the shared experiences and concerns of all humanity. Richard is a religious universalist, a global thinker before the invention of the term.

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58 Richard and MacGillivray 1913.

59 Richard 1913, vii.

60 "Unsystematic, undisciplined thinker and rambling writer that he was …" See Walls 2002, 258.

The German-Canadian sociologist of religion Peter Beyer, who works on the religious system of global society, has postulated the existence of a distinctive religious function system of global society equivalent to the global political or economic system. He writes: "The variable and contested understanding that we have of the word 'religion' and its various cognates (sometimes neologisms) in other languages are all significantly conditioned by the historical emergence of a particular social structure, an institutional domain, which is the religious system of global society."[61] Timothy Richard anticipated the emergence of this "religious system of global society" more than a hundred years ago. His overarching vision and desire was to contribute to the development of such a universal religion. Being a missionary and man of action, Richard would have approached the task less from a systemic perspective but rather from a perspective of practical experience. But the goal remains the same. "To secure permanent peace and progress it is not enough to have unparalleled armaments to fight each other, we must have also world federation, unprecedented parliaments to legislate laws for all classes, and one great modern religion on which to build universal contentment in love of God and man."[62]

Timothy Richard's "comparative religion"—he uses this term himself[63]—falls short of genuine comparison between religions in an academic sense because Richard neglects what is different between the religions and the cultural traditions of East and West. Richard's intellectual starting point was a strong belief in the unity of the world. His method of selecting random examples from different texts as well as from historical and political events from across the globe was to evidence the guiding hand of God behind the myriad phenomena in the world. His concern was not to lose sight of the forest for the trees. Universal religion, unity of religions, co-operation between religions, religious comparison, these were the cornerstones of Richard's intellectual world from about 1890 onward, when he moved to Shanghai.

What is this ideal religion that Richard called the "Great Religion," the "True Religion," or the "universal religion"? It is not simply a universalized form of Christianity. Richard states that "true Religion comes not to destroy but to fulfil, that no religion has a monopoly of all truth, and that the best in all religions is Divine and eternal, and must be honoured."[64] The true religion comes into being through the mutual and sympathetic recognition of the best

61 Beyer 2006, 3.
62 Richard 1913, xx.
63 Richard 1913, viii, xii; Richard 1916, 336.
64 Richard 1913, xii.

traditions of East and West. In one single revealing note Richard gave it the name: "Mahayana Christianity."[65]

Richard's understanding of faith was embedded in his "vision of a common genealogy for all religious truth and a utopian future of global peace and religious unity."[66] It was furthermore shaped by practical missionary concerns, namely to introduce Christianity to a Chinese audience and to thereby contribute towards spiritual, political and social progress in China. Beginning in the early 1880s, Buddhism came to play a key part in all of these endeavors. In addition to providing a heuristic method for how to introduce Christianity to China and improve missionary work—Buddhism itself used to be a foreign religion that had successfully integrated itself into China's intellectual and social life—Buddhism also became the centerpiece of Richard's ideas on the common root of all religions as well as religious development through global history.[67] One might even go as far as to argue that "Historical Evidences of Christianity," published in 1890, was influenced by Richard's encounter with Buddhism, even though his translations of Buddhist texts were only published much later, in 1907 and 1910 respectively. In this light "Historical Evidences of Christianity" would appear less to be an attempt to demonstrate and thus justify Christianity's expansion across the globe. Rather it could be read as an attempt to define Christianity's place within global religious history. The difference lies in the multi-directionality of the latter approach compared to the one-directionality of the former.

Timothy Richard's engagement with the question of faith in Buddhism was based in his creative interpretation of two key Buddhist scriptures: the first is *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna), said to have been written by Aśvaghosha in Sanskrit and translated into Chinese by Paramārtha in 550 CE, but very likely composed in China itself.[68] Richard's translation of the text was published under the title *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana Doctrine—The New Buddhism* in 1907. He was assisted in this task by Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), an influential Buddhist layman who praised the *Dasheng qixin lun* as a text capable of integrating and thus unifying the different teachings within Buddhism.[69] Richard's encounter with Yang in Nanjing in 1884, and particularly Yang's admission that *Awakening of Faith* had

65 Richard 1913, xx.

66 Scott 2012, 55.

67 Gregory Scott has demonstrated that Richard's theories, rather than being the radical views of an outsider, were in fact "firmly based in certain scholarly trends that enjoyed considerable popularity at the time." Scott 2012, 72–74.

68 The most current translation of the text is Hakeda 1967. Williams 2009, 110.

69 Gong 2017, 30. On Yang Wenhui, see Goldfuss 2001.

caused him to convert from Confucianism to Buddhism, strongly influenced Richard's decision to translate the text.[70]

The *Dasheng qixin lun* is a summary of the essentials of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Part 3 of the text contains a discussion of the three "aspirations for enlightenment," one of them being the perfection of faith. Part 4, entitled "Faith and Practice," analyzes four kinds of faith as well as five practices through which the religious adept might perfect her faith: charity, observance of precepts, patience, zeal, and cessation of illusions and clear observation. In other words, the *Dasheng qixin lun* is a guidebook for "those who have not yet joined the group of beings who are determined to attain enlightenment."[71]

The second key text is the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 or *Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Dharma* (Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*), according to Paul Williams considered by many East Asian Buddhists to be the final teaching of the Buddha, imbued with extraordinary potency attesting to the efficacy of faith in the power of Amitābha.[72] Richard did not produce a translation of the whole *sūtra*. Instead, he translated the Chinese synopsis of the text which had been included alongside the Japanese translation by K.S. Fukagawa and published by the Nichiren Sect in 1904.[73] For the Japanese monk Nichiren (1222–1282), the *Lotus Sūtra* was not only sufficient to lead those who put their faith in it to salvation through rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha; it was the only *sūtra* adequate to the task of spiritual renewal during a period of declining *dharma* (*mappō*/*mofa* 末法).[74]

Faith was accorded a central place in Richard's theory of global religious development. He did not elaborate on the roles of faith in Christianity and Buddhism, but a careful reading of Richard's writings on the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity confirms key aspects of faith discussed above: First, faith is a generic human religious experience and as such part of the common genealogical heritage of all of the world's religions. Instances of the efficacy of faith can be traced historically across civilizations around the

70 Richard 1907, ix–x; Richard 1910, 44–45. A second factor in the decision to produce a translation of *Dasheng qixin lun* was, according to Gong Jun (2017, 31), the fact that Samuel Beal (1825–1889) in his book on Buddhism described *Awakening of Faith* as a "pseudo-Christian book."

71 Hakeda 1967, 88.

72 Williams 2009, 149.

73 Richard 1910, 129. Richard's book *The New Testament of Higher Buddhism*, published in 1910, contains the translations of both the *Dasheng qixin lun* and the *Miaofa lianhua jing* as well as *The Great Physician's Twelve Vows* and the *Heart Sūtra* (*Xinjing* 心經). In 1907, Richard had already published another book on Buddhism, the *Guide to Buddhahood, Being a Standard Manual of Chinese Buddhism* (Shanghai: Christian Literature Society).

74 Williams 2009, 149.

world. Second, faith is a means of global spiritual, social, political, and material progress. The practice and perfection of faith as promoted by both Buddhism and Christianity creates an aspiration and confidence in the possibility of a better world, both for the individual (individual salvation) and the collective (social progress). Where faith is absent decline sets in. The potency of faith is, to some extent at least, independent from its object, whom or what one has faith in or places one's trust in, as long as there is a "divine helper." The idea of faith as a driver of progress is reinforced through the link between faith and social action. Richard's use of a *Lotus Sūtra* edition prepared by the Japanese Nichiren Sect is significant in this regard. Having visited Japan in 1903, Richard was fully aware of the centrality of this *sūtra* for Nichiren followers as well as the political and social implications of Nichiren's teachings.[75] Whether he realized the extent to which contemporary Nichirenists instrumentalized Buddhism in the name of Japanese patriotism and anti-western imperial expansion is a moot point.[76] Third, faith that is expressed in sincere prayer addressing spiritual as well as material needs will elicit a response. Niwano Nikkyō 庭野日敬 (1906–1999), a twentieth-century Buddhist, put it this way: "[T]here is nothing odd about a person who has through faith undergone a change of heart, a change in his or her way of thinking, having the blessing of money or other material things come his or her way … . [I]mprovement and change for the better are natural consequences."[77] Fourth, faith in the *Lotus Sūtra* and its magical potency can serve as an expedient means (*upāya*; *fangbian* 方便) for attainment of salvation for all those who are not yet ready to explore the depth of Christian theology. The use of allegory in religious scriptures chimed with a missionary who was searching for skillful means to explain Christianity in China and Buddhism at home. The following statement on the Christian Gospel, written in defense against his critics within the Baptist Missionary Society, contains some of the ideas Richard believed to have found in Mahāyāna Buddhism: "one soul immanent for good in all the universe, of one Divine helper of men, of individual immortality and growth in the likeness

75 "[…] Nichiren, not satisfied with relegating salvation to the inner life of the individual, taught that it was imperative to engage oneself in active efforts to objectively transform the land, toward the realization of an ideal society wherein people would be able to attain happiness." See Satō 1999, 320; Iguchi 2006; Williams 2009, 171.

76 Richard (1916, 337) wrote: "After Dengyo Daishi had taken the 'Lotus Scripture' to Japan, it became the chief sacred book of the Nicheren [sic] sect, one of the most popular in Japan to-day. Thus we see that the religion of the Far East is not merely the growth of one native religion or sect, but a development of a religion which has ramifications throughout all the Far East, if not all Asia."

77 Quoted from Williams 2009, 171.

of God, of the importance of faith in God to produce good works, and of the willingness of the best spirits to make sacrifices to save others."[78]

> An explanation of what I understand to be the aim and scope of the Gospel. I regard the Gospel of Christ as remedial—undoing the work of the fall—destroying the works of the devil—a Salvation from sin and suffering wherever found, so that where sin has abounded grace shall much more abound. It begins by the conversion of individual souls through belief in the incarnation, the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then proceeds to lead these individuals to benefit their fellow men by the bearing of the various fruits of the Spirit, and as conversions multiply the converts will ultimately become a blessing to all the world. I also note this, that belief in Christ's death for us is not the end of our religious life, but a means. It is difficult to find a passage anywhere in scripture which tells the object of Christ's death to be other than Holiness. E.G. Our Lord "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all our iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.["] I hold also that our personal complete salvation is indissolubly connected with saving others. Turner agrees with me that Christ saves the soul and gives immortality, and so far destroys the works of the devil; but I believe that as sin brings a whole train of misery into the present world as well as into the next, often involving numberless other people, spiritually, morally, materially, socially and politically, Christ's salvation is not a half salvation, but will deliver the world in the long run, and is now delivering it, from all sin and misery of the present life, whether brought on us by ourselves or by others.[79]

## 6 Conclusion

In his introduction to *Faith and Belief*, William Cantwell Smith made the following comment on the relationship between faith and belief:

> Two considerations stand out, as one views the situation globally. First is the obvious point that in the world-wide range of mankind's history, religious beliefs have of course differed radically, whereas religious faith

78 Richard 1910, 37–38.

79 Richard to BMS Committee, 17 October 1888, 3, BMSA CH/4. Quoted from Kaiser 2019, 192.

> would appear to have been, not constant certainly, yet more approximative to constancy.[80]

Timothy Richard's discussion of faith in the published writings discussed in this essay has to be seen in the context of both his theory of a common genealogical heritage of all religions as well as the search for a future global "True Religion." As a universal expression of the human capacity for religious experience faith is a central concept with which to establish not only historical connections between Christianity and other forms of religiosity, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the future global religion of all humankind. Richard's conception of the salvific power of faith has a strong utopian element. In the present, faith has the powerful role of being one of the main drivers of human progress, both spiritual and material.

Scholarly reviews of Timothy Richard's published works have often been critical. Andrew F. Walls described Richard as an "unsystematic, undisciplined thinker and rambling writer" who "never produced a convincing synthesis of his experiences, and [whose] attempt to do so were manifestly flawed and sometimes alarming."[81] While such critique is not entirely unjustified it fails to recognize the underlying coherence of Richard's writings. These writings may not satisfy modern scholarly standards—he was no scholar, after all—but they are certainly not devoid of a larger plan.

Richard's comparison of religions and search for a world religion begs the question of his entanglement in orientalist discourses and modes of thinking. Richard's translations of Buddhist texts have been described by Gong Jun as "a Christian 'construction' of East Asian Buddhism":[82]

> [W]hen reorganizing its [Mahayānā Buddhism's, TJ] philosophical discourse, he completely ignored East Asian Buddhism's very own philosophical and historical contexts, and did not adhere to the principles of historical exegesis when handling the translation of Buddhist text. Rather, he placed himself in the context of the Western tradition, particularly that of the Christian tradition, to interpret the classical texts of East Asian Buddhism.

80 Smith 1979, 10–11.

81 Walls 2002, 258.

82 Gong 2017, 41. I have benefitted from the work by Tarocco 2008, Lai 2009, Scott 2012, and Gong 2017.

One could add to this assessment that Richard's idea of progress through scientific innovation utilizes what Marius Meinhof has called "colonial temporality": a discourse of linear progress based on unequal power relations that "revolve around discourses of deficiency that compel Chinese institutional discourses to constantly undertake comparisons with the West."[83] The relationship between the European nations and China is conceptualized as one between advanced nations and a China that requires tutelage in order to progress.

However, Timothy Richard's encounter with Chinese religions provides an opportunity to further complicate his relationship to orientalist discourses. Gregory Scott noted that Richard's narrative of humankind differed in important points from that usually associated with missionaries or orientalists in general.[84] In the context of this paper it is, first, important to note that faith in Richard's understanding was not a parochial concept on which Christianity had an exclusive claim. Faith is therefore not a hegemonic concept on which Christian superiority could be based. The undeniable influences from sectarian religions on the salvational aspects of faith undermined any narrative that was designed to project the status quo of foreign political and religious dominance into the future. Second, rather than projecting preformed ideas onto the Chinese religious landscape, Richard developed his concept of faith by amalgamating experiences as a young man during the great Welsh revival (1858–60) with first-hand experiences of Chinese religiosity at temple fairs and local religious groups. It was a work in progress. The analysis of faith-related sources revealed significant adaptations in response to Chinese religious expectations, for instance by focusing on the non-scriptural, material benefits of faith. In other words, Richard opened up the scripture-based discourse to a more efficacy-based understanding of faith.

The exchange of faith-related ideas was a two-way process. Richard certainly was involved in the construction of East Asian Buddhism. However, by the same token one could argue that he was also involved in the construction of a future global religion designed to ultimately replace Christianity. Both constructions led to a certain degree of decontextualization of religious practice. Yet it is important to acknowledge that Richard's ideas were rooted in the highly complex interactions between the worlds of Christianity and lived Chinese religiosity. Faith was for Richard a key mechanism that linked these two worlds.

83 Meinhof 2017, 53.
84 Scott 2012, 75.

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CHAPTER 14

# From Missionary Doctrine to Chinese Theology: Developing *xin* 信 in the Protestant Church and the Creeds of Zhao Zichen

*Chloë Starr*

## 1 Introduction

At some point between the late Qing and the early Republic, around the time of the collapse of the monarchy and the language revolution, another line of demarcation was breached. But just as the reforms took decades, imperial demise segued from Cixi 慈禧 to Puyi 溥儀 (restored briefly in 1917, and again in 1934 in Manchukuo), and classical modes of writing continued for decades alongside the evolving vernacular, so the transmission of faith from Protestant missionary publications and concepts to the agency of the Chinese church is more clearly delineated in the retelling. Overall, the pattern is clear: *xin* 信 in Protestant texts of the late nineteenth century primarily translates the English term "faith," and renders contemporary western understandings of faith. The content of the term is understood as a doctrinal given, whose (universal) meaning can be interpreted directly into Chinese. By the second and third decades of the twentieth century, *xin* appears more frequently as a compound term, and the semantic scope and philosophical content of "faith" as expounded by Chinese theologians and church leaders has been expanded and developed in the light of their own understanding and beliefs.

If the scope of use of *xin* in Christian publications in the late nineteenth-century was driven by western mission sources, it was also informed by prior Chinese-language usage. By the 1920s, as compound *baihua* terms containing the character *xin* were consolidated, tensions emerge in the range of usage defined by the re-imported Christian faith and its patterns of thought. In the theological discussions of the early Republic, the question is not just what these new compound terms mean, but whether the meaning and concept of faith is analogous in imported western liturgical texts and theologies and in the understanding of contemporary Chinese Christian leaders.

This chapter begins with a brief survey of the use of *xin* in late Qing publications, before taking Zhao Zichen's 趙紫宸 (T.C. Chao, 1888–1979) 1920 essay on the Apostles' Creed and his creation of a new creed for the Chinese church as a

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starting point to explore the developing interpretations of *xin* among Chinese theological educators and church leaders in Republican China.

## 2 From the Late Qing to the Republic

The spread of knowledge about Christian life and faith was much enhanced by the mission press in the late nineteenth century. Secular thinkers and politicians who became leading spokespersons on religion, such as Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), garnered the greater part of their knowledge from Protestant missionary publications (Kang even entered and won a *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 prize essay competition in 1883).[1] Unlike the specialized Christian press or church press of the Republican era, the late Qing press followed "for profit" publication models and a broad missionary sense of purpose in presenting an eclectic mix of news, scientific and secular topics alongside Christian apologetics. There was not only considerable personnel crossover between "secular" and church publications, but also between Chinese and foreign presses.[2] Articles from the Church Times might find themselves excerpted and reproduced in the *Shanghai Xinbao* 上海新報.[3] Leading newspapers like the *Wanguo gongbao* were widely read among the intelligentsia—reputedly from the emperor downwards[4]—and their language use as well as patterns of thought and social frameworks permeated into Chinese discourse. *Wanguo gongbao* (which was sponsored by the Scottish-founded Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge in China) had a circulation of almost forty-thousand in its heyday, a far cry from the first samizdat Protestant mission periodical of Robert Morrison in 1815, and proved a prime means for Christian vocabulary to enter Chinese speech prior to the broader reach of the *Heheben* 和合本 Union bible in 1919. A key precursor of the *Wanguo gongbao* was the cross-denominational *Jiaohui xinbao* 教會新報 (The Church Times), founded in 1868. This had a greater Christian thematic content than its more

1 See Kuo 2013. On the developing function of newspapers circa 1870s, including the creation of a "public sphere" in China (Shanghai), the coexistence of state and private media, and foreign press vs Chinese press, see, e.g., Wagner, ed. 2007.

2 For concrete examples of links between mission personnel and merchant newspapers, see, e.g., Gentz 2007, 52–66. Gentz's article also confutes categories of "foreignness" and "Chineseness" as frequently applied to two leading merchant newspapers, the *Shenbao* and *Xunhuan ribao*.

3 See, e.g., the *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao* article reprinted in the *Shanghai Xinbao* 上海新報, July 10, 1869.

4 Zhang 2007, 3.

popular successor, and ran multi-part articles, such as the series "Xin zhu lun 信主論" (On Faith in God).

Just as western notions of the role of a regulatory, free press were incorporated into late Qing editorials and ideals, western notions of Christian religious structures came to affect national structures of belief, and to guide practitioners of other religions, at a time when religious terminology was being standardized.[5] The impact that "Europeanized-Chinese" (*ouhua baihua* 歐化白話)—developed in missionary writings across the nineteenth century—had on the evolving grammar of vernacular Chinese has been described by scholars of Chinese literature, but remains a sensitive and understudied topic.[6] Christian publications abounded with odd grammar and very specific, translated word usage, but the regularity of the appearance of Christian terms and phrases does suggest a transfer of understanding and input of new semantic range into religious terms in the late nineteenth century.

In late Qing writings, the character *xin* 信 mainly appears as a single character, with many occurrences variations on "belief" or "faith" in verbal and nominal forms, in a linguistic pattern consonant with use in earlier Chinese texts. The provocative headline of a *Wanguo gongbao* article of 1878 provides an example: "Believing in (信) Jesus is divine; believing in idols is diabolic."[7] A number of compound terms relating to *xin* as "faith" also circulated in the 1860s and 70s, but binomes appear less prevalent than monosyllabic use. Compounds or quasi-compounds include the neologism *danxin* 單信 for "faith" itself;[8] *xinzi* 信子 or *xinyou* 信友 for "believer;" *jing xin* 敬信(天主) "devoutly believe;" *zhong xin* 終信 "to believe wholly;" *du xin* 篤信 "to believe truly" or "firm belief;" *jianxin* 堅信 "to establish in the faith," with *jianxinli* 堅信禮 as the rite of Confirmation, and *chongxin* 崇信(者), "worshipper."[9] Use of *xin* in

5 On Christian religious structures as a national model, see Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 73–89; Nedostup 2009. On the domestication (and "Sinification") of the Qing press, see e.g. Mittler 2007 and debates in Gentz 2007.

6 See, e.g., Yuan Jin 袁进 2009 or his 2006 volume *Zhongguo wenxue de jindai biange*. The relationship between the Christian press and the expanding public sphere is another understudied area, with most attention directed toward *Shenbao* and the for-profit press' relationship with the state and with reform-minded thought.

7 Chen Pan 陳磐 1878.

8 William Muirhead uses this in his translation of *The Anxious Enquirer*, published in Shanghai in 1856 and 1882. As John T.P. Lai notes, the neologism *danxin* "in itself is hardly intelligible," but was used by translators like Muirhead in contrast to the more usual Chinese term 篤信, used to render "assurance." See Lai 2012, 198–200.

9 The first three terms can be found in the article "誠信子論職方外紀言耶穌事," *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao*, 1869, no. 59: 3–4.




FIGURE 14.1 Faith, hope, love
FROM *ZHEN DAO QIKAN* 12, COVER PAGE, N.D. (1911?)

Christian journal articles can be cumbersome, but frequently makes more sense in back-translation from English.[10] Such use of Chinese terminology in a western frame (linguistic or conceptual) did not cease in the late Qing, and is found in isolated examples well into the Republic. An edition of the Roman Catholic *True Way* 真道期刊 magazine from the 1920s, for example, reprinted an engraving of "Religio" depicting her as a lady with a full-body halo holding a chalice and large cross, with the three characters 信 望 愛 below: "faith, hope,

10 As in unmarked biblical phrases or paraphrases, such as "不信者雖生即死而信者雖死更生" [the unbeliever who is alive is yet dead, while the believer, though s/he die, will live again]; or "信天父之主宰別無上帝" [believe that there is no God but the heavenly father who is ruler/Lord]. See Sun 1869, 6–7.

and charity/love."[11] Here *xin* is the cardinal virtue that abides; a stand-alone noun or sign depicting the entirety of (Christian) religious belief and assent.

The meaning of *xin* as faith is frequently unexplored or taken for granted in late Qing Christian journal articles. This is in part a function of format, of predominantly short articles in magazine formats and their intent for general consumption, although multi-part articles spread over several editions also existed, allowing for more extended treatment of topics. Where the nature of faith is considered, the authors of these pieces frequently fall back on stock biblical phrases and ideas. One Suzhou Presbyterian teacher or pastor (教師) surnamed Bao, for example, offers a conventional starting point for a discussion of faith in a three-part article entitled "If you believe you will be saved" (*Xin ze de jiu* 信則得救), but one which affords little discussion or elaboration: "human faith comes from the grace of God, and is not self-sustained" (人之信由神之恩非人自持).[12] Another example is seen in a thousand-character piece by Guo Qianshen in the *Wanguo gongbao*, entitled "Exhorting faith in the True Way" (*Quanxin zhendao* 勸信真道).[13] Following a sweetly naïve pastiche of the opening of the Analects,[14] the author narrates how, after coming to "believe in the Way" *xin dao* 信道, he experienced a healthy body, peaceful heart and all that he wished for—while his unbelieving spouse knew none of these. The article, perhaps a sermon transcript, circles around the phrase from John 14, "believe in God, believe also in me" and limns the hypocrisy of faith not acted upon, as in Peter's three-fold denial of Christ. Variations on the phrase "to believe with the mouth but never make the intent sincere" (口信而意未誠) are repeated, but with no definition of "faith" implied other than that of being willing to lay down one's life for Christ—that is, the acting out of what St. Peter failed to do. The relatively unsophisticated level of debate is seen in the language describing the hypostatic union and its relation to faith.[15] In many such articles, phrases abounding in faith (信) usually require the meaning to be input by the reader, and in some cases appear if not tautological, then

11 *Zhen Dao qikan* 真道期刊, no. 1: 1–52, 122. N.d. The magazine was printed at the Beijing Xishenku 西什庫 church press. C.f. Nicolas Standaert's discussion of *xin* as the first of the three theological virtues in Wang Zheng in this volume.

12 Bao jiaoshi 鮑教師 1869, "Xin ze de jiu 信則得救," 43: 3. The Protestant tenor of the statement is clear. In part 3 in the following edition, Bao contests that faith has been inherently weak (信本性柔弱) since the fall. Bao jiaoshi, "Xin ze de jiu," 44: 2.

13 Guo Qiansheng 1875, 27–28.

14 Where the author writes "耶穌聖教真是朋自千方來奉救 主之命而來者我等聽之不亦樂呼?"

15 E.g., "耶穌之身世人也耶穌之神上帝也故信耶穌者即當信其為上帝" (Literally "Jesus' body is [that of a] person of the world; Jesus' spirit is God therefore those who believe in Jesus also ought to believe he is God").

paradoxical. As Guo reaches his conclusion, exhorting his readers towards a truthful, active faith in Christ and God, he paraphrases the gospel of John, with interwoven commentary: "the faith of the one who does not believe in God but believes in me is inferior; one ought to believe in God and believe in me, and only then is faith achieved."[16]

On the rare occasions where the nature of faith is addressed, an apologetics motivation may guide discourse. Several articles in church periodicals contrast the nature of true faith and false (假) faith. A short article in *Jiaohui xinbao* in 1870 entitled "Similarities and Differences in the ways in which Confucianism and Christianity prove faith"[17] expands on the notion from the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) that without proof people will not believe (*wu zheng bu xin* 無徵不信), and describes the dangers of the populace not being followers (*xintu* 信從, those who believe and obey). The crux of the matter for the author lies in a query from a reader asking why miracles have been rare since the time of Jesus and the disciples, given that without proof, people will doubt. The author's response is two-fold: there is enough proof in the records of the actions of Jesus and his disciples transmitted through generations in the gospel to please all; but faith should not, in any case, be based on miraculous occurrences. On the question of why such miraculous events as those recorded in Mark of exorcising demons, touching snakes and safely drinking poison were not replicated in the present, the author explores the conundrum of faith from a Christian perspective: just as Jesus criticized those with stubborn, unbelieving hearts (心頑不信者), faith was a prerequisite for a miracle, not a proof; those who put their trust in miracles were in danger of being deluded by tricksters and illusionists. The *dao* of Jesus was not something that could be fathomed; faith had first to be actualized in the heart/mind. Miracles might follow, but would not be constitutive of faith (the argument is notably similar to that which Wu Leichuan propounds several decades later in *The Hope of Christians* (*Jidutu de xiwang* 基督徒的希望, 1940).[18]

If much of late Qing discussion of faith in the Christian press presents a somewhat unreflecting, wholesale import of biblical language, with a conceptual frame rooted in the transmitting culture, certain writings were more nuanced, exploring the term and the meaning of "faith" from a rather more inculturated perspective. Unsurprisingly, these tended to come from liberal-leaning

16 "不信上帝而信我信猶左也當信上帝而信我信始成也."

17 Asking about Christianity 耶穌教或問, "Rujiao yu Yesujiao zhengxin tongyi 儒教與耶穌教徵信同異," *Zhongguo jiaohui xinbao*, 1870, no. 92. "Christianity" is "the teaching of Jesus" not "the teaching of Christ" here, showing that even common terms were not yet standardized.

18 Wu Leichuan 2015, 242–245.

missionaries of certain denominations, and from scholars who had spent longer in a Chinese cultural and textual world. An article "On Faith" in the *Wanguo gongbao* co-authored by Timothy Richard and Chen Yunhe 陳雲鶴 in 1875, for example, takes a more abstract philosophical approach and standpoint, beginning in natural law territory with the innate understanding of principles and belief of those who lived prior to Christ's incarnation. (This is notable closer to the mode of argumentation on faith from reason that Matteo Ricci and confrères propounded).[19] The subsequent teaching of the Way is described in terms of cardinal Chinese virtues (*ren yi zhi dao* 仁義之道), and while the essay was clearly Christian apologetics, it explores the dangers of misplaced faith (or trust) via a series of worked examples and logical progression, rather than simple appeal to scripture.[20]

In articles adopting a Chinese frame of reference, the blurring of conceptual worlds is most evident, often predicated on the ambiguity of single-character usage of 信. In a short article also with the title "On Faith" (*Lun xin* 論信),[21] Pastor Bi, an English priest from Guangdong, posits faith as a civic good. This might be taken as the sort of article that Matteo Ricci would once have deemed "preparatory" material for evangelism, a Christian exposition of shared topics of interest, except that it becomes clear that the article is really about the notion of "trust" and not of "faith," and should perhaps be better translated "On Trust." The article is signalled as Christian—published in the Church Times, by a priest, under a title that in many other instances would be translated On Faith—yet here 信 is a Chinese term and expresses the concept of trust. Pastor Bi begins with the statement that "Faith/Trust is one of the Five Constants; trust is the key to the Five Relationships" (信為五常之一信為五倫之要), before arguing that the five relationships are fixed by heaven and the five constants are a gift from heaven. All human exchange relies on trust, notes the author; even acts of goodness have to be trusted as such—we have to take it on trust that the actor is not seeking glory through their good deeds. The multivalence of the terms in such writings allows Christian virtues and vocabulary to coalesce with Chinese ones.

The broad possibilities of *xin* 信 in late Qing Christian writings, particularly in single-character usage, allow a degree of obfuscation in the referent, and so of how the notion of faith was conceived. The transport of terminology had yet, in the Protestant world, to realize a common understanding between author and reader. By the 1920s, a more fixed vocabulary of faith terms is

19 See Nicolas Standaert's article in this volume.

20 Li Timotai, Chen Yunhong 1875, 20–22.

21 Bi mushi 1872, 6–7.

evident, especially in compound terms, although there remains divergence between Protestant and Roman Catholic usage. The evolution from the multivalent *xin* 信 to the narrower "faith" or "belief" of *xinyang* 信仰 (or *xinxin* 信心)[22] was paralleled in Roman Catholic texts by greater compound use, with *xinde* 信德 remained the prevalent term. The prolific print production of Protestant missionaries, and their greater interaction with the more widely circulating secular press, meant that for specialized church vocabulary, Protestant usage was winning out nationally. (The Jesuit Xu Zongze 徐宗澤 [1886–1947] was still lamenting in the 1930s the adoption by young Catholics of Protestant vocabulary, such as *xintu* 信徒 for *jiaoyou* 教友 [believer], or *libairi* 禮拜日 for *zhuri* 主日 [Sunday; the Lord's Day]).[23] But more striking than vocabulary is the sheer number of writings on the topic, and the evolution in the level of theological acuity, including of scholarship which challenges inherited interpretations. Critical, constructive theology by Chinese Christians burgeoned in the early twentieth century as the cumulative effects of scriptural translation, didactic materials and education in the Christian colleges engendered the finest generation to date of Chinese Protestant theologians.[24]

## 3 Reformulating the Credo

"Faith 信仰," wrote Zhao Zichen, "is the light and strength that guides life forwards, and is also the creative spirit produced by a thriving life."[25] Among theologians of the 1920s and 1930s, Zhao Zichen (1888–1979)[26] was acutely aware of the need to shape a new Christian faith in the new environment of Republican China—and of the dangers and divisive potential attendant in discarding elements of the "old" faith. Several of his articles in both English and Chinese specifically address the question of faith. In an essay on "The Indigenous Church," where Zhao acclaims the indigenous church as one

22 *Xinxin* is also in regular use: in his multi-volume *Systematic Theology* (*Shendao xue* 神道学, 1921?, repr. 1925), for example, Jia Yuming consistently uses 信心 for "faith." Jia's scripturally-derived and salvation-centered discussion of "faith"—as a gift from God; its difference from knowledge, its relation to action; and the difference between, for example, "believing" in scripture and "believing" in one's salvation—make for an illuminating contrast with Zhao Zichen's writing. See Jia 1997, 145–165.

23 See Starr 2016, 118.

24 See Starr 2016, Chapter 1.

25 Zhao Zichen 2007 [1934], 529.

26 Professor of sociology and religion at Soochow University 1917–23, of philosophy 1923–25; professor of philosophy and Christianity and Dean of the School of Religion at Yenching (Yanjing) University 1925–*c.*1953.

which "conserves and unifies all truths contained in the Christian religion and in China's ancient civilization"[27] but is also freely enriched by Chinese "theological definitions and modifications," he suggests that the Chinese church "cares nothing about theological controversies," foremost among which were the niceties of the historic creeds.[28] The tension between what Zhao regarded as a natural tendency in China to love tradition and the need to reinterpret Christianity for its strange new environment was heightened by the anti-imperialist clamour of the day and its rejection of western hegemony in thought and praxis; yet the dangers of engagement remained real. Defining and categorizing the "faith" was, to a certain degree, inimical to that faith and its practice. The Chinese church would have its own creed, wrote Zhao, but:

> To the Chinese mind tolerance is easy and theological debates that divide and destroy the inner life of believers as well as that of the church appear to be absurd and to be a pastime only for theological warriors who can afford to leave the whole church dying before then "for just a little bit of love" while they fight their sham battles for the historical faith in the most unhistorical way.[29]

Four years earlier, in 1920, Zhao strode across this battlefield of the historic faith by offering a reassessment of the Apostles' Creed.

Creeds (and Confessions) are evidently historical milestones in the church. From the Westminster Confession to the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, modern confessions have differentiated new church bodies from existing ones and formulated new emphases in the relation of humanity to God. (The term "confession" is used for a denominational statement of faith, while "creed" is reserved for those texts universally agreed among Christians, which is why they are historic and few). In an article entitled "My View on Creeds" published in one of the major new Christian apologetics magazines, *Life* (*Shengming* 生命),[30] Zhao sets out a three-part dissection of the nature and purpose of the Apostles' creed.[31] In the article he re-evaluates the relationship between the historic creeds and contemporary Chinese Christian thought; explores the nature of faith—and, by doing so, expounds on the scope

27 Zhao Zichen 2009, 177.

28 For Qing dynasty Roman Catholic texts and discussions of the Creed, see Nicolas Standaert's essay in this volume.

29 Zhao 2009, 178.

30 Zhao 2007, 30–40. Zhao was a founding member of this and various other Christian periodicals.

31 Zhao's creed is discussed in English in Chen 2017, 152–154, and in Hui 2008.

and meaning of *xin* 信; and creates his own confession (or statement of belief; literally, "faith scripture" *xinjing* 信經). If the historic creeds are inseparable from the nature of faith, this third element is their outcome: a living, embodied statement of faith, at once practical and textual. Creating a new creed, in Chinese and for a Chinese audience, was a bold move—Zhao notes that a lack of courage had delayed its dissemination—and an announcement of the theological and ecclesial independence of the Chinese church. The widespread perception of the need for a local confession is seen in the afterlife of Zhao's text, as his confession was taken up by others.[32] Zhao's analysis of the nature of "faith" as a cultural and theological construct draws on his western theological training and his Chinese literary background. As in the late Qing, the linguistic scope of 信 intersects, but is not always contiguous with, these debates.

Zhao Zichen was an avid educator, and many of his most important writings were written for students and youth. He begins his article on the Apostles' Creed by noting that his ambivalence towards it stemmed in part from the difficulties that his students who wished to be baptised had in assenting to it, especially the clauses "born of the Virgin Mary" and "the resurrection of the body." The notion that believing in the precepts of the historic creeds was not necessary to contemporary faith was widespread among more liberal Christians in the 1920s. In an excursus on whether faith precedes hope or hope comes first, Zhao's colleague Wu Leichuan says of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds that "although they still retain some residual authority, following the changing needs of the times and the progression in our knowledge, the majority of those old beliefs (信仰) have become mere formalities (*juwen* 具文)."[33] At this point in his life, Zhao Zichen himself believed that a physical resurrection was antithetical to science and human experience.[34] The questions his students raised, and the points on which they differed, concerned whether such individual creedal statements were a necessary requirement for faith, baptism and membership of the church—or, as some believed, whether one could slip into the church with partial insincerity in the recitation of the creed and then work to remedy the problematic clauses from the inside.

32 In 1929, for example, a conference of the Congregational Union (Kung Li Hui) in Shandong noted that "differences in belief, and in the message presented by different evangelists" presented a major obstacle to evangelism, and selected a committee "to draw up a confession of faith." The committee spent two days preparing a draft, referring back to the Manual of Congregational Churches and "finding a confession prepared by Prof. T.C. Chao especially helpful." Wickes 1930, 191–192.

33 Wu Leichuan 2015, 242–43.

34 The different periodisations of Zhao's faith life, and his move from liberal back to neo-orthodoxy have been documented by many, e.g., Glüer 1979.

Zhao rehearses at length the reasons for the Chinese church to retain or to discard the historic creeds. His translation of a quotation from Philip Schaff's *History of the Apostolic Church*[35] supports their retention as a common heritage of the world-wide church, and exemplifies some of the new compound uses of *xin*-terms. Zhao's translation of his citation from Schaff reads:

> ... the so-called Apostles' Creed. This symbol, though not in form the production of the apostles, is a faithful compend of their doctrine; comprehends the leading articles of the faith in the triune God and His revelation ... and to this day is the common bond of Greek, Roman and Evangelical Christendom.
>
> 這個《信經》的各式雖不是使徒的產品， 卻是他們教義上信實的綜合， 其中包含'三合說'和上帝的啟示， 及從創世到永生的主要信條。。。直至今日，猶然是希臘，羅馬， 改正教中間共有的聯絡.

Returning "symbol" to its ancient usage as creed, composed in common, Zhao utilizes three *xin*-compounds in swift succession: *xinjing* 信經 (Apostles' Creed); *xinshi* 信實 (faithful); *xintiao* 信條 (articles of the faith). He continues Schaff's argument, by noting the ecumenical force of a single, common "document acknowledging faith" (*renxin wen* 認信文) at baptism, and accepting that any selective attitude (*xin bu xin* 信不信) towards the creeds constituted doubt of the bible itself. The danger for the Chinese church in discarding the historic formulations, as he notes, lay in losing the goodwill of the western (and Eastern) churches.

Zhao concedes that for many Christians throughout history the creeds have been as important as the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue, and recognizes the near-impossibility of any given body in China agreeing to a new formulation, but his article nevertheless sets out his five objections to the Apostles' Creed. These allow us to see how he understands "faith," how he construes differences between inherited western and Chinese understandings of the nature of a creed, and finally his own contextual interpretations of the essence of Christianity.

Zhao's first grievance is the inclusion of what he considers non-credal statements (不是信條的話) in a statement of faith. That Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was nailed to the cross, died and buried are, he holds, all facts,

35 Published in German in 1851, English in 1853. Schaff was a German-educated pioneer Protestant scholar of the formulation of doctrine in creeds and confessions, who had been acquitted of heresy charges in 1845.

historical realities, and not articles of faith (不是信仰的條件). In other words, one does not need faith (*xin* 信) to believe in (*xin* 信) objective facts. "We must also believe in (*xin* 信) history, he writes, "but history is realities already past, which we can use historical and scientific methods to collate and gather corroborative evidence" to verify: we should, he argues, make real deeds the corner-stone of religious faith, while there is no need for them to be articles in a creed. Here Zhao adds his own voice to a long line of Christian texts from the late Ming onwards debating the nature of creedal clauses as statements one "should" believe in, and of belief in matters unseen, as discussed in Nicolas Standaert's essay in this volume. For Zhao in the 1920s, faith needed a more scientific basis than the incredible elements of the historic creed allowed for.[36] The paradox is, of course, that the corner stone of Christian faith was to be verifiable historic facts, and not anything that required "faith" to believe.

What, Zhao asked, was the doctrinal core of Christianity? Not only did the Apostles' Creed contain non faith-based elements, but it included, in his estimation, a number of non-essential sayings too—including the virgin birth and the resurrection of the body—which "the majority of those with a scientific philosophical understanding do not believe in." These have soteriological implications and go to the procedural heart of what a faith-statement is for:

> If we say these are things Christians must believe (*xin* 信), then we should ask: for all those who do not believe these two sayings yet believe that Jesus is their personal savior, and are people who strive to learn God's ways and manifest God's character in their lives: will they not be saved? And can they not all enter the church?

The demands of absolute creedal belief, or promoting the entire creed as a sine qua non of faith and church belonging, entail the danger of a sort of institutional "don't ask don't tell," or emergent hypocrisy. If people are given to believe that they shouldn't criticize or amend the Apostles' Creed, yet those who do not believe each and every clause can still join the church: doesn't this negate the nature of the creed as the "measure of the Holy church"?, asks Zhao. Forcing a tension between creedal rigidity and truth-seeking leads to the situation where would-be believers think they can "assent by mouth but deny in the heart," and revise certain elements of the faith after they are baptized. This, he

36 On religious faith as "irrational" belief, see Thomas Fröhlich and Christian Meyer's discussion of Liang Qichao and Republican thinkers, as well as a germane point of comparison in Christoph Kleine's discussion of Shinran and Pure Land Tradition with its rejection of a "rational" basis for faith.

warns, makes the church into a liar, an organization that merely "dons the mask of truth-seeking."[37]

If Zhao Zichen's first two complaints against the Creed were targeted at its content, his remaining three cavils relate to what it omits. His analysis of what is absent from the early church creed allows us to see more clearly the shape of faith that Zhao envisages. The Apostles' Creed presents a certain understanding of the human and view of society, but it contains nothing on *how* one should live in the world, suggests Zhao. If Jesus' ideal society is described in the Matthean Kingdom of Heaven, then where is the Kingdom, or the "new person" (*xinren* 新人) in the creeds, he asks? Zhao quotes Ian McLaren (pen name of Rev. John Watson) approvingly: the Beatitudes were the heart of Christianity, its narrow path, while the creed merely furnished a broad path.[38] The Apostles' Creed contains only abstruse, or mystical theology, and no ethics—a "flaw" in all of the historic creeds—"From their first word to their last, they are physical or metaphysical, not ethical."[39] Belief for Zhao in the 1920s is thus not a mental assent to propositional truths, but has to be embodied in a lived life, a life lived on a social plane. Such category problems, and the Confucian-centered critique they imply, are compounded by the omission of any reference to Jesus' character.

As for many Republican-era thinkers, Christian and non-Christian alike, Jesus' nature or character was for Zhao "the central point of Christianity, the root of Christianity."[40] Without Jesus' character as the center of faith, nothing else, from the atonement to canon law, held any meaning. Character and action were, as Zhao reiterates, indivisible, and so the biblical and credal emphasis on action was misguided: Jesus' essence was his character.[41] A generation of Protestant Chinese thinkers in the late Qing had thought through and rejected a Confucian "self-cultivation" in favor of the Christian necessity of external

37 Zhao 2007, 34.

38 As McLaren writes, "Among all the creeds of Christendom, the only one which has the authority of Christ himself is the Sermon on the Mount … We must all know many persons who would pass as good persons by the Sermon and be cast out by the Creeds, and many to whom the Creeds are a broad way and the Sermon [on the Mount] is a very strait gate." Watson 1896, 16.

39 Watson 1896, 18, quoted in Zhao 2007, 35.

40 See, e.g., Wu Leichuan 2008, 180, for whom "the foundation of the establishment of Christianity, is the character of Jesus."

41 As Chen Yongtao notes, Zhao presupposed that humanity would cooperate with God in salvation through effort and self-cultivation; Zhao's Christology gave "exclusive priority" to the historical Jesus. Chen 2017, 154, 126.

salvation,[42] but the link between Jesus' own character and his salvific power held strong for many. In an essay on the Christian Student Movement, Zhao developed one of his clearest expositions of the links between character, faith, and (national) salvation.[43] Addressing the beliefs and mission of the student group and what it needed to do to tackle pressing national problems, Zhao explored the need for a strong inner self (内心力), and for Christians to inculcate this in others. The aim of Christianity was, for Zhao, the creation of a new society and new lives, and at a time when the existence of the nation was itself under threat, the core problem was one "of character, of vigor of mind" (*xinli* 心力). He exhorted the student movement to "create character, muster character, develop character, in order to hold together the true life of the nation."[44] Character was itself dependent on faith, since "in order to establish character, there must be a stable, unwavering, central faith (信仰), one that gives life and for which one would die."[45] Jesus' own vitality and greatness of spirit (*jingshen* 精神) came from his faith, and was inseparable from that faith—and it was faith in God that enabled Jesus to have faith in people, and to build up stupid, poor, uneducated, powerless peasants like Peter and James into the most powerful prophets and revolutionaries in the world.

If the creed omitted a core datum of faith—character formation—in Chinese understanding, Zhao's biblical and theological study (at Vanderbilt and in China) persuaded him that the creation of creedal texts was a slow, human-centered process in the post-apostolic period, and not a matter of instant revelation. The spiritual authority of the creeds came later: only after church (or worldly) powers supported their formulation did they come to be seen as a heaven-sent ideal. As a human enterprise, the writing of the Apostles' Creed was of its era. The history of composition was itself, for Zhao, an argument for the church to determine its teachings as it saw fit,[46] and amending, critiquing, or producing a new creed would be a "bold action, a valuable work" for the Chinese church, since the transmitted Creed was no longer able to express contemporary faith adequately, "but is rather a stumbling block

42 See e.g. "On the Regulation of the Heart" (Zhengxin lun 正心論) and "Teachings on the Salvation of the World" (Jiushi jiaoxun 救世教訓) by Wong Him-Yue (王謙如 Wang Qianru), 1879. Wong, an evangelist in the 1840s who worked with Ernst Faber on Christian translations, submitted these essays to a contest organized by missionary David Hill, which were published in a collection entitled *Zhenli kexuan* 真理課選 in 1881. I am grateful to Aaron Sze-long Wong for the reference; see Wong 2017.

43 Zhao Zichen 2007. Cf. also Thoralf Klein's discussion of religious and national salvation in the context of political religion in this volume.

44 Zhao Zichen 2007, 649.

45 Zhao Zichen 2007, 650.

46 Zhao Zichen 2007.

to many believers *xinjiao* 信教 of understanding and moral integrity." Zhao's own ten-point constructive statement of what a creed should or should not be shows his ideal in the positive and the negative. It should:

> Have scripture as its base
> Propose ideals and standards with a faith value in each clause (有信仰价值的理想与标准), not just a description of historical events
> Comprise only significant clauses
> Encompass the most important doctrines of the faith
> Be in simple language
> Express an appropriate global social perspective
> Foreground the character of Jesus and love as the basis of Christianity
> Express clearly the means of salvation
> Include discussion of ethical standards, moral life, or matters of the spirit.
> Those who draw up the creed, moreover, should not rely on any authority or ancient transmission, but be free of bias, employ no arbitrary assertions, not contravene any truths established by science—yet at the same time should speak to the eternal glory of religion.

A disinclination towards abstract theology alluded to in the penultimate point is complemented by an emphasis on the moral character of those drafting such a creed in the final clause: those creating a creed should recognize their own limitations, be rooted in good faith, and able to discard language at odds with the established truths of scientific thought.[47]

The confession Zhao writes, and which he describes as a Tentative Draft Confession (Zan ni xinjing 暫擬信經), is a deceptively simple six-point statement of faith (see Appendix below). Each of the six clauses begins, as with the Apostles' Creed, with *wo xin* 我信 ("I/We believe") and the first three follow the Trinitarian formula of the Apostles' Creed. Each clause is meticulously crafted and rooted in scripture: Zhao cites biblical texts to elucidate or corroborate his point thirty-three times in the short text. If the first three clauses attest to the triune God, father, son and spirit, the remaining three affirm beliefs relating to Christians, the church, and the Kingdom of Heaven. Zhao provides a commentary on his own creed in the article, pointing to its innovations and potential friction points. The three most significant innovations, as he avers, are its Christology; its philosophical underlay, and its ecological message linking God to all creation rather than just humanity. The first clause

47 On the ferocity of belief in "science," and debates distinguishing science from religion in Nationalist China, see Thoralf Klein's essay in this volume.

on God the Father is based on philosophical theism and biblical creation, with a key emphasis on God as the standard for human morality.[48] Zhao believes that he has retained the Trinity, but the "content has changed a little." His ecclesiology is functional, inclusive, and aimed at dismantling barriers between church groups. The low ecclesiology and the relative lack of emphasis on the church in clause 5 is noteworthy, prefiguring both the "post-denominational church" beyond missionary divisions of the 1950s, and the interpretations of contemporary scholars like Liu Xiaofeng, who have regarded the church as secondary, or dispensable, to Christianity.[49]

The most telling break with tradition is in Zhao's depiction of Jesus' "self-established character," which as Zhao notes is "bound to be attacked by some." He pre-emptively rebuts these attacks by arguing that all humans have to develop their character, and if Jesus had been born wholly good, he would not be identical to us, and could not represent or save us—a premise of Athanasius. If character must be established, then what is not established or achieved is not character, and our "revered and beloved Jesus" would count as not having any character, so could not teach us how to establish character. His perfect, achieved character enabled Jesus to be "equal in substance and alike in glory" with God, since the element of divinity lay not in his natural character, but his achieved moral character. While Zhao does not dismiss the cross, this is clearly not a crucicentric theology.

Zhao Zichen published two more statements of faith, a brief but powerful two page composition entitled "Wo xin 我信" (I believe) in 1932, and an essay in English entitled "What I believe" in 1941.[50] The first of these was a statement of optimism in the face of Japanese occupation, a statement of belief in the essential righteousness of the universe, and of hope and trust that righteousness would eventually prevail over sin and evil, as well as in the Chinese people and eventual flourishing of the Chinese state. In this statement Zhao deliberately couches his trust in language accessible to non-Christians, speaking of the eventual liberation from Japanese occupiers and all imperialism, while offering parallels from within Christian thought. The second is a more extended essay, written from within the darkness of war and imprisonment, and represents a different phase in Zhao's theology, affirming the authority of God to rule and judge; the reality of Christ's incarnation and atoning self-sacrifice, and of the transforming, overcoming Spirit. In light of despairing humanity, Zhao proposed a renewed faith in "man, the incomplete, finite and

48 Zhao 2007, 39.
49 See Liu 2006, 87.
50 Zhao Zichen 2009.

sinful being;" in the good of the Christian community, and in democracy as the best form of political organization. In 1941, Zhao the iconoclastic creed-creator concludes that in the midst of world change "we do not need a new set of beliefs, but that as Christians we need to reaffirm very strongly the old beliefs in the light of present day world need, for these are eternal truths."[51]

## 4 Conclusion

Throughout the late Qing, many of the circulating Protestant writings on faith were documents translated or written by foreign missionaries. The didactic and evangelistic nature of many such texts discussing *xin* is clear: their purpose is not to debate or expound the meaning or faith or philosophical bases of belief, but to transmit doctrine, to reproduce an understanding conjured by a source text, usually in English, in accurate Chinese, or to produce definitions for memorization. Language was understood as a vehicle, and much learning and expertise was expended in producing parallel or translated texts.

By the time that the New Culture Movement and the Anti-Christian Movement were simmering down (*c.*1923), a generation of Chinese scholars had grown up bilingually and biculturally, trained in the universities and seminaries of the U S , France and elsewhere. The debates on faith in their writings, as exemplified by the essays of Zhao Zichen, are no longer so much linguistic as theological and philosophical: what does it mean to have faith? Not to believe blindly in the "supernatural" elements of the Christian story but to develop a mature Chinese faith in keeping with the cutting-edge science and moral philosophy of the era? To propound a creed that professes a Confucian-inflected faith in accord with the aims of the indigenizing movements (*bensehua yundong* 本色化運動), and determine the purpose of faith for contemporary society? The strength of this shift should be clear: it was the redefinition of "faith" itself, as the indigenizing drive within the church, advocated by both missionaries and Chinese theologians alike, met with the latest theologies and the textual debates espoused by foreign-trained seminarians. Faith was not to be an inherited doctrine but a living reality, shaped by both deep engagement with church tradition and the changing linguistic and social context of revolutionary China.

51 Zhao Zichen 2009, 481. On the major shifts in Zhao's theology in this period, from more liberal to more orthodox emphases, including the role of revelation and the nature of the incarnation, as well theology's relation to culture, see, e.g., Chen 2017, 15, 186.

## Appendix: Zhao Zichen's Draft Creed (1920)[52]

1. I believe in the ruler who created, manages and sustains all things (Gen. 1), the holy (Isaiah 6: 3; 1 Peter 1: 16), loving (1 John 4: 8) heavenly father of humanity, who is also the standard for human morality (Mat 5: 48).
2. I believe that through Jesus' sanctified birth (John 17: 19) and sacrificial love (Lk. 23: 33, 34), that is, his self-established character (Heb. 2: 9, 10, 17; 5: 8), he became God's only perfect son (John 3: 16), of one body with God, one glory, one age (John 1: 1, 14); sufficient to commend the moral character of God (John 14: 9) and the possibility of humanity (Heb. 2: 10, 11); he is teacher (Lk 11: 1), friend (Jn 15: 14, 15), elder brother (Heb. 2: 11) and savior (Acts 4: 12; 1 Jn 4: 14).
3. I believe in the Holy Spirit, that is, the spirit of God's Christ (Rom. 8: 8), who seeks us out (Luke 15), who wants us, through his love, to escape sin and evil (Mat. 1: 9, 21), to live in harmony with him (Rom 5: 1. 5), to communicate with him (1 John 1: 3), to work together with him (1 Cor 3: 9) so that we may enlarge our spirits and develop our moral life (2 Peter 1: 4–7) to the point where we are capable of giving glory to God and serving others (John 17: 4, Mat 20: 28).
4. I believe that all who share a heart and will with Christ, share in his life and death, his glory and humiliation, share in his labor (Phil. 3: 10–16) are all Christians, and that as Christ lives eternally, Christians will also have eternal life (1 John 5: 12).
5. I believe that through their spiritual friendship, Christians become a united church (Eph. 2: 19; Eph 4: 12–13); if they form a visible organization, such as a church body, this is a tool to realize the spiritual life of Christians.
6. I believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is gradually realized in line with God's will (Mk 4: 26, 28), that is, the realization of the good society of new humanity (2 Cor. 5: 17; Rev. 21: 1–2; Mat 6: 10); that days of truth will be ever more evident; that the church (*jiaohui* 教会 not *gonghui* 公会) will become ever more flourishing, that humanity will become ever more peaceful and united; that the world will become ever more cultured.

52 Zhao Zichen, "Duiyu 'xinjing' de wo jian," 38.

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CHAPTER 15

# *Shin* 信 as a Marker of Identity in Modern Japanese Buddhism

*Hans Martin Krämer*

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, the grand syntheses of nineteenth-century global history have all emphasized (Protestant) Christianity's role as a model in shaping the modernization of other religions around the world. Christopher Bayly has argued that "[a]cross the Asian world, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian reformers of the nineteenth century emphasized the rational and philosophical elements in their religious inheritance, condemning superstition, mindless priestcraft, and magical beliefs."[1] Jürgen Osterhammel has claimed that non-European elites have engaged in "reinterpreting, concentrating, and systematizing religious programs and practices, following the model [...] of Christianity."[2] And Sebastian Conrad has taken up the moniker of "Protestant Buddhism" to describe the "transformation of Buddhism" in Sri Lanka in the second half of the nineteenth century.[3]

More concretely, works focusing on how the modern concept of religion spread globally since the nineteenth century have traced an interiorization of religion, i.e., a shift from external manifestations to a privileging of inner forms of worship and the spread of a Protestant model of religion. In their quest for this development's origins, some have gone all the way back to Martin Luther (1483–1546), such as José Casanova in his epoch-making 1994 *Public Religions in the Modern World*:

> The external world of society and nature was literally left to the Devil, while religion underwent a visible process of subjective internalization. By withdrawing to the inner subjective expressive sphere, by becoming a pietist religion of the heart, Lutheranism and all modern forms of expressive religion became relatively immune to the scientific critique

1 Bayly 2004, 328.
2 Osterhammel 2014, 875.
3 Conrad 2016, 561.

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> of religious worldviews and to the political critique of ecclesiastical institutions. The sphere of politics was indeed the sphere of violence and evil. As a state church, the Lutheran church also partook of this sphere, but Lutheranism introduced the principle of a double morality, a secular one for the outer sphere of the "office" and a Christian one for the "inner" sphere of the person, so that the freedom of "inner religion" was assured.[4]

Others have instead pointed to the Late Enlightenment-period Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who in his 1799 *On Religion* decisively defined religion as "something that everybody can and has to discover from within."[5] Regardless of the exact point of reference, a strong mainstream opinion seems to hold that a Protestant idea of faith as religion's core was developed at a fairly early point in time in Europe to then spread globally in the course of the nineteenth century.

Christoph Kleine, in his contribution to the present volume, vehemently refutes such generalizing conclusions as "a postcolonial narrative in which non-Western cultures appear as pure objects, indeed as mere victims of hegemonic Western powers."[6] Instead, Kleine argues that faith has always been "a central concept in Buddhism in general and in East Asian Pure Land Buddhism in particular." Since there is no "relevant difference between the Christian notion of *fides* and this Pure Land Buddhist notion of *xin*," there was no need, either, Kleine continues, for the premodern notion of *xin* "to be transformed in modern times to match the 'Christian concept of faith' and to develop 'into the signifier of a modernized and globalized meaning of belief(s).'"[7]

In contrast, I will argue that discussions about "belief" in modern Japanese Buddhism can only be understood in their specific modern context. Contrary to what Kleine implies, however, this claim does not necessarily entail the assumption of a simple Western imposition. Rather, the modern context was characterized by the new need to position "religion" vis-à-vis entities such as the state or "science," a need that religious elites around the globe faced almost simultaneously in the nineteenth century. In order to answer these challenges, the privileging of inner forms of worship, and especially of faith/belief, played a strategically important role. As the choice of the term "strategic" here implies, however, we need to differentiate between texts strategically directed towards a broader audience, including non-religious social elites, and those addressed

4 Casanova 1994, 33.

5 Bergunder 2016, 96–97.

6 See Kleine's chapter in this volume, p. 174.

7 See Kleine's chapter in this volume, p. 174, 191–192.

to co-believers. The transformation of concepts is much more readily visible in the former context, although interferences between the two are frequent.

Below, I will trace, first, how very early Meiji-period debates, i.e., around 1870, set the tone for thinking about the relationship between state and religion, thereby also engaging in some fundamental definitions of religion itself. In these considerations, "belief" (various terms involving the character *shin* 信 were used) played a prominent role in defining the "essence of religion." The conventional account sees secular intellectuals at the forefront of this development, which led up to the Meiji Constitution. As I will show in section 2 of this paper, however, immediate stakeholders of the debate, namely Buddhist priests, had even earlier set the perimeters of thinking about the relationship between religion and the state in early Meiji Japan. More than any other sect, it was the True Pure Land Sect (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, short Shinshū 真宗 or Shin sect) that actively responded to the challenges of Western modernity, although the domestic political context also figured prominently, as I will explain below. The scholar-priest Shimaji Mokurai was particularly instrumental in arguing for faith as the core of religion, thus excluding certain groups from that category, within the political debate about religion's position in the emerging modern nation-state. We will see here the complicated relationship between the special historical place of the notion of "belief" within the Shinshū and the modern emphasis on "belief" as the core of religiosity. Although we can clearly distinguish between inner-sectarian writings and those directed to the outside, both clearly impact each other. In Section 3 below, I will discuss how this heritage from the sectarian tradition has been used since the nineteenth century to construct a modern identity for the Shinshū. Crucially, I will draw on nineteenth-century sources to show that Japanese Buddhism comprised no obvious, clear-cut, and singular understanding of *shin* 信 up to the modern era, but that it was only then singled out and highlighted as the main marker of Buddhism as a religion, thus becoming central for a Buddhist identity in modern Japan. This was a development specific of modernity and not just identical to any linguistic or social phenomenon of the premodern era.

## 2 Religious Freedom in Japan: the Conventional Narrative

In 1889, Japan promulgated the first modern constitution of any Asian country: The Constitution of the Empire of Japan (in force since 1890) was to have a tremendous impact as a model of modern statehood all over Asia, but especially in the neighboring countries of Korea and China. Among its major innovations, individual rights of freedom for the first time became legally binding,

even though the constitution's authors took care to balance those liberties with duties that were imposed upon the subjects in the same paragraphs. Among the genuinely new regulations, Article 28 provided for freedom of religion:

> Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由).[8]

What is surprising here is the choice of terminology, as *shinkyō* was a rarely used term around 1890. It has been carried over into the new constitution written in 1946 (in force since 1947 and until today), where Article 20 begins:

> The freedom of religious belief (*shinkyō no jiyū*) is guaranteed for everyone.

Even today, *shinkyō* is almost never used outside the context of freedom of belief. This can easily be ascertained by a search in the "Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese," which encompasses 173,000 texts containing around 105,000,000 words produced between 1971 and 2008. Out of 152 hits for *shinkyō* in this corpus, 141 occurrences are exactly within the phrase *shinkyō no jiyū*, and four more are from the context of constitutional law.[9]

The authors of the Meiji Constitution consciously avoided the term *shūkyō* 宗教, already well-established as a translation term for "religion" by 1889, when specifying the civil rights of the subjects of the Japanese Empire. This was because they intended to protect only (inner) belief, but not any (outward) form of religious practice. Yet even in explaining this point, leading statesmen of the early Meiji period made use of the much more common *shinkō* 信仰 ("belief") rather than the slightly obscure *shinkyō*. This is most easily visible in the semi-official commentary issued in 1889, even before the constitution assumed validity. The commentary was published under the name of Itō Hirobumi 伊藤博文 (1841–1909), although its author was more likely Inoue Kowashi 井上毅 (1844–1895); both men had been among the main drafters of the constitution itself. This is what the commentary had to say on Article 28:

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8 Throughout this chapter, Japanese orthography has been somewhat modernized and unified by rendering *katakana* as *hiragana* and adding diacritc marks for voicing (*dakuten*).

9 Search engine Shōnagon 小納言 of the Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese, *Gendai Nihongo kakikotoba kinkō kōpasu* 現代日本語書き言葉均衡コーパス, http://www.kotonoha.gr.jp/shonagon/ (accessed 21 November 2020).

> Belief (*shinkō* 信仰) and conviction (*kie* 帰依) are operations of the mind. As to forms of worship, to religious discourses (*enzetsu* 演説), to the mode of propagating a religion (*fukyō* 布教) and to the formation of religious associations and meetings, some general legal or police restrictions must be observed for the maintenance of public peace and order. [...] Thus, although freedom of religious belief (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由) is complete and exempt from all restrictions, so long as manifestations of it are confined to the mind; yet with regard to external matters such as forms of worship and the mode of propagandism, certain necessary restrictions of law or regulations must be provided for, and besides, the general duties of subjects must be observed. This is what the constitution decrees, and it shows the relation in which political and religious rights stand toward each other (*seikyō no gosō kankei* 政教の互相関係).[10]

The idea of freedom of religion (or freedom of belief) had been discussed for some time before becoming legal reality at the end of the 1880s. The most well-known contributions to this debate had come from secular intellectuals; indeed, the conventional historiographical narrative holds that the origin of Article 28 of the 1889 constitution can be found in these intellectuals' works.

One such intellectual was Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916), who was likely the first to have written about the idea of freedom of religion, more precisely: freedom of belief, in Japanese. Today best known as a conservative politician and the second president of Tokyo University, Katō had been a student of Western learning ("Dutch studies," *rangaku* 蘭学) in the 1850s and become an instructor at the shogunate's institute for the study of Western books (at that time called Kaiseijo 開成所) in 1864. It was during this time that he wrote a tract entitled "A Summary of Constitutional Political Systems" (*Rikken seitai ryaku* 立憲政体略), which was printed in 1868. On the brink of the Meiji Revolution, Katō introduced Western political systems and their features. A sub-chapter was devoted to "The Right to Freedom of Belief" (*shinpō jizai no kenri* 信法自在の権利) and read:

> In religion (*kyōhō* 教法) there is, independent of denomination (*shūha* 宗派), the right to believe (*shinkō* 信仰), leaving it to the will of the people adhering to this denomination. There are, however, countries that have until recently not established this right or that honor Catholicism while looking down upon Protestantism. Since this led to political unrest, one has lately done away with such prohibitions, and the governments ceased

10 Quoted from the official English translation Itō 1906, 60. Original: Itō 1889, 42.

> discussing the pros and cons or good and bad of denominations. Instead, they have established the right to believe freely (*jizai ni shinkō-su* 自在に信仰す) in whatever denomination one wishes, by leaving it up to the will of the people. For this reason, political unrest related to religion has abated in recent times and is obsolete today. This is truly one of the reasons for the great progress of civilization in Europe.[11]

Katō wrote during a period of terminological upheaval. Many of the abstract concepts he used were in the process of being coined or at the very least in flux. "Freedom," for instance, was rendered *jizai* 自在 by Katō, although shortly thereafter the standard term in Japanese became *jiyū* 自由 and *jizai* fell largely into disuse.[12] Equally, *kyōhō* 教法 for "religion," while being the preferred term around 1870 and remaining in use until the late 1870s, came to be discarded completely and eventually replaced by *shūkyō* 宗教.[13] *Shinkō* 信仰, in contrast, has continued to be the standard term to render "belief" into Japanese until today. Curiously, the text quoted above itself uses this term instead of the now obsolete *shinpō* 信法 given in the title of the sub-chapter. Katō here explicitly lays out the idea of freedom of belief, albeit without the later distinction between inner belief and outer forms of worship. It is also worth emphasizing that he is describing the situation in Europe and not discussing Japanese politics.

Katō was a member of the Meiji Six Society (Meirokusha 明六社), which despite its rapid demise only two years after its foundation in 1873 proved to be highly influential. The prominent group of intellectuals making up the Society set the framework for discussions about Japan's social and cultural modernization for years to come. It was in the pages of its journal, the *Meiroku zasshi* 明六雑誌, that the issue of the relationship between religion and the state was discussed in depth in the mid-1870s. Most prominently, it was another early student of Dutch studies, who had even studied at Leiden University in the Netherlands between 1862 and 1865, who would carry this debate to the front pages of the journal. Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897), who is famous for having coined the modern terms for "philosophy" (*tetsugaku* 哲学) and "science" (*kagaku* 科学), among others, tackled the subject head on in his six-part article "On Religion" (*Kyōmon ron* 教門論), published from the fourth issue onwards

11 Katō 1868, 24–25.

12 See Howland 2001.

13 See Krämer 2015, 43–44.

in 1874. Nishi set out by distinguishing "belief" from "knowledge,"[14] a move that, as Ōkubo Takeharu has shown, may be traced back to Nishi's experience as a foreign student at Leiden University in the 1860s. There, Nishi had come into contact with the positivist philosophy of Cornelis Willem Opzoomer (1821–1892), who, while fundamentally rooted in the empiricism of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), strove to accommodate Christianity by adding "religious sensibility" to the range of empirically valid experiences.[15] Thus, Nishi begins his article series by explaining:

> Religion (*kyōmon* 教門) arises out of belief (*shin* 信). Belief has its roots in that to which our knowledge (*chi* 知) does not extend. If people already know something, they treat its principles as already known; yet if there is something they cannot know, they make guesses about the part they know and believe (*shin-zu* 信ず) in that which they do not know.
>
> [...]
>
> However, because the so-called belief is located within people's hearts, even a strong man cannot rob someone of his belief by force, nor can a clever man force his belief upon someone by eloquence. When it comes to religion, the government should therefore leave it up to the people to believe as they please. It will not be able to make people believe this or not believe that.
>
> [...]
>
> It is sufficient for government offices when supervising religion only to regulate externals, leaving the people to believe as they please.[16]

Like Opzoomer, Nishi may be seen to salvage religion by excluding it from the category of knowledge, yet reserving the equally valid category of belief for it. At the same time, in the framing of his argument, Nishi makes clear that he is writing as a secular intellectual: In the first instance, he philosophically defines belief as "not knowing." It is only secondarily that Nishi refers to belief as a religious act that entails more than just guessing that which one does not know. Interestingly, Nishi here, in 1874, already spelled out clearly the basic principle guiding Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution written fifteen years later. When it comes to religion, the government should leave the people alone, or, more precisely: It should regulate the externals, but leave its interior dimension, defined

14 Heinrich Reinfried claims that Nishi was the first Japanese to use "belief" as the antonym to "knowledge" in his 1874 article series. See Reinfried 2014, 149.

15 See Ōkubo 2004, 63–65.

16 Nishi 1874, 1. The translation of the last sentence is adapted from Josephson 2012, 211.

as "belief" (consistently *shin* 信 or *shin-zu* 信ず), untouched. The explicit reason Nishi gives for his recommendation is that belief cannot be swayed by external force anyway, so it seems to be a matter of expediency or perhaps efficiency for the government to desist from attempting to do so.

While the role of people like Katō and Nishi, of the Meiji Six Society, and of the *Meiroku zasshi* in paving the way for the constitution seems clear enough, especially given their prominence within the political elite of Japanese society in the 1870s and 1880s, there was in fact another discursive strand leading up to the emergence of Article 28 that carried equal, if not more, weight. Next to the secular intellectuals of the Meiji Six Society, Buddhist scholar-priests weighed into the debate. A few of them were actually members of the Meiji Six Society[17] (although none of them contributed to the journal), and only a few months after the *Meiroku zasshi*, the first issue of the *Hōshi sōdan*—Japan's first modern Buddhist journal—was established, clearly modeled on its secular precursor.[18] Outside of this journal, some Buddhist priests had begun writing on the issue of belief even predating the *Meiroku zasshi*, albeit from a quite different vantage point. Less interested in issues of statehood or good governance, they set out not from abstract philosophical distinctions between forms of knowledge, but from an eminently political problematique, namely the religious policy of the very early Meiji state, and it was in fact they who first formulated the solution that would later be enshrined in the Meiji Constitution as "freedom of belief."

## 3 Buddhist Interventions: Countering Shintō through Privileging "Faith"

The religious policy of the first few years following the Meiji Revolution of 1868 must be distinguished from later developments culminating in what is today called "State Shintō" (*kokka shintō* 国家神道). A crucial precondition of State Shintō is an understanding of religion that excludes Shintō, thus allowing the state to guarantee freedom of religion while at the same time retaining the ability to demand participation in Shintō rites—now defined as non-religious—from all citizens, regardless of their individual religious convictions. In contrast, in the years around 1870, the central government experimented with

17 These were Shimaji Mokurai, Ishikawa Shuntai, and Atsumi Kaien, all from the Honganji branch of the True Pure Land School. See Tozawa 1991, 54–55.

18 See Deneckere 2014, 29–30.

policies that tended towards an implicit understanding of Shintō as a state religion, to Buddhism's detriment.[19]

Thus, shortly after the Meiji Revolution of 1868, a Department of Divinity (Jingikan 神祇官) was set up following ancient precedent. "Missionaries" (*senkyōshi* 宣教師), who were to explain the ideological background of the new regime to the people and to prevent Christianity from entering the country, were sent out by the Department, which was firmly in the hands of Shintōists pursuing an anti-Buddhist agenda. Politically minded Buddhists therefore sought to put an end to this system. A young scholar-priest from Western Japan, Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), affiliated with the Honganji branch of the True Pure Land School, led the charge by proposing the abolition of the Department of Divinity and the establishment of a proper Ministry for Instruction (Kyōbushō 教部省), which was to make use of Buddhists in "instructing" the common people. In 1871, Shimaji sent a petition to that effect to the government. In arguing for the utility of Buddhism to the young Meiji state, Shimaji emphasized the importance of *shin* 信 and the failure of Shintō to address this crucial dimension of human life:

> It is true of all people that if they have something to depend upon they will not move, and if they have something to believe in (*shin-zu* 信ず) they will not stray from the path. In the case of people who neither have something to depend upon nor something to believe in, it is difficult to prevent them from moving and straying from the path. And in this case, the monstrous teaching (*yōkyō* 妖教) [i.e., Christianity] will increasingly enter the common people from day to day. There is no greater evil for the country, and no ailment more extreme for the court. [...] When we have one teaching we can believe in (*shin-zu* 信ず), no sprouts from external desires will appear. When we don't have one place we can depend upon, we will inevitably be drawn away by external lures. [...]
>
> Buddhism has been in our imperial country for over a thousand years; there is no place its proselytization has not reached, and there is no one who does not worship it. [...] Since the theory of the destruction of Buddhism arose, people have looked down upon its merits. They blindly desire to get rid of Buddhism with one stroke, but they do not consider that there is an extreme danger from the outside, and they are not aware that there is inside no teaching with which to counter it. In the end, they drive the common people to lose that which they depend upon

19 The classic study of State Shintō in English is Hardacre 1989.

> and believe in (*ishin* 依信), and not few of those are driven into the arms of the monstrous teaching. [...]
>
> It has now been two or three years since the establishment of the Department of Divinity, and although I am not yet familiar with its teachings, it seems to make no use whatsoever of the two teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism, but instead to rely directly on teaching Shintō. [...] Shintō is great, it encompasses the dark and the bright, and it rules present and future; it leaves no things behind and there is nothing it does not master. Yet it emerged in a time of simplicity in the ancient past and since its way itself exists in a nonverbal space, it is not yet furnished with a verbalized teaching, and in it the art of praise and exhortation is not yet developed. It might be appropriate to say that while it has a way, it does not have a teaching. But how are we to educate the common people without enlightening them about innate ethics, without leading them through the up and down of karmic causality? Those who desire to proselytize according to the Department of Divinity do not really wish the common people to attain faith (*shin o toru* 信を取る); those who desire the common people to attain faith should not proselytize according to the Department of Divinity. [...]
>
> If Buddhist priests turn toward the common people as leaders and spread the current government by correcting the current teaching, then no one will be able to drive the common people into the monstrous teaching, because they will have something to depend upon and find peace through something they can believe in (*shinjū-su* 信従す).[20]

Addressing politicians and bureaucrats, Shimaji's main concern is with leading the common people, referred to as the "stupid folk" (*gumin* 愚民), as in other texts of this era. In the field of "teachings" (Shimaji does not yet speak of religion here), this is necessary because the foreign teaching of Christianity is threatening to enter the country. Indeed, in the minds of most elite members of Japanese society around 1870, defending the country from Christianity was the main motive for having a national religious policy, so Shimaji could be sure to strike a sympathetic chord here. Yet, in order to fend off Christianity, Shimaji continued, Shintō would not suffice, as it did not offer a system of faith, unlike the much more appropriate Buddhism. While Shimaji's argument remained rather unspecific, it helped convince the Meiji leaders to in fact do away with the Department of Divinity and set up a Ministry of Instruction, as proposed by Shimaji, in 1872.

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20 Shimaji Mokurai 1871, 231–233.

When it was actually established, the portfolio of the Ministry of Instruction included the administration of shrines, temples, and priest ranks, the ordination of Buddhist and Shintō priests, the approval of teaching materials for all doctrinal instruction, the approval of public speeches, and the right of ultimate judgment in doctrinal disputes. As a continuation of its earlier concern for enlightening the populace, the Ministry initiated the Great Promulgation Campaign (*daikyō senpu undō* 大教宣布運動), in 1872, aimed at inculcating the Three Articles of Instruction (*sanjō kyōsoku* 三条教則) in the people. The Campaign was conducted by national proselytizers (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職), an office limited to those who could pass an examination and divided into clearly defined ranks. The Great Teaching Institute (Daikyōin 大教院), specifically created for the task, supervised around 7,000 national proselytizers in 1874, a number that swelled to 100,000 in 1880, of which about 80 percent were Buddhist priests.[21]

Although the majority of proselytizers were thus Buddhists, the Three Articles of Instruction they were supposed to expound upon ("To embody reverence for the deities and love of the country; To clarify the principles of heaven and the way of humanity; To revere and assist the emperor and obey the will of the court") were overly Shintōist in character. This fact prompted a deluge of tracts debating and denouncing the Ministry program, increasingly with the aim of getting rid of the whole campaign. Only one year after he himself had successfully lobbied for the establishment of the Ministry of Instruction, Shimaji now took exception to its actions. In an 1872 petition that became the most prominent contribution to the debate about the Three Articles of Instruction, Shimaji again took aim at Shintō, this time arguing that the state was confusing religion and politics. Enlightening the populace was all good and fine, he argued, but this was a purely political affair. Religion, in contrast, spoke to the interior, the heart, or the mind, and was not something that politicians could or should meddle with. Buddhism, as a full-fledged religion, therefore had no proper place in an indoctrination campaign run by the state. The situation was different with Shintō, however, which did not partake of the special characteristics of religions, such as having a divine founder:

> The sages and wise men of old stood between gods and humans because in their virtue they surpassed the masses, and in their benevolence they had compassion for everyone. Had they not been such mediators [between divine and human], how could they have been at peace in life and death even though these cannot be known, and how could they have

21 Yasumaru 1979, 181–185.

> controlled heart and thought even though these cannot be ruled? Even today, after thousands and hundreds of years have passed, people cling to their faith tenaciously no matter what (*shinjū koshu no hanahadashiki* 信従固守の甚しき), are not moved by life and death, do not yield to hardships, and return to the battlefield willing to suffer for their cause like someone boiled in a cauldron, because they revere the founders of their religion and worship the heads of their religion as they did in the beginning: These being the reasons that religion (*shūkyō* 宗教) is religion, how can it be something people simply make up?[22]

This is one of the first texts in Japanese offering a complex discussion of religion, even using the translation *shūkyō* 宗教, which has remained the preferred term in all of East Asia until today. One of the central characteristics of religion in an emphatic sense offered here is that one can believe in it, or even that it makes people believe in it "no matter what." It is precisely through this dimension that Buddhism and Christianity are held to be different from Shintō, which in Shimaji's view was just a system of ancestor veneration and public rituals, or Confucianism, primarily an ethical system.[23]

One conspicuous difference between the 1871 petition and this one from late 1872 is that Shimaji wielded modern categories with increasing ease. His discussion of religion is quite sophisticated and obviously informed by Western knowledge; in another attempt to prove that Shintō is not a proper member of the category of religion, at one point he derisively classifies Shintō as mere "mythology" (*mitorojī* ミトロジー).[24] Shimaji was in fact a member of the first group of Japanese Buddhists ever to have traveled to Europe. He wrote his petition against the Three Articles of Instruction while in Paris, had studied and discussed Christianity with French clergymen, and was in the midst of translating the introduction to Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* while working on his petition.[25]

We can find Shimaji explicitly making use of his French connection in yet another petition written a year later. Now, in 1873, he attacked the Great Teaching Institute head on and was able to refine his thinking about religion and the state further. Again, Shintō is his main enemy (here somewhat disguised as "ancient history"), and belief/faith now takes center stage in his implicit definition of religion:

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22 Shimaji 1872, 240. The translation partially follows Krämer 2015, 151.

23 Shimaji's views on Shintō are aptly summarized by Tonami 2008.

24 Krämer 2015, 148.

25 Krämer 2015, 95.

Since the sages and wise men of old stood between gods and humans and left behind teachings for myriad ages, do we necessarily need ancient history when we want to make people adhere to them and revere them? If we really make ancient history the model of the imperial house after the opening of the country and then attempt to force people into believing, this will later lead to no end of sorrow for the imperial house because it means attempting to control people's hearts by narrowing imperial authority. Since the ancient past is vague, it is difficult to attain faith (*shin o toru* 信を取る) through it. Even if, despite of this, one attempts to make people believe (*shin-zeshimen to suru mo* 信ぜしめんとするも) in it, since people already each have what they believe in (*shin-zuru tokoro* 信ずる所), will they follow that which they do not believe in (*shin-zezaru tokoro* 信ぜざる所), simply putting their own faith (*onore-ga shin* 己が信) aside? Even if one makes them submit through fear at one time, the time will inevitably come at which the accumulated discontent will erupt. If things come to that, even if once the power of that religion had benefited people greatly, the harm caused by it now will be enormous. This is like water or fire: Even though their benefits are great, the harm caused by them is also not small. The great disturbances of Europe in the past all had their origin in forced attempts to assimilate others, making oneself the standard. The reason that religious wars erupted there was because freedom of religion (*shinkyō no jiyū* 信教の自由) was not granted; furthermore, the reason why it came to the rise and fall of monarchs was that government was often conducted by arbitrary use of power. Fénelon[26] says: "The rights of the monarch do not extend to the right of people's inner beliefs (*shinkō* 信仰), the power of the monarch does not extend to people's inner conscience. Therefore he who wantonly raises and debases religion (*kyōhō* 教法) makes a slave of religion. If someone should change his faith (*shinkō*) because of the authorities, he is but a little man with false faith (*gishin* 偽信)." The meaning of these words is entirely in accordance with the word of Confucius: "One can capture the general of three armies, but one cannot capture the will even of a common man." Because attempting to bend the will of others to the standard of one's own is something that politics and religion cannot originally attain, one can say

26 François Fénelon (1651–1715), French archbishop and writer, author of the widely read Early Enlightenment novel *Les Aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse* (1694–96), which led to his removal from the court of Louis XIV. Only the phrase about making "a slave of religion" may be found in Fénelon's writing (*Télémaque*, book 17). Shimaji seems to be paraphrasing or partially quoting a different French book which in turn quotes Fénelon, namely Ramsay 1721, 112–113. I am grateful to Philip Clart for locating this original.

> that something like endlessly changing the will of the lower people will surely yield no fruits of faith (*shinkyō no mi* 信教の実).[27]

The argument Shimaji here makes, that the state cannot force a particular faith upon its people, is exactly the same as that found in Nishi's text for the *Meiroku zasshi*, referred to above, which was published almost contemporaneously, just one year later. Furthermore, Shimaji goes beyond Nishi in pointing out that doing so means "narrowing imperial authority," which is precisely the main reason why in the later construction of State Shintō, emperor worship was excluded from the purview of religion, thus removing it from the sphere of individual choice associated with faith or belief.[28] Furthermore, Shimaji's argument is reminiscent of Katō Hiroyuki's 1868 text in drawing upon recent European history. In his quote from Fénelon, belief/faith is again the central category (next to conscience) at the heart of religion. Finally, it is striking that Shimaji employs the exact phrase *shinkyō no jiyū* for freedom of religion that would 16 years later be incorporated verbatim into the constitution—a clear indication of the relevance of these Buddhist contributions to a debate that would begin in the much more famous *Meiroku zasshi* only one year later.

Shimaji was again successful with this drive to end the institutionalized preferential treatment of Shintō. He managed to persuade his own sect's leadership to leave the Great Promulgation Campaign in 1875, and in 1877 the Ministry of Instruction was dissolved. This opened the way to the establishment of State Shintō and the solution found in Article 28 of the Meiji Constitution; accordingly, the historiography on Buddhism in modern Japan has understood Shimaji from early on as a pioneer of the separation of religion and state.[29]

For our context, however, this well-known development is less interesting than how Shimaji employed faith for the purposes of making a point in the debate on religious policy in early Meiji Japan. Did Shimaji, one of the first Japanese Buddhists to have traveled to Europe, pick up the idea of the centrality of faith to religion from Protestant Christianity? Or could he refer to an older, inner-Buddhist, tradition of giving faith a privileged position? It is here that we need to go back to the premodern era and consider how the relative importance of faith/belief might have changed in the transition to modernity.

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27 Shimaji 1873, 246–247.

28 The clearest exposition of how State Shintō was constructed in order to free up a space for emperor worship may be found in Maxey 2014, 19, 50, 94.

29 Fukushima 1964, 44.

## 4 Modern Self-Representations of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism as Faith-Based

In his contribution to this volume, Christoph Kleine adduces a plethora of texts from East Asian Buddhism to show that faith, in a sense going beyond trust, was an integral component of at least the Pure Land Buddhist tradition. Although it is difficult to judge from scattered citations just how central the concept may have been in Indian or Chinese Buddhism,[30] faith certainly comes to the fore in Shinran (1173–1263), who "argued that the so-called 'threefold mind' as propagated in Dharmākara's Eighteenth Vow […] is nothing but three aspects of one single 'faithful mind' (*shinjin* 信心)."[31] It is perhaps less in "Buddhism in general," but particularly in Japanese True Pure Land Buddhism that some understanding of "faith"—and premodern Shinshū sources indeed mostly speak specifically of the "faithful mind" (*shinjin*)—becomes not just one among many elements of the doctrine, but a tenet that is central both in theory and for practice.[32]

Certainly, as Kleine also mentions, Western observers quickly caught on to the doctrinal particularities of the Jōdo Shinshū within Buddhism, and identified it with the *sola fide* idea of Protestantism. Thus, Galen Amstutz, in his book *Interpreting Amida*, summarizes the situation around 1900 as follows: "In any case the idea of Shinshū as in some sense a 'protestant Buddhism' became in those early days a universally accepted European metaphor."[33] To corroborate his impression, Amstutz mostly cites English-language texts from around 1900, such as Clarence Ludlow Brownell's 1902 article "Hongwanji and Buddhist Protestantism in Japan" or the influential 1895 book *The Religions of Japan* by William Elliot Griffis (1843–1928). Indeed, Griffis explicitly writes that Shinshū, "resembling Protestantism in so many points, both large and minute, foreigners think has been borrowed or imitated from European Protestantism," and rhetorically asks: "Shall we call [Shinran] a Japanese Luther, because of his insistence on salvation by faith only?"[34]

In his 1876 book based on his experiences in Japan, *The Mikado's Empire*, Griffis had already characterized Shinshū's adherents as the "Protestants of

30 Cf. the chapters by Meisterernst, Tam, and Kleine in this volume.

31 See Kleine's chapter in this volume, p. 188.

32 An extreme counterposition to Kleine is held by the historian of Japanese political thought Heinrich Reinfried, who argues that, "in the traditional Japanese reading," the concept *shin* is at best approximately comparable to the Christian idea of "faith," and only in a very narrow, especially Jōdo Shinshū, usage. See Reinfried 2014, 147.

33 Amstutz 1997, 60.

34 Griffis 1895, 271, 274.

Japanese Buddhism," although his emphasis here is more on Shinran's stance against celibacy and the monastic institution as points of resemblance with Protestantism.[35] The same points are raised in a popular book by the British author and traveler Edward James Reed (1830–1906). In his 1880 *Japan: Its History, Traditions, and Religions*, he equally emphasizes the institutional innovations of the Shinshū and its emphasis on "salvation by faith":

> It is obvious from this statement, coming from a source so entirely unquestionable, that for six centuries and a half there has existed and flourished in Japan a section of Buddhists who believe in the doctrine of salvation by faith; who consider heaven attainable at the close of this life by means of that faith; who have swept aside many of the most prominent restrictions of what we have all supposed to be the ancient Buddhist faith—celibacy, penances, fastings, seclusions, pilgrimages, etc. They have justly been called the Protestants of Japan, building their temples in great thoroughfares, and in many other ways appealing directly to the people.[36]

The "source so entirely unquestionable" is the Shinshū cleric Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841–1919), who had been to Europe together with Shimaji Mokurai in 1872/73. Reed quotes at length from a text written in English by Akamatsu entitled "A Brief Account of 'Shin-shu,'" and containing the first translation of the term *shin* 信 into English as "faith" by a Japanese Shinshū adherent:

> Our sect pays no attention to the other Buddhas, and, putting faith only in the great desire of Amita Buddha, expects to escape from the miserable world and to enter into paradise for the next life. From the time of putting faith in the saving desire of Buddha we do not need any power of self-help, but need only keep his mercy in heart, and invoke his name in order to remember him. These doings we call thanksgiving for salvation. [...] Creed: Rejecting all religious austerities and other actions, giving up all idea of self-power, rely upon Amita Buddha with the whole heart for our salvation, which is the most important thing; believing that at the moment of putting one's faith in Amita Buddha our salvation is settled.[37]

35 Griffis 1876, 170, 173. See also Dolce 2006, 63.

36 Reed 1886, 86.

37 Quoted in Reed 1886, 85–86.

The "Creed" quoted and translated by Akamatsu is attributed to the second most important figure in the history of the Jōdo Shinshū, Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), and lay people in both major subdenominations of the Jōdo Shinshū use it to confirm central tenets of their religion.[38] Curiously, however, Rennyo actually never used *shin* 信 or any of the combinations including this character in the "Creed" quoted and translated by Akamatsu. For both the phrases rendered here—"rely upon" and "putting one's faith in"—the key actions directed towards Amida by the practitioner, the original text employs *tanomu*, written in *hiragana*. Which meaning to attach to those *hiragana* was an open question, and it is deceptive to simply accept Akamatsu's translation as "faith" as definitive or as without alternatives.

A detailed commentary from around the same time that Akamatsu wrote his translation discusses this very question, i.e., which *kanji* are appropriate to attach to the *tanomu* in this quotation, in some depth. This commentary on the *Gaikemon* was authored by Urabe Kanjun 占部観順 (1824–1910), a Shinshū Ōtani scholar-priest who was later (in 1897) to become the first president of the predecessor of today's Ōtani University (Ōtani daigaku 大谷大学; then called Shinshū daigaku 真宗大学), as part of a series of "A Collection of Shinshū Sermons" in 1879. Urabe explained that there were three possibilities for understanding *tanomu*: *shin* 信, *ki* 帰 ("to return"), or *rai* 頼 ("to rely upon"). Although the latter would be the standard writing for *tanomu* today, Urabe explains that this was not the case in Rennyo's time. Based on a lengthy analysis of other texts by Rennyo (particularly the Ofumi 御文),[39] Urabe concludes that *tanomu* is here best understood as a unity of the two other meanings:

> *Tanomu* in the *Ofumi* must not be restricted to meaning either only *shin* or only *ki*. *Ki* and *shin* are really two characters that cannot be separated. Distancing oneself from doubt is called "faithful mind" (*shinjin*), and following the words of the Buddha is called "entrusting one's life [in the Buddha]" (*kimyō* 帰命). A faithful mind is always identical to entrusting one's life; entrusting one's life is always identical to a faithful mind.[40]

38 Rennyo's text is known as *Gaikemon* 改悔文 ("Text of Repentance") in the Ōtani branch of the Jōdo Shinshū, and as *Ryōgemon* 領解文 ("Text of Understanding") in the Honganji branch. Akamatsu's choice of "Creed," clearly a Christian term in English, as a title for this text is interesting in itself.

39 Known in the Honganji branch as *Gobunshō* 御文章, these were originally letters Rennyo wrote to lay followers.

40 Urabe 1879, 18–19.

In other words, even within the perimeter of traditional scholarship as presented in this collection of sermons, the act simply translated as "putting one's faith in" by Akamatsu has a strong connotation of "taking refuge in," "devoting one's life to," or "obeying."[41] What this range of meaning implies is that translating *shin* 信 or any other related term from the East Asian Buddhist tradition, especially *shinjin*, as "faith" or "belief" and thus making it converge with concepts from other religions, especially Christianity, was not a clear-cut or obvious process. Heinrich Reinfried has stressed how the traditional identification between *shin* and *kimyō* (or the synonymous *kie* 帰依), which has a strong connotation of "absolute subordination," is problematic because "the semantic field of *kie* is in no way congruous with that of 'belief' in the biblical sense of 'not doubting that which one does not see.'"[42] The importance of the idea of the "faithful mind" (*shinjin*) for the balance between other-power (*tariki* 他力) vs. self-power (*jiriki* 自力) in Japanese Buddhism[43] would be another indication that the specifics of the Shinshū idea of faith/belief may significantly outweigh the apparent congruences with parallel ideas in other religions.

More than anything else, re-comprehending *shin* 信 under modern conditions involved an identification with (the newly defined sphere of) religion and a simultaneous distancing from other non-religious spheres. The same author just quoted here with a traditional interpretation, Urabe Kanjun, had engaged in this kind of modern reconceptualization in a different textual genre just four years earlier. For the *Kyōgi Shinbun*, the first modern religious journal of Japan, published by the Ministry of Instruction and aimed at government officials, Shintō priests, and Buddhist clerics, Urabe wrote a piece on "The Eight Principles of the Shinshū," in which he attempted, among other things, to come to terms with how Buddhism as a religion should approach the question of faith/belief:

> Originally, "religion" (*kyō* 教) orders the inner heart, so that in the end it comes down to rooting one's belief (*shinkon* 信根) at the limits of the unfathomable (*fusoku* 不測). In doing so, one must not take lightly the belief (*shin-zu* 信ず) in the existence of the soul (*reikon* 霊魂) before birth and after death. [...] Science has as its mainstay experimenting

41 Compare the entry on 歸命 in the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=歸命 (accessed 28 September 2021).

42 Reinfried 2014, 150.

43 For a brief exposition of the importance of *tariki* to the Jōdo Shinshū in premodern times, see Amstutz 1997, 10–15.

> (*keiken* 経験) with things (*jibutsu* 事物), while religion only believes in the unfathomable. Therefore, if one knows something, having experimented with it, but doesn't believe in it, this belongs to science and cannot be called religion. Further, if one believes in something, even if one has not understood it and acts upon it, this belongs to religion, but not to the domain of science.[44]

Urabe can here be seen to follow up on Shimaji's identification of faith/belief as the core of religion introduced in section 2 above. But while Shimaji does so mainly strategically to score a point against Shintō, Urabe takes the argument to a more philosophical level, fundamentally distinguishing between knowing things—the realm of science—and believing the unfathomable—the realm of religion. This juxtaposition was further developed and deepened within the Meiji period, evolving into a central component of the understanding of religion and Buddhism within it. This became evident by the 1890s, as is discernible in the work of Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870–1941), who had studied at Tokyo Imperial University on a scholarship from Higashi Honganji Temple and became a Buddhist scholar specializing in modern philosophy.[45] In his first published essay from 1896, Chikazumi attempted a philosophical distinction between philosophy, religion, and science according to their final aims and methods. Philosophy sought insights about the "person" (*jinshin* 人身), the perception of which was only available to, again, a person. In contrast, Chikazumi claimed, religion aimed at the "absolute" (*zettai* 絶対), which man was able to know through "belief" (*shinkō* 信仰). Science (*kagaku* 科学), finally, sought to identify "fixed rules," and it arrived at such rules through "experiments and observation."[46] One of the conspicuous differences between science and religion, according to Chikazumi, was that in the realm of the former, "there is no room to admit two opposing explanations about one and the same thing,"[47] while religion

> appears in various guises, according to how their doctrines differ. Yet, in aspiring to the absolute, they are all the same. Further, they are divided into various ways in which they approach the absolute and attempt to discern it. Yet, in aspiring to belief, they must all be the same.[48]

44 Urabe 1875, 514.
45 Ōmi 2014, 57.
46 Ōmi 2014, 60–61.
47 Chikazumi 1896, 12.
48 Chikazumi 1896, 15.

Chikazumi's attempt at ordering the different realms of knowledge is noteworthy for his singling out "belief" as the exclusive mode of accessing religion, setting it apart from how philosophy and science operate to gain access to their respective objects of investigation. It is not difficult to see in his argument, informed by the thorough study of Western philosophy, a refinement of the earlier ideas put forward by the likes of Shimaji or Urabe, a refinement that is visible also at the terminological level where now, in the 1890s, Chikazumi exclusively resorts to the modern word *shinkō*.

## 5 Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, I introduced Christoph Kleine's uneasiness with generalizing assumptions about how conceptual changes in East Asia in the modern era were supposedly due to a unilateral influence of the West. I sympathize with Kleine's critical impetus, although for different reasons. Contrary to Kleine, I do not believe a similar notion of faith/belief had existed in East Asia all along; instead, I am convinced that "the Western" or "the Protestant Christian" notion of faith/belief in a modern sense actually also emerged only in the course of the nineteenth century. One can observe the emergence of this new understanding in late nineteenth-century Europe,[49] but one can also witness it in Japan at almost the same time. It was not invented out of thin air, nor was "the Western influence" unilaterally predominant. But neither can one simply ignore it.

Instead, what we are facing is a complicated process of the reconceptualization of the idea of faith/belief amidst indigenous political agendas, conceptual traditions (especially in the Jōdo Shinshū), and the impact of Western epistemologies (not just isolated concepts such as "faith"). In particular, it is the modern distinction between religion and science, which presupposes belief as the core of religion, that forms a crucial backdrop for the establishment of the modern notion of faith, giving the concept a semantic context it could not have had in the premodern or early modern era. This is vividly illustrated by Shimaji Mokurai's attempts at redefining "religion" as necessarily and centrally grounded in "faith," thus rejecting a Shintō understood as purely ritualistic, as well as by the subsequent definitions of religion by authors such as Urabe Kanjun or Chikazumi Jōkan, who located religion's essence in the inner process of belief/faith from the point of view of philosophy or psychology.

49 Bergunder 2016, 95–109.

In all these efforts, the existence of the premodern category of the "faithful mind" (*shinjin*) looms large, albeit not as a continuity of an unchanged idea, but rather as a conscious and explicit point of reference for Shinshū authors to imbue their innovations with an inner-religious logic. Overall, these Japanese Buddhists were part of a global negotiation of these issues and terminologies towards the end of the nineteenth century that, although not entirely symmetrical, was already entangled enough to prevent us from characterizing them as simply a Western imposition upon East Asia.

Compared to the discourse among reformist Buddhists in modern China, one cannot help but note how specific some of the points raised by the Japanese priests and laymen were. This is certainly due to the dominant position of Pure Land in Japan, which elevated problems such as that of faith to a prominence they did not have elsewhere in East Asia. Beginning with Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), Chinese reform Buddhists were generally less attracted to (or perhaps felt less threatened by) Western rationalism in the guises of philosophy or science.[50] When studying abroad in England in the 1880s, Yang met and befriended Nanjō Bun'yū 南欧文雄 (1849–1927), a Jōdo Shinshū priest who would go on to become one of the founding figures of Sanskrit studies in Japan.

The direct connection to Japan was maintained by the two disciples of Yang who came to shape the image of modern Buddhism in China in the first half of the twentieth century, the layman Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943), who went to study in Japan in 1907, and the monk Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), who visited Japanese-occupied Taiwan and Japan itself in 1917. Similar to their earlier Japanese counterparts, these two would go on to identify religion with faith. For Ouyang, this was a negative association: Buddhism was different from a religion that was marked by (blind) faith or emotions. Although Taixu disagreed with Ouyang about the identification of Buddhism as a religion, he, too saw the latter firmly on the side of emotions and faith.[51]

For these Chinese reform Buddhists, faith was a much less contested und much less problematic aspect of Buddhism than for the Japanese Buddhist intellectuals summarized above. Partially, this was because they wrote before an already much changed background in the 1920s, in which Christianity appeared less of a threat, and in which theories of religious studies had already greatly advanced, globally as well as in China.[52] The differences may, however, also be due to the fact that the Chinese were partners in shared discussions within the East Asian Buddhist world, which included Japan, where much

50 Zamorski (forthcoming), 33.

51 Müller-Saini 1993, 32, 51.

52 See Meyer 2015.

earlier answers had already been found to some of the most pressing questions in the adaptation of their common faith to contentious aspects of modernity.

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CHAPTER 16

# The (New) Buddhist Semantics of *xin* 信 in the First Half of the Twentieth Century: Arguments from China and Taiwan

*Stefania Travagnin*

## 1 Introduction: Repositioning Buddhism

Since the late Qing, Buddhist clerics and the laity started framing Buddhism and Buddhist practice within a new set of conceptual categories, especially analytical ideas imported from the West or via Japan, and also through revisited and redefined Chinese (and Buddhist) endogenous ideas. Buddhists worked to reposition themselves and their tradition in the new cultural and political time; they updated Buddhist taxonomy and vocabulary and articulated new semantics of traditional terminologies. This process was unfolding in a wider social and intellectual milieu of challenges and paradigm shifts, a milieu that involved other groups and patterns, with whom Buddhists acted in parallel but also intersected. Certainly, this scenario was not confined to the Chinese soil; as Krämer writes in his contribution to this volume, the Japanese were facing a similar atmosphere, and experiencing the process to reposition Buddhism within a new set of values.

In this chapter, I will explore the new ways Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhists understood and used the specific term *xin* 信 and the compound *xinyang* 信仰 in the first half of the twentieth century, and will assess how the reconfiguration of the idea of *xin* was a reflection of the overall intellectual and religious background, but at the same time also actively contributed to the shaping of that framework. In fact, the direct and indirect debates on *xin* also developed in dialogue with non-Buddhist and non-religious agencies, and may have affected these in turn. Certainly, given the complexity of the environment within which these debates have been conducted, I will show that the character *xin* assumed various meanings, and thus translations, in these decades, and question whether there was a rupture or a continuity with *xin*'s conception in pre-modern Chinese Buddhism.[1]

1 See Tam's chapter about the meanings of *xin* in premodern Chinese Buddhism.

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Unlike other chapters in this volume, I am not much concerned with the concept of "belief" or "faith" and the plurality of their Chinese translations, which included—but are not limited to—the character *xin*. Instead, I will specifically address the character *xin*, and related compounds, and unpack the spectrum of meanings that these terms embedded. It will appear that the semantic scale of *xin* includes concepts that we may translate in English with terms like faith or belief, intended in the sense of unconditional confidence in—and reliance on—specific doctrines, but also as a preliminary and necessary step in the path of cultivation and practice towards the ultimate religious and spiritual realization. In the several compounds that will be explored in this chapter, *xin* assumes qualitative nuances as, for instance, right or wrong, positive or negative, rational or irrational, secular or spiritual. Finally, Buddhist discussions on *xin* associate this term with other expressions and ideas, like the call for saving the country (*jiuguo* 救國), that further specify contextual meanings of *xin*.[2]

I have based this *xin*(*yang*) research mostly on articles published in Buddhist journals in the first half of the twentieth century, and will reveal the debates Buddhists developed around this concept, diachronically and synchronically, and how those debates were embedded within social and political discourses. In fact, some of these Buddhist-authored works were not just concerned with Buddhism's status quo, but also mirrored and reframed the political thoughts of rulers such as Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866–1925) and Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 (1887–1975); the role that these non-religious figures assigned to the concept of *xin*(*yang*) becomes a crucial addition to rather Buddhadharma-based argumentations.

Finally, my research draws on intellectual debates that animated Taiwan in those same decades, i.e., during the Japanese occupation of the island, given the relevance of Buddhist and otherwise intellectual exchanges between China and Taiwan in those years, and how intellectual movements in China affected—or interacted with—Taiwan, too. In other words, we may want not to think of Republican China and Japan-ruled Taiwan as distant entities, but should rather recognize their interconnection, and revalue East Asia's role as a macro-area with common underlying narratives. In fact, a study of Taiwan would also shed light on the debates in Japan from the Meiji through the Taishō and the beginning of the Shōwa eras,[3] and thus contextualize Chinese perspectives within the wider East Asian region.

2 See also the argumentation of the editors in the Introductory chapter for more about the possible semantic range and translations of the character *xin*.

3 See Krämer's chapter for the meaning and role of *shin* 信 in the Meiji period.

In Chinese Buddhism, the semantics of *xin*(*yang*) intersects with several domains, in fact recurring in discussions about practice, doctrine, and institutions. In this chapter, I will then group and analyze modern Buddhist semantics of *xin* under four headings. In Part 2, I will explore systems of classification of *xin* proposed by several well-known, but also other less-known, Buddhist monastics and laypeople, via careful attention to the binaries *zhengxin* 正信 vis-à-vis *mixin* 迷信, 信 *xin* vis-à-vis *kexue* 科學, and 迷信 *mixin* vis-à-vis *kexue*. In this section, it will already become evident that the idea of *xin* often appeared in conversation with the character *xiu* 修, and so the idea of cultivation/practice. In Part 3, I will focus on how Buddhist leaders from the Republican period made *xin* instrumental to the process of "rescuing the nation" and the building of the *new* China; here, *xin* is moved out of the exclusive domains of doctrine and practice, and engages with institutional and political discourses. Part 4 will still concern the political and official milieu, but from a different perspective: rather than looking at how officials and intellectuals used or defined *xin*, I will focus on how Buddhists perceived those non-Buddhist views, and put them in a constructive dialogue with Buddhist narratives. In Part 5, I will look at *xin*'s "institutionalization," namely at how the concept of *xin* was used to label lay Buddhist associations, in China and Taiwan, and thus its concretization in social (and secular) domains. The conclusion will also include a brief overview of the legacy of these early twentieth-century positions.

As this chapter will show, it is quite difficult to arrange these debates and different arguments into a single narrative, or to discuss the topic via an official history. The complexity of voices, however, shared one common feature: the need to reposition conceptual semantics of Buddhism within the reconstruction process of the new China.

## 2 Categorizing *xin* 信: *zhengxin* 正信 vis-à-vis *mixin* 迷信

As explained briefly in the Introduction, the character *xin* has been charged with different values via the addition of qualitative prefixes that added nuances to its root meaning of "trust," "belief," or its reference, in relational way, to "ethical values." Several written discussions on *xin*, for example, developed around the particular dichotomy of *zheng-xin* (correct belief) and *mi-xin* (superstitious belief), or in other words, within the categorization of a positive *xin* and a negative *xin*. *Zhengxin* is often identified with the basic refuge in the three jewels, namely Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and thus with a faith that brings awakening (*wuxin* 悟信), while *mixin* is often identified with faith in

(and reliance on) polytheism and spirits, a worship often labeled as *xiejiao* 邪教 (heretic cults). The former is highly valued in the Buddhist community, in both China and Taiwan, while the latter is defined as a cause of worries and instability, and became synonymous with the religion of the dark ages.[4]

As we will see in this section, the opposite categories of *zhengxin* and *mixin* have been debated within the context of different schools' doctrines and practices, in relation to the historical development of the Buddhadharma from India to China, and in parallel with the new pressing challenge of scientism and secularism. Some publications included both these categories explicitly, while others discussed one with implicit reference to the other. Often, this categorization associated the character *xin* with the newly reconsidered term *zongjiao* 宗教,[5] and cross-referred to the categories of science and secularity as well.

The concept of a correct *xin* is frequently associated with a specific school or even a specific figure within one school; this is certainly in line with the sectarian nature of pre-modern Chinese Buddhism, and when it comes to Taiwan it is also the effect of the relevance of sectarianism in Japanese Buddhism. Moreover, debate on a correct *xin* also embraces other interconnected concepts such as *xiuxing* 修行 (practice) and *xiuyang* 修養 (cultivation), and even here, the sectarian discourse of mainstream Chinese Buddhism frames the argument. A careful reading of Republican sources clearly shows that Buddhists retrieved the definition of the correct belief in Buddhism from canonical scriptures and writings of ancient patriarchs, which are cited repeatedly.[6] Given that Mahāyāna is the tradition mostly spread and followed by (Han) Buddhists, it is unsurprising that discussion on the correct belief has also been associated with the Mahāyāna cross-sectarian practice of the six pāramitās.[7] The influential monk Fazun 法尊 (1902–1980), an important educator in the Republican period and particularly active in the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute (Hanzang jiaoliyuan 漢藏教理院), discussed *xin* according to similar criteria. Fazun wrote two short articles on *xin*, which he analyzed within the domains of doctrine and practice. He began the first with a quotation from a Buddhist scripture, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, that said that *xin* is the mother of all virtues, and nurtures all good roots.[8] This is why, Fazun argued, it is important for Buddhists

4 Hayashi 1936, 29–31.

5 For the term *zongjiao* and the concept of "religion" in China, see Barrett and Tarocco 2012, Kuo 2010, and Kuo 2020.

6 Tianran 1934, 5.

7 Hayashi 1936, 30–31.

8 Ch: "Xin wei daoyuan gongde mu, zhangyang yiqie zhu shan'gen" 信為道源功德母，長養一切諸善根. See also Tam's chapter in this volume.

to cultivate *xin* at the early stage of their practice. But what should Buddhists believe (*xin*) in? A correct *xin* has four objects, Fazun continued, and these are the Buddha (*xin fo* 信佛), the Dharma (*xin fa* 信法), the Sangha (*xin seng* 信僧), and the discipline (*xin jie* 信戒).[9]

The value and virtue of (the positive) religious/Buddhist *xin* (faith) lie in the fact that it exceeds the power of materiality and science, that it can in fact address situations that would otherwise remain unexplored or unexplained within the framework of material culture or science. In this perspective, some Buddhists have argued that in a world and time dominated by materiality and scientific development, and where and when everything is judged and categorized according to scientific criteria, there is still a strong need to recognize that the power of *xin/xinyang* (faith) overcomes material culture/material science. Faith does have its inner value, then, and it is defined as a spiritual culture (*jingshen wenhua* 精神文化) that can serve in support of (and sometimes counteract) the science-oriented material culture.[10] Moreover, correct *xin* (faith) can have global impact, as it can contribute to the purification (*jinghua* 淨化) of this entire world.[11] And again, of course, correct *xin*(*yang*) in these articles[12] is synonymous with the correct practice of the Buddhadharma that can lead to achieving Buddhahood (*fo zhi dao* 佛之道).[13]

Some other articles address only *mixin*, still in terms of "wrong faith" (*cuowu de xinyang* 錯誤的信仰), but also as an unavoidable step in the historical development of the Dharma and the secular world. Thus, a specific faith that is defined as correct in one historical period can be labeled as superstitious and negative in a subsequent moment, in order to adapt to the altered surrounding cultural parameters.[14] Some of these arguments, published in Taiwan in the journal *Nanying fojiao/Nan'e Bukkyō* 南瀛佛教,[15] are written by Japanese

9 Fazun 1940a, 9–10; Fazun 1940b, 10–12. A strong attack on the serious problem of the clerics disrobing over and over again is included in the same articles.

10 Nukita Shido 1935, 7–9; Kuwada Yoshizō 1933, 2–5.

11 Nukita Shido 1935, 9; to quote from the article: "Jinghua zhege shijie. Zhe, zheng shi xin zhi de de liliang" 淨化這個世界。這，正是信之德的力量. This argument is also reminiscent of the newly formed notion of "Pure Land on Earth" (*renjian jingtu* 人間淨土).

12 It is worth noting that these writings use *xin* interchangeably with the term *zongjiao* 宗教, as a further remark of the semantic spectrum of *xin* in the context.

13 Nukita Shido 1935, 7.

14 Kuwada Yoshizō 1933, 2–5.

15 This is the journal published by the South Sea Buddhist Association (Ch: *Nanying fojiao hui*; Jp: *Nan'e Bukkyō kai* 南瀛佛教會), which was established in Taiwan in 1921 as a Japanese official reference organ to include all the Buddhist groups and activities in Taiwan. Run by Japanese, it also involved Taiwanese Buddhists. Articles published on the journal were mostly authored by Japanese intellectuals or monks, however some were

Buddhists, and also reveal contemporary Japanese understanding of—and musings on—*mixin*.[16]

Others insisted on the opposition between *mixin* and *kexue*, stating that *mixin* develops especially when and where *kexue* has not flourished yet. These articles refer to the concept of a positive and "correct" *xin*, even if mostly implicitly; see, for instance, the explicit statement that the overall idea of *zongjiao*, here taken in connection to a positive *xin*, can be "good" for individuals and surrounding societies.[17] Yet the correlation between *mixin* and *kexue* is quite multifaceted, implying both a distance and an overlap between the two concepts.

And some Buddhists debated the binary *zhengxin* – *mixin* within two main contexts: the overall development of Buddhism,[18] and the overall Chinese (Han) cultural sphere.

### 2.1 *Xin* 信 *within the History of Buddhism: Early Indian Practices vs. Chinese Domestication*

Some Buddhists, in China and Taiwan, argued that Buddhism/Buddhadharma, in its original phase of formation and practice in India, was just *zhengxin*, while it developed *mixin* characteristics after the transmission to China, hence after going through the process of Chinese domestication, inter-religious borrowing, and merging with Chinese local traditions and systems of thought.

This argument was in line with a more general view, which developed between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Chinese Buddhist intellectual circles, that identified early Buddhism as the only "pure" Buddhism and participated in reinforcing the narrative of so-called "original Buddhism." This argument was partly connected to eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries European Buddhological scholarship and its conceptualization of an "original Buddhism"; it also encouraged renewed interest in the study of early Indian Buddhism, including a revaluation of textual corpora such as the *Āgama*s, which became a key feature of Chinese Buddhism in the first half of the twentieth century.[19]

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also written by local Taiwanese. For more on the South Sea Buddhist Association, see Jiang 1995, 121–125; Jones 1999, 75–81.

16 See, for instance, Matsumura Sei 1930a, 31–32, and Matsumura Sei 1930b, 34.

17 Zhang Weilong 1935, 45–49.

18 These sources use the terms *fojiao* 佛教 and *fofa* 佛法 interchangeably; I would argue that *fojiao* here is intended in its doctrinal sense, rather than as the institution of Buddhism.

19 The study of the history of Indian Buddhism became a compulsory subject in the curricula for Sangha education, and also in the new schools for laity like the China Metaphysical Institute (*Zhina neixueyuan* 支那內學院) established by Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無

Criticism of the Chinese domestication of Buddhism was based on the conviction that the influence of Chinese local religions and cultures (namely popular beliefs and Daoism, but also Confucianism) corrupted the original message of the Buddhadharma. In this context, *mi-xin* becomes an umbrella term that defines Chinese religious beliefs and practices, other than Buddhism, that were led by blind feelings (*ganqing* 感情) rather than by true principles (*zhenli* 真理) and knowledge (*zhishi* 知識). These features affected and reshaped Buddhism in China, and turned it into a *mi-xin*. The "correct" Buddhadharma (*fofa*), instead, was rooted in a form of cultivation guided by knowledge (*zhishi*)—*zheng-xin*.[20] More specifically, some Buddhists argued that the Chinese (Han) family values, like *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) and all the Confucian *li* 禮 (rites), corrupted that *zhengxin* of the (original) Buddhadharma.[21]

A group of Buddhists went even further and criticized not merely the Chinese conquest of Buddhism and the Chinese versions of Buddhist doctrine and practice, but also argued that rituals and liturgy in Buddhism, overall, had to be perceived as *mixin*. A journal article stated explicitly that Dharma services were just *mixin* (*fahui yi shi mixin* 法會亦是迷信).[22]

Other writings proposed more nuanced arguments by drawing various typologies of manifestations and performance of Chinese Buddhist *xin*(*yang*), and categorizing some of them in terms of *zhengxin*, and others as *mixin*. And this is how several practices, like sūtra recitation when done with a pure heart, were classified as *zhengxin*. However, all the so-called practices based on the concept of "exchange" (*jiaohuan* 交換), which were based on the very material principle that the performance of offerings, regardless of purity of mind, would have been reciprocated with some forms of rewards, were defined as

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(1871–1943) in 1922. Yinshun's (1906–2005) early volumes, from *Yindu zhi fojiao* 印度之佛教 (1943) to *Fofa gailun* 佛法概論 (1949), focused on Indian Buddhism as well; Yinshun also stated explicitly, in his classification of Buddhist teachings (*panjiao* 判教), that early Indian Mādhyamika was *the* "correct *xin*," see Yinshun 1993 and Travagnin 2001. For the interest in early Indian Buddhism and the study of the *Āgama*s in Republican China, see Travagnin 2018; Travagnin and Anālayo 2020. For the Chinese debate on "original Buddhism" (*yuanshi fojiao* 原始佛教), and the implications of this notion on Buddhist practices and intellectual developments, see Ritzinger 2016; Travagnin and Anālayo 2020.

20 See, for instance, Changxing 1930, 39–45, especially the first two sections of the speech, the first one titled "He wei mixin 何謂迷信," and the second one "He wei fofa 何謂佛法." A similar position is held by Fan Gunong 1984, 555–558. For *mixin*, see also Kuwada Yoshizō 1933, 2.

21 Changxing 1930, 44–45. Changxing especially emphasized this argument in the third part of his remarks, titled "Shizhen de yuanyou 失真的原由."

22 Huang Heihan 1934, 21.

*shangpin de xinyang* 商品的信仰 (business-based belief), and not considered as *zhengxin*.[23]

Not all Buddhists in Republican China shared this positive attention to Indian Buddhism, and the criticism of the Chinese tradition that went with it; especially those belonging to more conservative and traditional groups still identified the early Indian tradition as the "Lesser Vehicle" (*xiaosheng* 小乘).[24] A third group of Buddhist voices brought the conflict between the purity and the decadence of the Buddhist faith in conversation with the crucial new issue of national identity that had developed in those same decades. In a time where different ideologies and beliefs were competing for a possible enshrinement as "national ideology/state religion" (*guojiao* 國教), this group of Buddhist voices proposed a different and Buddhist argumentation, to rethink Chinese national identity and the role that Buddhism, rather than Confucianism or other local beliefs, could have played in it: a sort of "Buddhist nationalism" vs. a more traditional Confucian-imbued nationalism, although this was still a Buddhism that had to relate to Confucian ideas like the Great Unity (*datong* 大同).[25]

### 2.2 *The Impact of Christianity: mixin* 迷信 *Originated in the West?*

While some Buddhists differentiated a "pure" (Indian) Buddhism from Chinese endogenous beliefs and systems of thought, others drew a clear distinction between Buddhism overall and the foreign Christianity, which had become a more competitive and threatening force for Buddhists in China since the late Qing.

Several articles, written from the late 1920s until the late 1930s and authored by either lay Buddhists or clerics, argued that Buddhism (in the general sense, without making any explicit distinction between the Indian or Chinese traditions) was a *zhixin* 智信 (wisdom/knowledge-based belief, hence a faith grounded in reason) while "Jesus's teachings" (which appeared with the names of *yejiao* 耶教 or *yesujiao* 耶穌教) had to be considered as a *mixin*, as they were not based on reason.

They took their argument a step further and concluded that the overall phenomenon of *mixin* was alien to China and Asia, that it began in the West and originated from Christianity.[26] The inaugural issue of *Dafo xuebao* 大佛學報 (1930) developed this point in detail. Buddhism becomes a faith based on/

23 He Binqi 1935, 38.

24 See Travagnin 2018; Travagnin and Anālayo 2020.

25 These are the Buddhist voices that argued the notion of rescuing the nation through the Dharma; Part 3 of this chapter will explore their views.

26 Hui Puxin 1923, 8–10 (see especially the appendix of this article, titled "Xiyang mixin 西洋迷信," 10); Ju Nong 1930, 18–19. The latter was published already in 1928.

aiming at the awakening of one's own (Buddha) nature (*juewu zixing de xin* 覺悟自性的信), while Jesus's teachings are merely a *mixin* faith centered on the worship of deities (*mixin zhu de shen de xin* 迷信主的神的信).[27] Buddhism could not be defined as a *mixin* because it is not centered on the worship of deities (*shen* 神): The Buddha was a human being who reached the final realization in a human body and in the human realm. According to the monk Zhenhua 真華 (1922–2012), in Buddhist institutes it is important, first of all, to learn and know what Buddhism is (*renshi fojiao* 認識佛教)—a religion of reason and intellect (*lizhi de zongjiao* 理智的宗教), not just a religion of (irrational) faith (*xinyang de zongjiao* 信仰的宗教). In other words, Buddhism was misunderstood as *mixin* because its rational/intellectual part was missed.[28] In his article "Xin fo yu xin shen 信佛與信神," the monk Yongquan 湧泉 made a clear distinction between the faith in deities/spirits (*xin shen* 信神), which is defined as *mixin*, and faith in Buddha (*xin fo* 信佛), which is intended as *zhengxin*.[29] The monk Zhifeng 芝峯 (1901–1971), who became well-known as editor for the journal *Haichao yin*, educator at several institutes of Buddhist studies, and was especially well-versed in the Only-Consciousness (*weishi* 唯識) teachings, wrote an article published in *Haichao yin* discussing the question of *xinyang* by looking at the origins of *xinyang*, the object of *xinyang*, and how these related to the nature of the human being, which he saw as primarily spiritual. Zhifeng distinguished between "relative *xinyang*" (*xiangdui de xinyang* 相對的信仰) and "absolute *xinyang*" (*juedui de xinyang* 絕對的信仰), with the former having different deities (*shen*) as object of faith and devotion, and the latter having one's own self as the object of belief. Zhifeng gave a comparative overview of relative and absolute *xinyang* in various religions and Western philosophies, and concluded that Buddhism embodied both relative and absolute *xinyang*, in the way it included both the *fangbian dao* 方便道 (which he viewed in parallel to the "relative *xinyang*"), and the *zhenshi dao* 真實道 (which he associated with the "absolute *xinyang*"). It is precisely on the level of *xinyang* that Buddhism distinguishes itself from the other religions, Zhifeng stressed: Other religions could only offer relative *xinyang*, while Buddhism had also the absolute *xinyang*.[30]

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27 See especially the sections "Fojiao zhi xinyang nai zixin er fei mixin 佛教之信仰乃自信而非迷信," 8–9, and "Fojiao zhi xinyang nai zili zhi yinguo er fei tali de shen 佛教之信仰乃自力之因果而非它力的神," 13–17. *Dafo xuebao* was published in Yangzhou; it was discontinued after only two issues, both printed in 1930.

28 See Zhenhua 1996.

29 Yongquan 1935, 11–13.

30 Zhifeng 1928, 13–18. Meanings, functions, and manifestations of *xinyang* are the last topics of Zhifeng's long analysis.

Buddhism is defined as a logical, human-centered, and reason-based belief, which is rooted in the law of cause and effect and therefore puts human beings in charge of their own destiny (*zili zhi yinguo* 自力之因果); Buddhism is a religion based on knowledge and self-power, it is not a faith based on blind reliance on the other-power (*tali zhi shen* 他力之神).[31] Such an argument, considering that most of the Chinese Pure Land practice preaches reliance on the other power and the worship of Amitābha Buddha, also stirred opposition and tensions within the Buddhist sphere.

### 2.3 *Mixin* 迷信 *vis-à-vis kexue* 科學*: Opposition or Overlap?*

Republican debates on the value of *zongjiao*/religion and the problematics of *mixin* very often included Christianity, and the role that the latter had played in the Chinese epistemology of the terms *zongjiao* and *mixin*. The anti-religion movement (*fei zongjiao yundong* 非宗教運動) that arose around the May Fourth Movement was framed within those lines, and often became synonymous with the anti-Christian movement (*fei jidujiao yundong* 非基督教運動).[32] Other debates focused especially on the contrast between *zongjiao*/religion and *kexue*/science.[33] Similarly, discussions on *xin*(*yang*) also included references to *kexue*. Some Buddhists tried to defy the idea that the highly appreciated science (*kexue*) stood in such mutual opposition to *mixin*, while others identified the strong role that *xinyang* held in connection to *kexue*.

An article published in 1946, for instance, explored the idea of science and superstitions not as opposite terms and concepts, but as two parts of the same conceptual compound; this relation of connection, rather than opposition, brought a new meaning to the two terms. This was another way of arguing against the conflicting relations between religion and science that had emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. Two new compounds, and two new analytical concepts, then appeared: the notion of *kexue mixin* 科學迷信 ("scientific superstition," or better a "scientific attitude towards superstition") and *mixin kexue* 迷信科學 ("superstitious science," or better a "superstitious attitude towards science"). The author of this short article argued that the former concept identified all the rituals that people systematically perform

31 Ibid.

32 For the May Fourth and the anti-religion or anti-Christian movements, see Bastid-Bruguière 2002; Lutz 1988; Tao Feiya 2003; Kuo 2020; Meyer 2015; for Buddhist responses to those movements see Travagnin 2020. For effects and synergy between the May Fourth atmosphere and Chinese religions, see the volume edited by Lu Miao-fen and Paul R. Katz (2020).

33 For *kexue*, and the overall concept of science and scientism in Chinese religions, especially Buddhism, see Hammerstrom 2015 and 2020.

in precise moments of their lives, such as burning paper-money for someone's death; these rituals are performed according to a precise schedule and in a regulated manner, as a form of science, and for one's personal consolation. The concept of *mixin kexue* results from the widespread attitude that the author calls *xinyang kexue* 信仰科學 ("science of faith," or better "believing in science"); it is blind faith in anything labeled as science that transforms the adoption of science into a new form of superstition.[34]

From a different perspective, the monk Fafang 法舫 (1905–1951) also claimed that there may not be opposition between *kexue* and the Buddhist faith; in particular, he identified Buddhist Yogācāra *as* science.[35] This was in line with other monastic and lay networks, from Nanjing to Sichuan, who found in Yogācāra a Buddhist response to Western sciences like psychology. The claimed scientific nature of Yogācāra also explains the revival of interest in this tradition during the Republican period.[36]

In those same years, Taiwan hosted the publication of written arguments about the need for cooperation, not opposition, between *kexue* and *zongjiao*/*xinyang*, and the call to use the Japanese attempts in this respect as exemplary.[37] These Taiwanese publications echoed the ongoing debate in Japan, where Buddhists had to respond to internal and external pressure to position "religion" vis-à-vis the domains of "state" and "science."[38]

## 3 Legitimizing *xin* 信 in the Public Discourse: Benefiting Society and Rescuing the Nation

This section will propose views on *xin* from Buddhist figures who have often been recognized as the leaders of crucial networks in Republican China; moreover, they were often protagonists of several exchanges and negotiations with the political powers. Although these voices and arguments are not exhaustive of the Buddhist landscape, they become crucial because they delineate the official discourse of *xin* in a public and secular sphere too. The claim of a

34 Xinjian 1946, 50.

35 Fafang 1928.

36 See, for instance, the papers collected in Makeham 2014.

37 See, for instance, Inoue Jinkichi 1936, 5–6.

38 See Krämer's chapter in this volume. As he stated well, Japanese Buddhists were facing challenges coming from outside, yet the reconceptualization of faith and religion should not be seen as a mere reaction to Christianity or a Western imposition, but was instead also result of a debate internal to the Buddhist community.

certain Buddhist *xin* as instrumental in the making of the new China gave then new values to *xin* and religion.

The layman Fan Gunong 范古農 (1881–1951) was influential in the Chinese Buddhist sphere as editor of Buddhist books and journal; he also gave lectures on the philosophy of the Only-Consciousness School, and authored works on the foundations of Buddhism. His writings include the article "Xin fo zhi tiaojian 信佛之條件" (1928), where he listed thirty-six conditions for a proper belief in Buddhism.[39] These thirty-six conditions, he argued, are the basis of the correct faith and practice of Buddhism, and thus thirty-six factors that can distinguish a correct Buddhist practice from an incorrect one. Correct faith in Buddhism (which Fan Gunong called *zhenzheng xin fo* 真正信佛, or *zhenzheng xinyang* 真正信仰) is rooted in the figure of Śākyamuni Buddha as *the* teacher, takes Buddha's canonical scriptures (*fojing* 佛經) as *the* guiding teachings, and is strengthened by respect for the five precepts (*jie* 戒) of the laity. An important element that is stressed in several of those thirty-six points is the distinction between Buddhas and bodhisattvas on the one hand, and divine spirits and ghosts (*tianxian shengui* 天仙神鬼) on the other. Belief in Buddha is then a correct faith (*zhengxin*) and not a superstitious belief, while belief in other forms of deities falls under the category of superstition. Unlike other Buddhists, Fan Gunong included Pure Land practice in the category of correct faiths. Furthermore, this correct belief in the Buddha (or in other words, adhering to Buddhism rather than to other beliefs) can also bring peace and have political and social value, an element that is recurrent in all the voices analyzed in this Part 3.[40]

The duals *zhengxin* and *mixin* recurred in the writings of the eminent monk Yuanying 圓瑛 (1878–1953). Yuanying was president of the Chinese Buddhist Association during the Republican period (*Zhongguo fojiao hui* 中國佛教會) from 1928 to 1937, and of the Buddhist Association of China (*Zhongguo fojiao xiehui* 中國佛教協會) in 1953, albeit only briefly. He was an eminent meditation and Pure Land teacher, an innovator for Sangha and lay education, but also well-known for not sharing most of the reforms proposed by Taixu. Yuanying discussed *xin* within the context of Buddhist cultivation and also in its relation to society and social demands. As for the latter, Yuanying wrote that *xinxin* 信心[41] should be cultivated as the vow preliminary to the *nianfo* 念佛

39 Fan Gunong 1928, 46–48.

40 The condition no. 21 reads: "Ji feng fojiao, dangzuo zhengren, yi zheng zhongren, xiushen qijia zhiguo, qiu shijie heping, renmin anle" 既奉佛教, 當作正人, 以正眾人, 修身齊家治國, 求世界和平, 人民安樂.

41 We may draw a correspondence here between Yuanying's explanation of *xinxin* 信心, and the reading that Lüdde and Huang do of the same expressions in their studies on

practice.[42] In a different talk, Yuanying discussed "correct" Buddhism as a positive *xinyang*, which brings benefits (*liyi* 利益) to society. He made a distinction between Buddhism as *zhengxin* and the wrong understanding and practice of the Dharma that made some practice of Buddhism resembling a *mixin*. In other words, Yuanying perceived the danger of turning Buddhism into a *mixin*, and stressed that only the correct practice of Buddhism was the faith (*xinyang*) that the nation needed to foster.[43] Yuanying then proposed that *zongjiao* (religion) was a positive concept to counteract *mixin*; he also drew a parallel to Confucius (Kongzi 孔子) and Confucianism (*rujiao* 儒教).[44] Yuanying repeated this idea in other pieces and, as in other monks' writings, discussed the—apparently logical—law of cause and effect (*yinguo* 因果) as proof of *zhengxin*.[45]

In those same years, the monk Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), who is probably the best known—and one of the most radical—reformist of the Republican period, defined correct faith in Buddhism as not just beneficial to the people and the nation, but also as the country's savior. Some remarks along these lines were published under the title "Zhengxin jiu guo 正信救國" (1933);[46] this is just one of the several lectures that Taixu gave in the late 1920s and the 1930s and in which he explained that patriotism was an inner teaching of Buddhism. Buddhists, Taixu reasoned, should take the nation's suffering as their own and actively use Buddhist compassion (*cibei xin* 慈悲心) to solve their social and national responsibilities. This was the way to merge the Mahāyāna Buddhist practice of compassion (*cibei* 慈悲) and skillful means (*fangbian* 方便), and the understanding of the Dharma as teaching that could liberate sentient beings from suffering, with Sun Yat-sen's call for a national sense of the public. Therefore, patriotism and rescuing the nation were conceived as intersecting with Buddhist practice and mission, and among Buddhists' national duties.[47]

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Buddhism in contemporary China, where *xinxin*, also understood as "confidence," is mostly conceived as the initial step in the individual cultivation.

42 From his lecture "Nianfo famen 念佛法門"; see Yuanying 2012a, 157–160.

43 See, for instance, the following statement from Yuanying 2012b, 180: "*Yi fojiao you ci liyi, gu shehui yingdang tichang, guomin ying sheng xinyang* 以佛教有此利益，故社會應當提倡，國民應生信仰."

44 From his lecture "Xie shi zongci jiangyan 謝氏宗祠講演"; see Yuanying 2012b, 180–181.

45 From his lecture "Guomin yingjin tianzhi 國民應儘天職"; see Yuanying 2012c, 196. See also the reference to the text *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經 (T3n189).

46 Taixu 1933, 1.

47 See also Taixu 1948, 60–61. Taixu gave this talk for the first time in 1932, and later again in 1933. Taixu claimed several associations between Sun Yat-sen's ideology and Buddhism; for instance, he drew the Three Principles of Buddha (*sanfo zhuyi* 三佛主義), on the blueprint of the Three Principles of the People (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義); he included the study of the Three Principles of the People to the curriculum of the Minnan Institute

The next step, Taixu believed, was to go beyond protecting the nation, and, in light with the global essence and value of Buddhism, move towards saving the entire world.[48]

Another influential Buddhist leader in the first half of the twentieth-century was the monk Cihang 慈航 (1893–1954). Cihang lived in China in the Republican period; he engaged in all the major debates that animated the Buddhist (or otherwise intellectual) circles in the 1930s, and proposed arguments that resonated—but did not fully coincide—with Taixu's positions. The close connection between Taixu and Cihang has also been stressed by recent scholarship that labeled the latter as part of Taixu's legacy.[49] Cihang moved to Taiwan in the late 1940s, thus becoming one of those clerics who bridged China with Taiwan, and worked on the "rebirth" in the post-colonial Taiwan of the kind of *new* Buddhism that had developed in the early twentieth century China. Cihang's oeuvre is vast and varied; he wrote commentaries on the most popular Buddhist texts in early twentieth-century China, but also debated the questions of education, Sangha reforms, and the role of nuns in the Buddhist and wider communities. Cihang also wrote extensively on the significance and implication of the term *zongjiao*, what *mixin* was, how to define *fojiao* 佛教 within this renewed analytical vocabulary, and, like Yuanying and Taixu, how *fojiao* could be effective in the mission of "rescuing the nation" (*jiuguo* 救國). As for the *xin/mixin* debate, Cihang first listed the major arguments that had been put forward in those years to define how a teaching or a belief could be defined as a *mixin*, and thereafter confuted most of them. Cihang noticed that worship practices (*libai* 禮拜) have been said to be a defining element of *mixin*, ceremonies and ceremonial etiquette (*yishi* 儀式) have been considered as another key features, and devotion to other-worldly spirits and deities (*shen* 神) has also been labeled as *mixin*.[50] This latter point resonates with what other less influential Buddhists wrote in the Republican period (see Part 2 of this chapter). Cihang also reported that another very curious feature put forward for *mixin* is that it was related to something that we could not see (*kan*

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of Buddhist Studies (Minnan foxueyuan 閩南佛學院) in the late 1920s (Travagnin 2015); he saw a parallel, rather than a contradiction, between the Nationalist ideology and his "Buddhism for the Human Realm" (*rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教). However, he simultaneously argued that the Buddhadharma could provide some spiritual guidance that the secular domain was missing, and thus proposed an overall process of "Buddhicization" (*fohua* 佛化).

48 See also Chen Yongge 2016, 263–287.

49 See, for instance, Deng Zimei and Chen Weihua 2017, 284–313.

50 For instance, Cihang counter-argued this point by stating that situations like landmark events in politics, any sort of official meeting, or the opening of a school year are all marked by ceremonial performances, yet may not all be considered *mixin*.

*bu jian de dongxi* 看不見的東西). This meant that what could not be seen did not exist either, and any belief in something that could not be seen was then *mixin*. The point was, in other words, that you could not believe in (*xiangxin* 相信) what you could not see, because what you could not see could not be real. This final issue was debated and confuted by Cihang in quite a few lectures,[51] in which he explained why that criterion could not serve to define something as *mixin*.[52] One of these talks focused on the law of cause and effect (*yinguo* 因果), which is seen as a key mark of Buddhism; in this lecture, Cihang questioned whether believing in that was *mixin* too, since the law of cause and effect is not something that can be seen. Most of the discussions on Buddhism as *mixin* were also related to the debate on whether Buddhism could rescue the nation. Cihang argued that *mixin* could not accomplish that mission; moreover, it could constitute a problem for the safety of the nation. However, Buddhism, which he did not categorize as *mixin*, could very well facilitate that. To strengthen his argument, Cihang listed Buddhism as one of the three main religions available in China,[53] and also categorized it as a form of national education (*guojia de jiaoyu* 國家的教育); it is the latter that gives Buddhism the ability to "rescue the nation," Cihang argued. Buddhism, Christianity, the Three Principles of the People, Confucianism (*kongjiao* 孔教)—these were all forms of education, and as education they could rescue the nation.[54] Cihang explained that there were three types of education: the education given within the household (*jiating jiaoyu* 家庭教育), the education given at school (*xuexiao jiaoyu* 學校教育), and the education given within society (*shehui jiaoyu* 社會教育). Since religion (*zongjiao*), and especially Buddhism, offered guidance to society, it belonged to the third type of education, and as such had the ability to rescue the nation.[55] Finally,

51 These lectures were all later published in the third volume of the *Cihang fashi quanji* 慈航法師全集 (Taipei: Cihang fashi yongjiu jinianhui, 1981), see Cihang 1981a, 1–5; Cihang 1981b, 6–10; Cihang 1981c, 19–21.

52 Cihang disagreed by claiming, for instance, that we can see the moon reflected on water, we can see things in our dreams, but we cannot see our eyebrows, nor possibly ever see our grandparents. Therefore, he argued, should we consider the reflection of the moon more real than our own grandparents or eyebrows?

53 The three religions were Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam; more local Chinese traditions, like Daoism, were not included.

54 As for the importance of education, let us think of the slogans on the "omnipotence of education" (*jiaoyu wanneng* 教育萬能), and the call to "save the country through education" (*jiaoyu jiuguo* 教育救國) that have recurred throughout modern Chinese history, including the Republican period.

55 These lectures were all later published in the third volume of the *Cihang fashi quanji* 慈航法師全集 1981, see especially Cihang 1981d, 46–49, Cihang 1981e, 50–56; Cihang 1981f, 57–59; Cihang 1981g, 71–73.

in Cihang's writings Buddhism is then conceived mostly in terms of *jiaoyu* or *zongjiao*, while the terms *xin* or *xinyang* do not appear equally often.

The intersecting of narratives between the religious sphere and the political domain reveals parallels, associations, and ideological borrowing and merging. For instance, the call for "rescuing the nation" (*jiuguo*) was raised not only by the Buddhist/religious community, but, as Klein explains in his chapter, was a core tenet in Sun Yat-sen's politics and the KMT government. Another example from the process of borrowing and unifying terminology concerns the relations that both domains, the Buddhist and the political (KMT), had with Confucianism and governing principles. For instance, Confucian ideals, like the *datong* 大同 (Great Unity), are embraced and adopted by both spheres.[56] Furthermore, while the theologian Wang Zhixin 王治心 (1881–1968) drew parallels between the Three Principles of the People and Christianity (see his *Yesu zhuyi* 耶穌主義),[57] Taixu not only stressed the strong similarities between those principles and his *rensheng fojiao*, but also stipulated parallel Buddhist Principles (*San Fo zhuyi* 三佛主義).

Taixu's second principle (*Fohua zhuyi* 佛化主義) aimed to "Buddhicize" the surrounding (lay) society.[58] The two characters *fohua* 佛化 became cardinal in the so-called "Buddhicization movement" (*fohua yundong* 佛化運動); members of the "modernizers' network" used the term *fohua*, rather than *fojiao* 佛教 or *fofa* 佛法 to express the plan to actively influence, and especially reshape, societal and other non-Buddhist spheres with the correct *xin*. The overall movement of reform and innovation eventually intersected with this call for a "Buddhicization." Many aspects, from education to family life,[59] from socialism to the three principles of the people,[60] were encouraged to go through a *fohua* process so to reflect the correct *xin*; several periodicals were also established to discuss the Buddhicization plans,[61] and many articles were published also elsewhere on the topic.[62] The lay scholars Jiang

56 See Travagnin 2015, and the chapter by Klein in this volume.

57 See Klein's chapter in this volume.

58 Taixu 1950 [1928]; this is one of the first articles of his where he explained how *rensheng fojiao* overlapped with KMT ideology, and the definition of the Three Principles of the Buddha (*sanfo zhuyi* 三佛主義) along the Three Principles of the People (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主義).

59 Katz 2019.

60 Travagnin 2020.

61 The following periodicals were established in early 1920s: *Xin fohua xunkan* 新佛化旬刊, *Fohua xin qingnian* 佛化新青年, *Fohua cejinhui huikan* 佛化策進會會刊, *Fohua xunkan* 佛化旬刊, *Fohua pinglun* 佛化評論, *Fohua zhoukan* 佛化週刊. See also Travagnin 2020.

62 Tang Dayuan 1924a and 1924b; Jiang Tesheng 1927a, 1927b, 1928a, 1928b; Ning Mogong 1927; Jueren 1923. For secondary sources on "Buddhicization" in relation to correct *xin*, see Hou Kunhong 2018, 153–198.

Tesheng 蔣特生 and Tang Dayuan 唐大圓 (1885–1941), both part of the "Taixu-centered network," were two of the main protagonists in the description of the Buddhicization process. Tang Dayuan's "Xin fohua zhi biaozhun 新佛化之標準," originally written in 1922 and published in 1924, lists the core doctrine of the *new* Buddhism, citing key Mahāyāna scriptures and teachings; the article also merges traditional Mahāyāna with features of *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教, such as the combination of acting in the world (*shijian* 世間) with the otherworldly spiritual essence (*chushi* 出世) of the Buddhadharma, and the purpose to benefit and purify (*jingyi* 淨益) society at large.

In other words, the relations between the religious and the political at that time were more complex than a mere opposition or pure collaboration. I will explore other patterns of this interplay in Part 4.

## 4 Politicizing *xin* 信: a Buddhist Reading of Sun Yat-sen's and Chiang Kai-shek's Views on *xin*(*yang*) 信仰

While Klein's chapter in this volume explores political use of the concepts of "belief" and "trust" in the Republican period, I will address how the viewpoints of the same political protagonists were perceived by the Buddhist community. A good reference for this research are the writings of the monk and historian Dongchu 東初 (1908–1977), a native of China who then fled to Taiwan in the mid-twentieth century. Although a graduate from Taixu's innovative institutes for Sangha's education, Dongchu adopted an ambivalent position towards tradition and reform, showing less enthusiasm for the secularization of Sangha education than his own teacher.

In his *Zhongguo fojiao jindai shi* 中國佛教近代史 (1974), Dongchu offered a detailed account of the political and social concerns on *xinyang* in China during the first decades of the twentieth century, looking beyond the domain of doctrine and practice, and focusing also on the public (and political) spheres. Among the topics that Dongchu addressed there are the debate on religion in 1920s, the consequent new politics and policies on religion issued and implemented by the new Nationalist regime, the effects of those policies on freedom of belief (*xinyang ziyou* 信仰自由), and the attacks that Buddhism became subject to in those years. According to Dongchu, however, Buddhism was not a superstitious belief (*mixin de zongjiao* 迷信的宗教).[63] Dongchu also stressed

63 Dongchu 1974, 140–142.

the social and national usefulness of the Buddhist *xinyang* as monks joined the national army in the late 1930s.[64]

In his *Jiang zongtong yu fojiao* 蔣總統與佛教 (1975), Dongchu wrote more specifically about the perspective of the political leaders Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek on *xinyang*, or better his Buddhist take on these viewpoints. Chiang Kai-shek was not just a politician (*zhengzhijia* 政治家), Dongchu argued, but also an expert on religion (*zongjiaojia* 宗教家).[65] Dongchu reported Chiang Kai-shek's statement, "There is no human life without religious belief (*zongjiao de xinyang* 宗教的信仰)."[66] In addition, science (*kexue*) and medicine (*yixue* 醫學) could not always heal humans' mental illnesses (*jingshen bing* 精神病), although psychologists had claimed otherwise. In fact, Chiang Kai-shek argued, it was only via the teachings of a religious *xinyang* and a humanistic philosophy (*rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學) that human beings could find inner stability (*anding li* 安定力).[67] Decades earlier, Dongchu reported, Sun Yat-sen had already given relevance to religious *xinyang*, and thus Buddhist *xinyang* as well (especially Mahāyāna Buddhism), as a benevolent value that could contribute to "rescuing the nation"; Buddhist *xinyang* is, then, in line with the Three Principles of the People. In fact, the fourth article of the Principle of Nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* 民族主義) says: "Buddhism can compensate for science."[68]

This reading of Sun Yat-sen's and Chiang Kai-shek's positions helped to ground the legitimacy of the arguments proposed by those Buddhist leaders who had stressed Buddhism as a socially and politically useful "belief" (and "religion").

## 5 Institutionalizing *xin* 信: the Buddhist Right Faith Society *Fojiao zhengxin hui* 佛教正信會 (China) and the Right Faith Society *Zhengxin hui* 正信會 (Taiwan)

The concept of a "correct faith" was not only extrapolated to interpret scriptures and practices, or to provide authority to the discursive narrative on the role of Buddhism in the public domain. Quite soon, in the 1920s, it also became the name of lay associations, in China and Taiwan. The Buddhist

64 Dongchu 1974, 9–11.

65 Dongchu 1975, 15; see also Dongchu 1974, 469–480.

66 Dongchu 1975, 15; "rensheng bu ke xu'er wu zongjiao de xinyang" 人生不可須臾無宗教的信仰.

67 Dongchu 1975, 15.

68 Dongchu 1975, 16; "fojiao neng bu kexue zhi pian" 佛教能補科學之偏.

Right Faith Society (*Fojiao zhengxin hui* 佛教正信會)[69] in China, and the Right Faith Society (*Zhengxin hui* 正信會)[70] in Taiwan are two good case-studies in this respect.

The *Hankou fojiaohui* 漢口佛教會 was established in 1920, in Hubei 湖北, and changed its name to *Fojiao zhengxin hui* in 1928. This is one of the many lay Buddhist associations that were founded in the early twentieth century; it focused on a wide range of charity activities, from taking care of the poor to running education programs for the less fortunate. Instituted and run by Buddhist laymen like, for instance, Chen Yuanbai 陳元白, Li Yinchen 李隱塵, and Wang Senfu 王森甫, this association was strongly connected with Taixu, and so part of the so-called "Taixu network." For instance, there was a close relation with the Wuchang Institute of Buddhist Studies (Wuchang foxueyuan 武昌佛學院); second, the majority of the lay leaders were all disciples of Taixu himself; third, Taixu came to serve as "guiding master" (*daoshi* 導師) of the association. Taixu was also behind the association's name change, and the selection of the expression "correct faith" as a new label for the group; *zhengxin*, he explained, expressed refuge in the three gems (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), while those who were not following the three gems were not practicing a correct faith.[71] The strong relation with Taixu and his network may explain the societal focus of the activities run by the association; those activities were the concretization of the idea of Buddhist *xin* as beneficial to, and savior of, the nation.[72] This form of social engagement was, certainly, also in line with Taixu's *rensheng fojiao* 人生佛教 and, a few decades later, became a key aspect of certain streams of *renjian fojiao* 人間佛教 as well. After the foundation of the society in Hubei, other branches, with similar aims and activities,

69 For a summary of the history, structure, and activities, see Welch 1968, 77–81. Tang Dayuan (1885–1941), who was a prominent lay Buddhist author of several articles published in *Haichao yin* and other journals, launched a Buddhist Studies Institute (*fojiao jiangxi suo* 佛教講習所) within the Buddhist Right Faith Society in 1922. Also, like many of these newly founded societies, the Buddhist Right Faith Society produced a magazine, the *Right Faith Weekly* (*Zhengxin zhoukan* 正信周刊), where activities of the society, information of their funds and sponsors, and discussions on Buddhist texts were published. See also Daxing 1933; Taixu 1925; Taixu 1929.

70 Information on the foundation, leading principles, and initial committee members can be found in the article Anonymous 1934, 24–27; Lin Chengpo 1935, 35; He Binqi 1935, 38.

71 Taixu 1925; "shou san gui jishi biaoxian zhengxin fofa zhi juezheng; wei shou sangui ze xin wei biaojue ye" 受三皈即是表現正信佛法之决證；未受三皈則信未表決也.

72 Among the many articles see Reporter 1932; the first paragraph summarizes the agenda of the society, the roots into Taixu's ideals, the embedding of Mahāyāna principles, and the goal to save the country and the world (*jiuguo jiushi* 救國救世).

were opened in the 1920s and 1930s in several provinces like Hunan 湖南[73] and Sichuan 四川.[74]

The lay leadership of this organization reflects crucial changes that had happened in the contemporary Buddhist context, where the laity had assumed a major role and were no longer subordinate to the Sangha; on a certain level, the laity had become an alternative to the Sangha, and acted in parallel to the monastic community.[75]

Although there is no evidence of direct connections between this lay association and Japan, we should notice that those were the years when "new religions" (*shin shūkyō* 信宗教) began to appear and flourish in Japan. Groups like Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 and Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会 were, like the Buddhist Right Faith Society, run by lay Buddhists, strongly rooted in sectarian teachings and teachers from the past, and highly engaged in humanitarian action, social welfare, and education activities. Furthermore, from the perspective of the cultural and religious milieu that characterized late Qing and Republican China, these "socially engaged" associations resembled—and may have been inspired by—Christian groups that were active at that time and challenged local traditions by their social commitment and popularity.

In 1934, just a few years after the creation of The Buddhist Right Faith Society, a similar society was founded in Taiwan. It was established in Taizhong, within the Taizhong Buddhist Association (*Taizhong fojiaohui* 台中佛教會) by, among others, Lin Delin 林德林 (1890–1951). Lin was a prominent figure in colonial Taiwan, a reformer who earned the name "Martin Luther of Taiwan" (*Taiwan Mading Lude* 台灣馬丁路德).[76] The foundation of this group was an accomplishment of the Taiwanese movement for the "right Buddhist faith" (*Taiwan zhengxin fojiao yundong* 台灣「正信佛教」運動), and it initially counted between twenty and thirty members, including four women. As Lin Delin explained, this group was created to discuss the question of the "Buddhist faith" in Taiwan (*Taiwan fojiao xinyang wenti* 台灣佛教信仰問題), within the overall context of the "faith question" (*xinyang wenti* 信仰問題) that not only

73 Anonymous 1921.

74 Photographic material from *Haichao yin* 海潮音 12 (1931), no. 12.

75 The education programs initiated by Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無, for instance, are a clear example of the laity installing themselves as an alternative to the monastic community in the educational sphere. For the role of the Buddhist laity in the Republican period, see, for instance, the case studies from Shanghai in Jessup (2016).

76 For more about Lin Delin, his ideology and activities, see Jiang Canteng 2002.

Taiwan, but also China, Japan,[77] and all the world were debating at that time.[78] Specifically about Taiwan, those were the years in which several articles, authored by either Japanese or Taiwanese Buddhists and published in *Nanying fojiao/Nan'e Bukkyō* 南瀛佛教,[79] debated local folk beliefs in Taiwan,[80] and the clash between proper traditional Buddhism and popular Buddhism.[81] The concern for a proper Buddhism was not only shared by Taiwanese Buddhists, but was also urged by the Japanese government, and Japanese Buddhist groups on the island.[82] The main role of this Society, then, was not to provide material support to the community, or to be involved in any form of humanitarian activities; it was an intellectual circle, where views on *xin* were debated and lectures on "proper" Buddhism were delivered regularly.

The Chinese Right Faith Buddhist Society and the Taiwanese Right Faith Society were established in the same years; they shared the common concern for reviving a proper Buddhist faith, and overcoming the other beliefs which were called *mixin*. At the same time, however, these two groups were the outcomes and manifestations of two different local histories, and were facing two different forms of colonization. China was rebuilding her own nation and identity, "rescuing" it from the challenges of Western ideologies and a traditional—often perceived as backward—local past, embracing exogenous concepts and reshaping endogenous ones. On the other hand, Taiwan was writing her own history of occupation and Japanese "domestication" of culture, drawing distinction between categories of beliefs (some more *mixin* than others), and questioning the Chinese and Japanese identities of "proper" Buddhism.

77 See Krämer's chapter for the Japanese situation.

78 Lin Delin 1935, 36. Lin also often referred to the late Japanese Zen teacher Nukariya Kaiten 忽滑谷快天 (1867–1934). This was a very prominent figure in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation, as Taiwanese monks or Buddhist laity did their study at Komazawa University where Nukariya Kaiten was also a teacher. His views were held in high esteem in Taiwan even after his passing.

79 For more on the *Nan'e Bukkyōkai* 南瀛佛教會, see Kan Zhengzong 2011, 195–209.

80 Those articles often referred to the book *Taiwanteki shūkyō* 臺灣的宗教 by Marui Keijirō 1919. Several articles published in the vol. 5, no. 5 and no. 6 of *Nanying fojiao/Nan'e Bukkyō* 南瀛佛教 1926 set proposals for reforming Taiwanese Buddhism.

81 For instance, see Sun Xinyuan 1932; Ye Miaoguo 1931; Zeng Jinglai (Sō Keirai) 1931.

82 For instance, see the various investigation on local religions that Japanese had been carrying out in Taiwan since the early stages of the colonial period, like the book by Marui Keijirō in 1919.

## 6 Conclusion: Continuities and Ruptures in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries

From the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, in both China and Taiwan, the character *xin* functioned as key word in several debates either initiated or joined by the Buddhist communities. Some of these debated related to the atmosphere of reconsideration of religion at the time of the May Fourth Movement and other contemporary campaigns, and the context of opposition to—or domestication of—scientific thinking, secularization, and foreign ideologies. Other debates are just legacies from premodern conceptions, and textual and doctrinal interpretations, of *xin* in the (Chinese) Buddhadharma.[83] Often, the character *xin* assumed semantic distinctions and variations through the compounds it was part of.

The discursive narrative of *xin* penetrated the private sphere of practice, where it meant a specific stage or approach to the Dharma cultivation; it also contributed to the public sphere, where it defined Buddhist ways to intervene in the "salvation" and construction of the (new) nation.

The early and mid-twentieth century was also a time of renewed interest for the text *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (The Treatise on the Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith) by Japanese and Chinese Buddhist scholars,[84] as well as by Western Christians.[85] Even here, the meaning of the character *xin* was often debated or even instrumentalized.

Some of the debates and arguments about *xin* that informed the Buddhist sphere in the first half of the twentieth century have continued to pervade Chinese and Taiwanese communities to this day. For instance, as Weishan Huang explains in her chapter about Tzu Chi followers in China, the dichotomy *zhengxin* and *mixin* is still relevant in the contemporary narrative. Furthermore, the connection between "belief" and "practice" is stressed today as well; in fact, according to Huang's study, it is the concept of "practice" (*xing* 行), rather than that of "belief" (*xin*), that recurs often in conversations with Tzu Chi members, yet *xing* is to be intended as manifestation of *xin*. And the concept of *xinxin* 信心, so dear to the monk Yuanying, for instance, in Republican China, is a key term in contemporary Chinese Buddhist circles, although it has also assumed a second semantic connotation.[86]

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83 See the chapter by Tam in this volume.

84 For instance, see Suzuki 1900, Liang Qichao 1922, but also Yinshun 1951.

85 See Richards 1907. For a detailed study of the modern interest in this text, including different positions on the reading of *xin*, see Tarocco 2008. See also Jansen's chapter in this volume.

86 See the chapters by Huang and Lüdde in this volume.

These signs of continuity in the understanding and usage of the term *xin*, naturally with adjustments due to a different historical and political climate, may be explained through the role *xin* has played within the all history of Buddhism,[87] and also, in the specific case of China and Taiwan, through the role played by Buddhists who had been educated in the Republican period and were then active in post-Mao China or post-colonial Taiwan. The late monks Yinshun (1906–2005) and Dongchu (1908–1977), and the living Xingyun 星雲 (b. 1927), who grew up in the atmosphere of the Republican China and then concretized their Buddhist ideologies mostly in the second half of the twentieth century, are good examples of these "bridging figures."

It is especially Yinshun, master and reference figure for the nun Zhengyan and so Tzu Chi, the case study explored by Huang in her chapter, who deserves our attention. Monastics and laity alike consider Yinshun's book *Xue fo sanyao* 學佛三要 the best guidance in the practice of Buddhism; the text lists *xinyuan* 信願 (believing and vowing),[88] *cibei* 慈悲 (compassion and mercy), and *zhihui* 智慧 (wisdom) as the three essential elements in Buddhist practice. The book was published in 1971, in Taiwan, but its various chapters are previous public lectures that Yinshun gave between 1953 and 1958, also in Taiwan. Although this is then a post-Republican text, Yinshun spent his formative years 1930 to 1940 in Mainland China, under the guidance of leading monastics such as Taixu, Fazun, and Changxing, whose debates of *xin* in the Republican period have been examined in this chapter.

In contemporary writings, *xinyuan* 信願 is often intended as the merging of *xinyang* 信仰 and *fayuan* 發願, and as embodying a consequential process from *xinyang* to *fayuan*.[89] In this context, Yinshun relates *xin* to *putixin* 菩提心, and the crucial importance of vowing to develop Bodhicitta. Yinshun expands his discussion with a cross-tradition parallel involving Christianity and also Confucianism: For instance, if Buddhism has *xinyuan* 信願, *cibei* 慈悲, and *zhihui* 智慧 as key markers, then Christianity has *xin* 信 and *ai* 愛 playing the same role. According to Yinshun, *xinyang* includes both *zhengxin* and *mixin*. The difference between the two is identified in the object and in the aims of *xinyang*: a belief/reliance/faith in Buddha is a *zhengxin*, but belief/reliance/faith in deities/spirits (*shen*) is *mixin*. A *xinyang* that originated from knowledge and awareness is *zhengxin* (and *zhixin* 智信), while the blind

87 See, for instance, Kleine's argument in his chapter about pre-modern Japanese Buddhism.

88 See Lüdde's chapter about contemporary usage of *xinyuan*.

89 Very often it is conceived as a merging of three elements and is written as *xinyuanxing* 信願行: *xinyang* 信仰, *fayuan* 發願 and *xiuxing* 修行 (*Foguang da cidian*, vol. 4, 3723b). The three-step process (i.e., from faith we make a vow and from then we start a practice) is very popular in Buddhism, and a cardinal idea especially in the Pure Land school.

following of certain ideas (in order to, for instance, imitate parents or friends) is *mixin*.[90] This is in line with many of the Chinese and Taiwanese debates from the first half of the twentieth century that this chapter has explored.

Yinshun's framing of *xin*, then, takes some distance from the political and societal discussions carried out in the Republican period (see arguments analyzed in Parts 3 to 5 of this chapter), while it shows continuity with the *xin* narrative in the sphere of Buddhist practice, and within the dichotomy *zhengxin* – *mixin* (see especially Part 2 of the chapter). At the same time, this take on *xin* has formed the background of contemporary Buddhist movements, like Tzu Chi, and the context wherein the interviews conducted by Huang can be positioned.

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90 Yinshun (1972) came back to *xin* in other writings, especially, but not only, in his book on comparative religions.

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CHAPTER 17

# Religious Concepts and Evolutionary Theory in the Early Thought of Liang Qichao: from "Religion" via "Faith" to the "View of Death and Life"

*Thomas Fröhlich*

## 1 The Framework for Liang Qichao's Use of Religious Concepts[1]

Chinese discourses on the role of religion in a modern society developed at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century in a coincidental context whose effects should not be underestimated. Just as key terms in the religious field were undergoing fundamental change, the scientific worldview, and especially Western evolutionary theories, found their way into academic and public discourses.[2] In this chapter, I will employ the example of Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) to show that the adaption of evolutionary theories in China had far-reaching consequences for the public reflection on the meaning, contents, and socio-political functions of religion and belief. Liang Qichao was one of the defining voices of the 1900s; the journal articles he wrote during his exile in Japan were also disseminated in China and had a lasting influence. Liang's pertinent writings are arguably exemplary of how far evolutionary theory entered into Chinese intellectuals' reflection on religion. His notions of "religion" (*zongjiao* 宗教), "faith" (*xinyang* 信仰), and "view of death and life" (*si sheng guan* 死生觀) reveal, as shall be shown, that under the influence of evolutionary theories the religious field may have been acknowledged as autonomous, but that excessive expectations of religion and faith simultaneously held sway that produced promises on the national and even fate-of-the-world scale. In this conceptualisation of the socio-political

1 Much of this text is grounded in preliminary work from my article "Das Große Ich: Religion, Evolution und Entpolitisierung bei Liang Qichao (1873–1929)," published in *Oriens Extremus* 41, no. 1/2 (1998/99), 193–210. In the course of reworking the older text, I have rethought Liang Qichao's understanding of "religion," "religious thought," "faith," and "view" and reached conclusions that partially diverge from my previous findings. I have also used the opportunity to make additions and correct some inaccuracies.

2 Many studies exist on the swift victory of evolutionary theories in China in the late Qing period. Their conclusions offer a comprehensive picture of the adaptions of evolutionary theories in China and Japan. See, e.g.: Pusey 1983, Furth 1983, Li 1993, Shen 2017.

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relevance of religion and faith, the aspect of temporalization plays a defining role. My understanding of temporalization follows Reinhart Koselleck.[3] According to Koselleck, temporalization pertains to basic political and social concepts that were shaped within the framework of European philosophies of history, and conform to a linear, progressivist sequence of past, present, and future. "The entire [social and political] vocabulary was reoriented in terms of baselines set within a philosophy of history."[4] Whether this also applies to the semantic upheaval that took place in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century remains to be discussed in detail. In any case, there is much to suggest that the adoption of fundamental Western concepts in China also introduced the trait of temporalization to Chinese political and social vocabularies.[5]

As I will here demonstrate by studying the example of Liang Qichao, key concepts from the religious field were deployed with a linear orientation towards the future and shaped by the expectation of progress. In some cases, this expectation of progress far exceeded that which was allocated to the realm of historical experience. This created a veritable overflow of expectation, which represents an essential aspect of temporalization. With respect to the European context, Koselleck hence concludes that fundamental social and political concepts of the threshold period reveal that the "[a]ctual, substantial experience and the space of expectation coincide less and less."[6]

Such temporal semantics have considerable significance for the religious concepts in Liang Qichao's early thought. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the new, linear view of history grounded in evolutionary theory[7] played a decisive role for how Liang coined religious concepts. This enabled Liang to develop his reflections on religion and faith in modern China on the basis of linear-historical analogies and anticipations. He thereby drew direct connections between the alleged progress of Western nations and China's present outlook, emphatically demanding an orientation towards—or perhaps better,

3 Koselleck's research on conceptual history focuses on the formative period of European modernity, and in particular on the so-called threshold period (*c.*1750–1850) in Germany; see Koselleck 2011, 15.

4 Koselleck 2011, 10.

5 Obviously, my article is not a comprehensive historical study of the concepts of "religion" and "faith" in the tradition of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. Rather, I am arguing that the aspect of temporalization, which Koselleck regards as a key to understanding the genesis of modern political and social concepts, should receive more attention in the field of modern Chinese intellectual history.

6 Koselleck 2004, 80.

7 Comprehensive research meanwhile exists on the formation of the linear view of history in China—see for example: Wang 2008. Murthy; Schneider, eds. 2014.

fixation on—the future. The terms religion and faith, as Liang applied them, are in this sense temporalized and therefore inextricably embedded in the universalist perspective of a homogenizing realization of "progress" and "evolution."[8] This represents a continuity of Liang's thinking at this point, which should not be forgotten in light of the frequently expressed criticism that he changed his political positions and terms at break-neck, confusing speed in the first half of the 1900s. Moreover, it must be recalled that the paradigmatic status of evolutionary theories in China is expressed less in coherent theses and assumptions, interpretations, and answers, than in how problems were identified and which questions were asked. All his political twists and turns notwithstanding, Liang Qichao steadfastly continued to ask certain questions. This includes the question of the preconditions for the establishment of a modern nation state and a modern society in China. Liang worked from the assumption that the genesis of a modern state and a modern society ultimately depended on impulses rooted in a collective subject's mental constitution and will. To be sure, both Liang and mainstream contemporary Chinese intellectuals believed that a modern state and society marked by institutional and functional differentiation had proven themselves to be the only viable options in the contemporary world. Yet they neither perceived the process of modernity as compulsive nor did they believe that contingent factors that eluded the will of the nation, the citizens, the constitutive people etc. played a decisive role in this. When a national crisis was diagnosed and social Darwinist assumptions came into play, therefore, concerted *action* remained the leading force.[9]

It is thus no coincidence that Liang composed his major texts on religion and faith at the same time that he advanced his famous works on the ethos of the "new citizen" (*xinmin* 新民).[10] The on-going disintegration of imperial rule in the last years of the Qing dynasty may have made him reflect extensively on the institutional aspects of reforming the state, but it is clear that he placed his reflections of political and social institutions on an ethical foundation. He developed his diagnosis of Chinese crises within this same perspective, as was evident not least where he concerned himself with religion and faith. The conceptual field of the religious, as Liang created it in the 1900s, therefore

8 On the formation of progressivist historical thinking in modern China before 1949, see *Chinese Visions of Progress, 1895–1949*, edited by Thomas Fröhlich and Axel Schneider (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

9 This had become clear even before Liang, in Yan Fu's reception of evolutionary theories. Regarding Yan Fu, I study this decisive aspect of the diagnosis of a national crisis in Fröhlich 2020b.

10 Liang's writings on religion and faith that I examine here appeared in his *New Citizen Journal* (*Xinmin congbao* 新民叢報).

included political terms alongside ethical ones. The conceptual field as a whole is encompassed by historical speculation marked by temporalization, comprising (occasionally formulaic) contrastive pairs typical of the period: "age of barbarism" and "age of civilization," or "progressive" and "conservative."[11]

In these years, Liang Qichao's writings are undoubtedly deeply influenced by Western and Japanese discourses. His vocabulary sometimes differs only negligibly from Western models and their Japanese adaptations, which applies to the religious field as well. However, the particular historical conditions of concept formation in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China must be taken into account. The paths of conceptual adaptions were transnational, sometimes continental, and the traveling concepts that developed served as more than mere husks for a multi-lingual use of terms. In the present instance, this can be seen primarily in Liang's strong efforts to deploy Confucian and particularly Buddhist traditions in order to indigenize and ultimately make plausible the postulates of evolutionary theory. As will be shown, he went much further in this than, e.g., Thomas Huxley in *Evolution and Ethics* (1892), who, *inter alia*, brought notions of karma from Indian Buddhism close to his understanding of "character."[12]

The continental dimension of the formation of key religious concepts also bears fundamental significance for the performative side of concept formation or—to adopt Koselleck's language once more—for the fact that basic political and social concepts were not just indicators of change, but themselves acted as factors of that change.[13] Liang and many other Chinese intellectuals of his

11 On this, see Fröhlich 2020a.

12 See the following passage by Huxley: "Everyday experience familiarizes us with the facts which are grouped under the name of heredity. Every one of us bears upon him obvious marks of his parentage, perhaps of remoter relationships. More particularly, the sum of tendencies to act in a certain way, which we call 'character,' is often to be traced through a long series of progenitors and collaterals. So we may justly say that this 'character'—this moral and intellectual essence of man—does veritably pass over from one fleshly tabernacle to another, and does really transmigrate from generation to generation. (…) The Indian philosophers called character, as thus defined, 'karma.' It is this karma which passed from life to life and linked them in the chain of transmigrations; and they held that it is modified in each life, not merely by confluence of parentage, but by its own acts. They were, in fact, strong believers in the theory, so much disputed just at present, of the hereditary transmission of acquired characters. (…) Indian philosophy, however, did not admit of any doubt on this subject; the belief in the influence of conditions, notably of self-discipline, on the karma was not merely a necessary postulate of its theory of retribution, but it presented the only way of escape from the endless round of transmigrations." Huxley 1997, 317.

13 Koselleck 2011, 8.

time believed that the social and political impact of the Western and Japanese concepts introduced to China, including the concept of religion itself, could be anticipated through the study of the Western past and present. This greatly strengthened their expectation of bringing the future within the Chinese present's scope of action through conceptual innovation. The battle over concepts could therefore not remain an academic matter. This may be one reason why the pertinent controversies were not fought according to the conventions of academic publishing, nor suggest that the participants even desired a distinction between scholarship and politics.

## 2 *Zongjiao* 宗教, *xinyang* 信仰 and Liang's Shifting View of Confucianism

In 1899, at the start of his exile in Japan, Liang reflected on a "religious reform" (*zongjiao gaige* 宗教改革) in China. In so doing, he defined religion[14] in such a way that it included Confucianism renewed as a "true doctrine" (*zhen jiao* 真教), as Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) had previously conceived it.[15] Although Liang discarded this religious categorization of the "Confucian Doctrine" (*Kong jiao* 孔教) three years later and thereby distanced himself from Kang Youwei's re-interpretation of Confucianism, the fundamentals of his later use of religious terms were already in place in 1899. Tellingly, Liang directly related Confucianism—still understood as a religion—to his understanding of evolution and progress. In this context, Liang's concept of religion already distinctly indicates a progressive, universal and linear course of history towards a future stage of civilization: On the so-called Teaching of the Three Ages (*san shi* 三世), which Kang Youwei had previously attributed to the Zhou-period annals *Spring and Autumn* and thereby defined as Confucian, Liang wrote:

> The Teaching of the Three Ages from the (annals) *Spring and Autumn* [however] states that the civilized world will [first come to] be at some other time. Its manifestations belong to the future. (…) When it is said that civilization is in the future, that mentality is progressive.[16]

14 The expression *zongjiao* was in use in Chinese to translate "religion" at this time, but had not yet established itself. The identical Japanese expression *shūkyō*, in contrast, had been wide-spread in Japan since the 1880s; see Sun 2015, 79–80.

15 Liang 1989 [May 1899], 55.

16 Liang 1989 [May 1899], 58.

Liang also brought Buddhism into play in order to dogmatically classify the religious contents of the Confucian Teaching of the Three Ages. To do this, he drew parallels between Confucianism and Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhism, honoring those parts of Confucianism he associated with Mahayana and critically denigrating those he saw as overlapping with Hinayana postulates.[17] This put Liang on a footing with Buddhist inspired Chinese thinkers of the late nineteenth century, who made positive reference to Mahayana as "Chinese cultural heritage" while vehemently rejecting the "Indian" Hinayana, whose teachings they identified as an unworldly, Christian-like idea of paradise.[18] With the term "belief" (*xinyang* 信仰), a further component entered Liang's writing of 1899—one that would be decisive for his later use of religious concepts. It turns out that Liang's notion of belief is tightly linked with his interpretation of the concept of citizenry (or "constitutive people," *guomin* 國民). He accordingly traced a state's strength or weakness back to the citizens' "knowledge" and "ability," which ultimately rooted in their "habits" and "beliefs." Although Liang was here using *xinyang* to examine the citizens' differing "beliefs" and not, as he did several years later, the meaning of "faith," his inclusion of *xinyang* among the mental foundations of state order is already clearly apparent. Further, the notable extension of *xinyang* that Liang would adhere to later is already visible here. *Xinyang* comprises not only the members of individual faith communities, but also the citizenry as a whole. In the mid-1900s, Liang would expand *xinyang* once again and in doing so—cross-fading from *xinyang* to "spirit" (*jingshen* 精神) and "view" (*guan* 觀)—widen his focus from the citizens to the individual as such.

About three years later, in February 1902, Liang published the text "Preservation as [Religious] Doctrine Is Not the Way to Exalt Confucius," which made evident that his understanding of religion had changed. The concept of religion retained its close association to an evolutionary view of history, and so to its temporalizing effects, but the aspect of institutional and functional differentiation in modern societies and a view critical of religion now came to the fore. Looking at the contemporary West, Liang argued that an occasionally antagonistic relationship existed between "religion" and "science" and that the former presented a danger to "freedom of thought."[19] He placed this

17 Liang 1989 [May 1899], 56. Among other things, Liang connects the notion of Great Unity, *da tong* 大同, the *Mencius*, but also the *Zhuangzi* with Mahayana Buddhism.

18 Chan 1985, 40, 137, 144. Liang's study of Buddhism began as early as 1881 under the tutelage of Kang Youwei. According to Chan, Buddhist ideas received almost no reception with regard to political reform before the reform efforts of Kang Youwei and Zhang Binglin; see Chan 1985, 49.

19 Liang 1989 [Feb. 1902], 52.

interpretation in the historic context in which religions were only completely useful to "progress [of human society]" in the "first phase of evolution." In regards to the contemporary Western societies, however, he underlined the institutional and functional demarcations of "religion" and "state," as well as "religion," "politics" and "education," and contended that Christianity's influence in politics and education had dwindled.[20]

In agreement with this evolutionist view on the history of religion, Liang intervened in the discussion on the relationship between Confucianism and religion. He now opposed the efforts to establish Confucianism as a state religion, efforts that had been underway since Kang Youwei's memorial to the throne in 1898. Here, Liang clearly separated Confucianism from "religion." Confucius, he contended, had spoken exclusively about the (mundane) world, the state as well as the origins of morality and ethics. He was a philosopher, classical scholar, and educator, but not a religious scholar. His teachings did not have the force of religions, but neither did they have their deficiencies.[21] In so saying, Liang reconceptualized Confucianism as political ethics, philosophy, and pedagogical teaching, turning it into a foundation for a modern state and society. It is precisely by not being a "religion," Liang believed, that Confucianism can remain viable for the future.

In the course of his rejection of Confucianism as a state religion, Liang also undertook a consequential internal differentiation of his concept of *zongjiao*. He now terminologically distinguished "religion" (*zongjiao*) from "faith" (*xinyang*) and "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信). *Zongjiao*—as which he counted the (in his eyes) mistaken interpretation of a clerical "Confucian doctrine" (*Kong jiao*)—now primarily referred to the institutional, ritual and dogmatic manifestation of clerical religion, including the idea of proselytizing. From a dogmatic perspective, Liang identified religion with a striving to overcome the mundane world, and claimed that it was outmoded in the present evolutionary phase of Western civilization, underlining his point with the generalized comment that "religion" and "superstition" had become synonymous in the West.[22] This simultaneously reveals a differentiation between faith and superstition, which in Liang's understanding pointed beyond the field of religion. In other words, Liang did not want to see *xinyang* reduced to *zongjiao*. He revealingly criticized the supporters of Confucianism as a state religion for trying to regulate all "faith" after the Christian and Buddhist model.[23]

20 Liang 1989 [Feb. 1902], 51–54.
21 Liang 1989 [Feb. 1902], 58.
22 Liang 1989 [Feb. 1902], 52.
23 Liang 1989 [Feb. 1902], 52.

## 3 Liang's Evolutionist Conceptualization of Religion

Eight months after rejecting the efforts to establish Confucianism as a state religion, Liang published an article on the social Darwinist thought of the British sociologist and "evolutionist"[24] Benjamin Kidd that is instructive in our context. Liang had probably familiarized himself with Kidd's writings through the Japanese translation of Kidd's *Social Evolution* by Tsunoda Ryūsaku, published in 1899.[25]

The article on Kidd made very clear that Liang examined religion and religious phenomena above all from the perspective of his reception of social Darwinist theories.[26] At the beginning of the article, he placed the concept of religion within the framework of his universalist-progressive understanding of history:

> For the past forty years, the world has been a world of evolutionary theories. Materialism prospers while idealism perishes in some distant corner. The sciences … are flourishing, while the religions can barely retain their paltry stumps. Indeed, the evolutionary theories capture the millennia-old foundations of the old teachings in order to break and discard them. They are that through which [the teachings] are renewed.[27]

However, Liang was not concerned with the question of religion's continued survival as such, but of religion's value.[28] He consequently followed Benjamin Kidd's example and applied Social Darwinist postulates on the formation of human society, thereby reaching ethical conclusions.[29] In particular, this

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24 Pusey 1983, 280. Liang had previously published a brief introduction to Kidd's *Principles of Western Civilization* in *Xinmin congbao* (Issue 15, July 1902); see Mori 2004, 238.

25 A Chinese translation of *Social Evolution* by Timothy Richards was published in the same year in *Wanguo gongbao* 萬國公報 (issue 121); Mori 2004, 240. Mori assumes that Liang mostly relied on the Japanese translation; see: ibid. Overall, Liang's reading of Kidd is clearly marked by a free adaption of Kidd's ideas. Pusey also determines that Liang distorted Kidd's reasoning and quoted out of context (Pusey 1981, 80); Liang, he contends, had overall engaged in "hasty reading, misreading, or very selective reading"—see Pusey 1983, 281.

26 In their studies on Liang's reception of Kidd's evolutionary theory, Pusey and Chang treat the topic of religion only marginally; see Pusey 1983, 285; Chang 1971, 173.

27 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1902], 79.

28 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1902], 80.

29 In the article, Liang is almost certainly referring to Kidd's 1894 book *Social Evolution*, which was translated worldwide and remained Kidd's sole big success; see Davies 1927, 305–306; see also Mori 2004, 239. In addition, Liang referred to Kidd's 1902 *Principles of Western Civilization* at the beginning of his article.

included an ethic of individual sacrifice for one's collective that rooted in an evolutionist conception of death and the future (see below). Liang's interest in the topics of individual sacrifice and view of death was kindled by contemporary Japanese discussions. As Mori explains, "the problem of 'death and nondeath' and the problem of the 'extinguishing and nonextinguishing' of spirit … was frequently taken up in Japan at that time …"—for example, "Toyama Masakazu, a former Shogunal official, had spoken of the 'consciousness that fosters development'."[30] But whereas Toyama had broached this subject in the course of his critique of Kidd,[31] Liang incorporated it in his enthusiastic adaption of Kidd's thought.

In his article on Kidd, Liang clarified his perspective on the ethic of individual sacrifice by criticizing other social Darwinist theories as well as political and social theories. He thus differentiated the teachings of Kidd—a "revolutionary" of evolutionary theories—from those of Darwin. While Darwin considered the present benefit of the individual or the "majority of the species" to form the core of evolutionary theory, Kidd, Liang argued, located the evolutionary goal in the future. Following this interpretation, Kidd saw life's aim in the necessity of sacrificing the benefit of individual bodies (*fenti* 分體) as well as the total body (*quanti* 全體) for the sake of the *future* total body.[32] Based on the (non-Darwinist) assumption that all evolutionary adaptations are inheritable, Liang defined death as the "mother" and "great origin" of evolution. Death, he said, makes possible the transfer of the results of adaptation and thereby increases a species' chance of continued existence in the evolutionary struggle for survival.[33] By contributing to the continued existence of the whole, the death of the individual hence loses its contingent characteristics and meaninglessness.

According to Liang, contemporary political and social theories gave insufficient consideration to this ethical consequence of evolutionary theory. This can be seen, Liang wrote, in the mistakes inherent in their conceptions of the present and future. In contrast to Kidd, according to whom the significance

30 Mori 2004, 242.

31 Mori 2004, 239.

32 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 78–80.

33 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 81. This evolutionist understanding of the meaning of death is presumably the reason Liang turned to his "Studies on Death" two years later. In his article on Kidd, he was taking on a discussion of the defects of religious and philosophical understandings of death (in Confucianism, Daoism, the Egyptian cult of the dead, Brahman teachings, Christianity, and Buddhism) and contrasting them with Kidd's "scientific" understanding of "death," which did not transcend the "realm of life." Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 82–84.

of revolution lies in its ability to produce the future, political and social theories had so far failed to give enough weight to the future in its relation to the present.[34] Liang therefore cited Kidd to condemn utilitarianism, the ideas of the French revolution, those of German social democracy as well as the theories of Herbert Spencer for fixating on the self-interests "in the present" (*xianzai* 現在). This dominance of the "doctrine of the present," which alongside Marx and Nietzsche was also championed by German conservatism and nationalism, came at the expense of an orientation towards the duties vis-à-vis the future of one's own collective.[35] Referring to Kidd, Liang concluded that the nineteenth century had been the age of popular sovereignty and the doctrine of the present, but that the progression of evolutionary theories meant that these "naïve ideals" now needed to give way. The only purpose of the present is to enable the future—therein lied its worth, and this must shape all thought on society, the state and morality.[36]

Rooted in this criticism of social and political theories, Liang followed Kidd to determine the socio-political and ethical importance of religion in the present:

> … the selfish spirit [oriented] on the present is called "naturalness." Kidd believes that this naturalness is the most "individual," "unsocial" and "non-progressive" part of the human character. It (=naturalness) in no way aids but rather damages progress in preserving humanity as a whole. According to Kidd, restraint must be of primary significance for the progress of humanity. What is restraint? It is that with which religions sanction naturalness. If one wants community,[37] if one wants progress,

34 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 84.

35 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 84–86.

36 Liang, 1989 [Oct. 1899], 86.

37 The translation of *qun* 群 as "community" is problematic. According to Chang Hao, *qun* expresses a "concept of grouping." In Liang's post-1902 writings, he says, *qun* refers to the idea of the nation state and was central for the development of the concept of public morality as an attribute of the "new citizens." Chang 1971, 150–156. Such "grouping" belongs to the associative foundation of nation-building. *Qun* therefore does not refer to the particularist collectivities within the nation states, which stand in tension to national unity. Vogelsang also discusses Liang's conception of *qun* and suggests "community" as a translation, as distinct from "society": Vogelsang 2012, 163–173, 176–183. In reference to Liang, "community" can indeed serve as an appropriate translation, as long as it is not accompanied by the notion that a community is created primarily through a strong sense of, well, community, through beliefs in a common descent and a shared fate. In contrast, Liang's 1902 definition of *qun*, colored by evolutionary theory, implies the notion of a scientific-rational formation of society. Here, the terminological relationship between *qun* and "learning," *xue* 學, also plays a role for Liang. On this, see Wang 1992, 45.

> one has no choice but to suffer such sanctions. Religions are the antagonist and the supplement of naturalness. Often, religions and the bad trait of human naturalness will stand in opposition, and it is only afterwards that the unification of human communities can be advanced in order to effectuate their progress.[38]

"Naturalness" is here an ethical concept under which Liang subsumed the above-named fixation on self-interests "in the present," which he stamped as "unsocial," "an enemy of progress" and therefore harmful to the existence of humanity. Whosoever pursues this fixation, Liang commented in agreement with Kidd, makes himself a "criminal" against evolutionary theories.[39] This seemed to replicate one of Kidd's central ideas—that moral progress consisted in the subordination of individual egoisms to the good of the whole.[40] Insofar as religions enhance such moral progress, they bear a fundamental significance for the reproduction of modern societies and the process of civilization. In accordance, Liang remarked the following in his travel notes from his multimonth trip to the USA and Canada in 1903:

> The motives of Europeans and Americans are not all the same, but in my estimation the most important are their love of beauty, concern for social honor, and *the idea of the future in their religion* (emphasis added—TF). These three are at the root of the development of Western spiritual civilization, and are what we Chinese lack most …[41]

In relation to Liang's conceptualization of religion in connection with his progressivist view of history, however, the importance of "religions," as we have seen, was rather inexorably dwindling and was to vanish completely in a future period of "civilization." Liang consequently sidelined, in the aftermath of his reception of Kidd, the concept of religion, *zongjiao*, in favor of concepts such as "faith," "religious thought," "religious spirit" or "view of death and life." Obviously, the institutionalized, clerical form of "religion" was no longer a central point of reference in Liang's reflections on the foundations of a modern Chinese nation state.

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38 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 80.

39 Liang 1989 [Oct. 1899], 79.

40 On Kidd, compare Davies 1927, 305–306.

41 Ebrey, ed. 1993, 339; the translation in Ebrey's compendium is taken from: R. David Arkush and Leo O. Lee trans. and ed., 1989, *Land Without Ghosts: Chinese Impressions of America from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present*.

## 4 From "Religious Thought" to "Cognizant Faith"

In his article "On the Merits and Demerits, Successes and Failure of Religious Personalities and Philosophers," which appeared two weeks after his article on Kidd's evolutionary theory, Liang again highlighted the concept of *zongjiao*, but eventually sidelined it in favor of the concept of "religious thought" (*zongjiao sixiang* 宗教思想). His argument is, in a broad sense, religious-philosophical and focuses on the political, social, and ethical relevance of religion in the present. Liang discussed the relationship between religion and philosophy by defining philosophy as the pursuit of truth and religion as faith, hence concluding that the two were sharply opposed. To be precise, the concept of superstition (*mixin* 迷信), which he associated with religion, marked the insurmountable difference between religion and philosophy, or "scholarship" (the latter also indicated "science").[42] With his practical interest in social order, however, Liang wished to mitigate the opposition between religion and philosophy (or science): Religion may be the "enemy" of scholarship, but a state must comprise both those seeking to destroy religion and those who believe in it.[43] The practical mediation between religion and science was to happen on a constitutional basis. In this context, Liang affirmed freedom of religion, as it existed in "civilized states"—provided, however, that "religious superstition" may be destroyed.[44] But Liang failed to elucidate either the constitutional aspect of this or the difficulty of legally defining superstition.

In contrast, the "morality of religions" (*zongjiao zhi daode* 宗教之道德) is productive for the state and social order and should be preserved, for morality is a general matter that should not be exclusively claimed by a single teaching.[45] Liang devoted the majority of his article to deepening this perspective, and introduced the concept of "religious thought" for this purpose. While he did not dissolve the opposition between the religious and the scientific,

42 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 44–46. For the term "faith" (*xin* 信), Liang differentiated between "correct faith" (*zheng xin* 正信) and "superstition." He viewed scholarship as engaged in a battle against superstition and, as such, against "religion," *zongjiao*, to which he attributed superstition; see Liang 1989, 49. On the contemporaneous Buddhist distinctions between *zhengxin* and *mixin*, see Travagnin's chapter in this volume.

43 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 49.

44 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 49. Liang had previously addressed the principle of freedom of religion in his text "Preservation as [Religious] Doctrine Is Not the Way to Exalt Confucius" in more detail; see Liang 1989, 54–55.

45 Liang believed that the moral quality of religion was rooted in the "sincerity" of its believers; see Liang 1989, 49. This definition of the socio-political significance of religion as a means of moral education of the citizens can already be found in the writings of Kang Youwei and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同: Zhang 1998, 35.

it became clear that religious thought takes on a mediating role in both a practical and theoretical respect. Liang did not expand on the theoretical mediation at this point; instead, he merely marked it by defining religious thought as the pinnacle of "idealistic philosophy." He included, *inter alia*, Wang Yangming's *xinxue* 心學, among whose contemporary practice he counted the reforms of the Meiji government. "Materialistic philosophy," in contrast, produced only scholarship.[46] The practical relevance of religious thought—in Liang's words, its significance for "the governing of [socio-political] affairs" (*zhi shi* 治事)—pointed back to the concept of religion. Liang here established religion as the most important instrument (*ju* 具) for building unity, and religious thought correspondingly as indispensable for any "unification."[47] Religious thought is thus open towards various professions of faith, as emerged from Liang's cursory and occasionally strongly generalizing reference to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity.[48] This discussion comprised five "reasons"—or rather postulates—why religious thought is of eminent significance for building unity. From these postulates it became clear that Liang believed political and social unification to primarily draw from moral-ethical and intellectual sources, and in particular from religious resources. Religious thought was thus said to produce unification by controlling "self-centered desires" (*si yu* 私欲)[49] and overcoming "battles between party cliques."[50]

The substance of the further postulates on religious thought is closely related, whereby Liang's explanations were marked by a multitude of cursory references to Western and Eastern philosophy and religion. Liang obviously wanted to bind the ethical practice of the evolutionary theories he had addressed in his article on Kidd to religious phenomena. In his second and third points,[51] he accordingly claimed that religious thought strengthened one's vigor as well as one's orientation towards the future, undimmed by

46 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 46.

47 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 46.

48 The dogmatic openness of this conception of religious thought is also revealed in Liang's chosen historical perspective. He claimed that the majority of history's "heroes" had possessed "religious thought." He counted Oliver Cromwell, Jeanne d'Arc, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, und Giuseppe Mazzini among these heroes. He also mentioned Kang Youwei and Tan Sitong with the remark that they had studied Buddhism and, although their philosophy was neither particularly original nor profound, their religious thought had enabled them to "rock the universe"; see Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 45.

49 The term *si yu* is closely related to the conception of the "naturalness" of man that Liang introduced in his article on Kidd, which must be restrained to enable the formation of society.

50 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 46.

51 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 46–47.

materialistic calculation of profit. This would happen because man would recognize the transient nature of materialistic desires, and the self would then manage to free itself from calculations of profit. Fourthly, religious thought built moral barriers through the dissemination of fear, preventing evil from being done. Liang was following Confucius, among others, when he found that fear prevented "the lesser" from doing evil. Christian and Buddhist dogmas, Liang believed, fulfilled a similar function. Dogmas such as the "Last Judgement" may be shallow, but they are sufficient to fill "persons of medium or low position" with dread. The Buddhist teaching of retribution for committed offences similarly produces fear.[52] The fifth and last point discusses man's "determination," which Liang believed to be strengthened when religious thought removes the paralyzing fear of death.[53]

Two months after the publication of "On the Merits and Demerits, Successes and Failures of Religious Personalities and Philosophers," Liang came out decisively in favor of the Buddhist faith as the form of religious thought most appropriate for contemporary China. A practical interest remained the starting point of his reflections on the subject of religion, as the introductory sentences of his article "On the Relationship between Buddhism and Social Order" made clear: "There is a big question concerning the future of our homeland: 'Should China's social order be gained and advanced through [religious] faith or without it'?"[54] The concepts of religion and civilization retained their temporalizing perspective when Liang claimed that the historical pinnacle of human civilization had not yet been reached and that religion and faith therefore continued to play a significant role in the formation of human society.[55] The concepts of religions as well as of "religious thought" and "religious faith," however, now receded as the concept of "faith" (*xinyang*) took on a more prominent role.

In this context, Liang made a turn towards Buddhism—not Buddhism in its institutional form as a "religion," however, but Buddhism as "faith." Once again, therefore, the internal differentiation between religion and faith moved to the center of Liang's work. Directly after the above-cited introductory sentences of his article, Liang found that faith must be rooted in religion. From this, he

52 Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 47–48.

53 Both points contain substantial and terminological overlaps with the "view of death and life", which Liang would reconceptualize two years later (see below). This also includes the Buddhist influenced discussion of a "bitter self" (*ku wo* 苦我), which is a temporary, illusionary body, and the "joyous self" (*le wo* 樂我) as essential truth. Liang 1989 [Oct. 31 1899], 47.

54 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 45.

55 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 45.

derived the following question: "Since China needs faith, which religion shall the faithful be a part of?"[56] He considered neither Confucianism, which he had ceased to view as a religion in 1902, nor Christianity viable options for China. He consequently dedicated the majority of the article to a practically motivated apologia of the Buddhist faith.

As before, Liang identified the leading criterion for judging the practical significance of the Buddhist faith in the perspective of his social Darwinist interpretation of the social process. The Buddhist faith therefore appeared to be significant due to its ability to help individuals realize ethical demands that correspond to evolutionist postulates on human society. Liang accordingly underlined the willingness to make sacrifices and the selflessness of the individual encouraged by the Buddhist faith, but also the fundamental attention to worldly and thus civilizational matters, and vigorously defended Buddhism against the common criticism that it encourages an unworldly attitude.[57] The core of Liang's reflections on the Buddhist faith was its purpose as a "cognizant faith" (*zhi xinyang* 智信仰). Under the heading "The Buddhist faith is a belief in wisdom, not superstition," he wrote:

> Buddhism's strongest guiding principle is "compassion and wisdom [signifying a] two-folded cultivation." From the beginning of making up one's mind to the attainment of Buddhahood, a major undertaking is transforming superstition and realizing awakening. This so-called awakening, meanwhile, does not mean only recognizing that Buddha exists [in awakening] and believing in this blindly. (…) In accordance with that which other doctrines call faith, the wisdom of the religion's founders is believed to be out of reach for the faithful. They therefore believe that strengthening their faith counts as a successful result. In that which Buddhism terms faith, the wisdom of the faithful is considered something that can be of equal value to [the wisdom of] the founder of the religion.[58]

This reveals a further, practical facet of Liang's interest in Buddhism, yet one that he did not elaborate on at this point: As a cognizant faith, Buddhism seemed superbly suited to laying the groundwork for the intra-societal coexistence of religious faith and science.

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56 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 45. Liang used the term *jingjiao* 景教 for Christianity, a word he also used for "Nestorianism" (see below).

57 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 45, 48.

58 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 46.

## 5 From Faith to Attitude: Liang's "View of Death and Life"

At the turn from 1904 to 1905, Liang published the two-part article "My View of Death and Life" (*Yu zhi si sheng guan* 余之死生觀), in which he further developed his reflections on the relationship between religion and state and society. This development can be seen not least in a conceptual index change, for the concept of a "view" now comes to the fore. The exact reasons for this shift from "religious thought" and "faith" to "view" are hard to pinpoint. However, it is noticeable that Liang had expressed his conviction that "religion" as well as "religious spirit" (*zongjiao jingshen* 宗教精神) would in some future age no longer be needed to unite the will of the people as early as 1902.[59] Liang's use of the concept of "view" may take this temporalizing speculation about the future history of civilization into account. This would also fit with Liang's at least partial revision of his eminently positive assessment of the socio-political impact of the Buddhist faith. He now wrote critically of Buddhism's tendency to promote an attitude of rejecting the mundane world, making its dogmas—in contrast to those of evolutionary theories—no longer serviceable for the realization of practical matters (see below).[60]

The concept of "view" made it possible, on the one hand, for Liang to underline the ethical primacy of evolutionary theories, and disseminating the view of death and life promised, on the other, to increase the reputation of evolutionary theories and science as such in Chinese society. Tellingly, he complained here that scientific insights were adopted only gradually in China.[61] From this perspective of realizing the scientific "civilization," Liang anticipated the socio-political relevance of the view of death and life, which lay in the connection between religious faith und evolutionary theory. To be sure, Liang's interest was as before practical, focused on the mental foundations of the modern nation state and modern society.

The central topos of the view of death and life is immortality. Liang treated this topos in his "Studies on Death" (*si xue* 死學), which centers on the human "spirit," that is, "the thing that does not die [but] persists."[62] In this context,

59 Liang 1989 [Dec. 30 1902], 46. The more barbaric a state, the more important religions are to unite the will of the people. However, if the highest point of civilisation has been reached in the world, the unity is completed through the "autonomous powers" of the people; ibid.

60 Liang 1989 [1904], 4.

61 Liang 1989 [1904], 7.

62 Liang 1989 [1904], 1–2. Liang avoided the contested concept of the soul; on this concept, compare Liebenthal 1952.

Liang now plumbed the points of contact between Buddhism, Christianity,[63] Confucianism and evolutionary theory and aimed to reach a minimal consensus that required no institutionalization as "religion." The goal of identifying a common substantial core aligned with the structure of the text. Liang first concerned himself with Buddhism, evolutionary theory, and the relationship between the two before turning, in abbreviated form, to Christianity and Confucianism. In the conclusion he finally presented his own view of death and life, which had the concept of the "Great Self" (*da wo* 大我) at its center.

The first half of the text is dedicated to proving that all above-named religious and intellectual currents postulate an immortal part of human existence. It shall suffice to discuss the quintessence of Liang's reflections, and to put the remainder of his partially comprehensive, annotated remarks aside. His discussions of Christianity and Confucianism in particular do not need to be recounted in detail.[64]

In relation to Buddhism, Liang highlighted the teaching that all phenomena were temporary in their becoming and passing. The only thing that lasts is the continuous succession of cause and effect, karma (*jiemo* 羯磨). All action, thinking, feeling, and speech allegedly bore a certain "character" (*xingge* 性格; Liang used the English expression in the text) that, like karma, survives in a succession of cause and effect. Liang thereby explicitly placed the concept of character in relation to evolutionary theories' conception of "heritability," thereby following Huxley's comparative reflections on the relation between "character" and "karma."[65]

Karma and character, according to Liang, are part and parcel of a causal chain that continues on into infinity and influences future life as a whole. This causal chain does not exhaust itself in individual experiences of personal, earlier consequences—as Liang underlines by juxtaposing the conceptions of "the transmigration of the soul" (*lunhui* 輪迴) and "liberation [of the self from outer constraints] (*jietuo* 解脫) in Buddhism and the "old Indian religion."[66]

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63 Liang here spoke of *jingjiao* and explained that this is the teaching of a Christian sect that developed among the followers of Nestorius, a patriarch of Constantinople (428–431) and reached China in the Tang dynasty; on this, see also: Ren 1981, 1016. As mentioned, Liang also used *jingjiao* to refer to Christianity in general.

64 In both cases, Liang was primarily concerned with proving that the adherents believe in something immortal, be it the soul or, within the family and clan, the continuing impact of the deceased's past deeds as well as, in a broader context, the immortality of glory. Liang 1989 [1904], 5 (Christianity), 6 (Confucianism).

65 On Huxley's use of "character" and "karma," see above my quotation of the passage from *Evolution and Ethics*.

66 With the expression "old Indian religion," Liang was presumably referring primarily to the "Brahman teachings" he mentioned elsewhere (see below).

Buddhism, he contended, contradicts the old Indian religion insofar as the latter speaks of a "soul" (*linghun* 靈魂), whereas Buddhism views the "subject" of the transmigration of the soul and liberation as not just the "individual entity"—that is, the soul—but also as the "total," and specifically karma as a "total."[67] This meaning of karma points, as Liang suggested, to a causal chain in the sense of inheritability. In this context, Liang claimed, first, that every disposition that is produced under the influence of the natural environment will be inherited. This also applies, second, to that which emerged under the influence of modern society including the traits that individuals developed over the course of their lives.[68] Liang's understanding of inheritability was thus broad and referred both to the biological and the social aspect of transmission of dispositions at birth and during life.

From a practical perspective, however, Liang pointed to a strong difference between Buddhism and evolutionary theories. The influence of Buddha's teachings had produced no "deeds" because the adherents aimed for "liberation" (of the self from outer constraints) and to leave this world behind. The evolutionary theories, meanwhile, encouraged good deeds because they placed the struggle for existence and the improvement of the world foremost. Against the backdrop of this comparative examination, Liang brought his view of death and life into play. He wished to go beyond both Buddhism and evolutionary theories, as can be seen terminologically first of all in his declaration that he was calling "spirit" (*jingshen*) that which the evolutionary theories termed "inheritability" and Buddhism "karma."[69] The view of death and life rested primarily on the concept of the Great Self and the related notion of "Small Self" (*xiao wo* 小我). The expression "Great Self" itself comes from Mahayana Buddhism and can be found in *Da boniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra), which is now only preserved in Chinese translations, as well as in *Darijing* 大日經 (Mahāvairocana Sūtra).[70] Liang, however, did not

67 Liang 1989 [1904], 2–3. Pusey points out that Liang's use of "unit" (phonetically translated as *yaoni* 么匿 based on the English "unit") and "total" (*tuodou* 拓都, English "total") was a recourse to two terms used by Herbert Spencer that Yan Fu (1853–1921) had rendered in this way. Pusey 1983, 296.

68 Liang 1989 [1904], 3–4. Pusey examined the misunderstandings in Liang's fragmentary readings of Darwin up to the year 1904, but without taking into account the Japanese reception of Social Darwinism. Philip Huang filled this gap and reached the conclusion that Liang's study of social-Darwinist teachings was shaped less by Yan Fu than by Katō Hiroyuki's (1836–1916) nationalist "international Darwinism." Pusey 1983, 300–301, 306; Huang 1972, 87.

69 Liang 1989 [1904], 4–5.

70 Ren 1981, 48–49; *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, 38; *Zhongwen da cidian*, vol. 2, 5960.448; Raguin 1986, 368.

use these concepts in accordance with this textual background, but reshaped them himself. He was possibly the first to transfer the Buddhist expressions "Great Self" and "Small Self" to a socio-political and evolutionist context.[71] The "self" of this Great Self was defined by Liang as follows:

> That which rises up high until today and does not die is the self. That which was plundered thousands upon thousands of times in the past thousands upon thousands of years but did not die is [also] the self. Why is this so? The reason lies in the fact that the self possesses a collective body. The self's family does not die, and so neither does the self; the self's state does not die, and so neither does the self; the self's community does not die, and so neither does the self; the self's world does not die, and so neither does the self; even the self's great garden of the bhūtatathatā does not die, and so neither does the self. (…) What does the Great Self mean? [It means that] the self is the collective body. What does the Small Self mean? [It means that] the self is the individual body.[72]

These statements are connected to a normative claim: According to Liang, insight into the immortality of the Great Self means responsibility. The lack of such insight leads to a misguided, purely materialistic, individualistic understanding of happiness and hinders, Liang argued, the development of appropriate conceptions of society and the future.[73] Insofar as man knows of the Great Self and recognizes his responsibility, he experiences his present existence as the "Small Self," that is, as an "individual unit" (*geti* 箇體) that is merely a "messenger," the physical carrier. Man thus recognizes that the "spirit" makes use of him to create coherence between the self of the past and the self of the future.[74] According to Liang's view of death and life, man finds the true happiness of life in his devotion to his Great Self, and so to collectivities such as family, society and the state, of which he is a member. He is to be guided primarily by an orientation towards the future of these trans-individual entities, and not towards the temporally narrowly restricted present of the Small Self. It is only this orientation, Liang believed, that separates mankind from animals,

71 On this, see also Duan 2012, 177.

72 Liang 1989 [1904], 8.

73 Liang 1989 [1904], 9.

74 Liang was here quoting from Yang Du's (1875–1931) preface to Liang's text *The Chinese Way of the Warrior* (*Zhongguo zhi wushi dao*, 1904), in which Yang further argued that this relationship between the spirit and "(messenger-)body" (Yang spoke of *shen* 身 and synonymously of *tipo* 體魄) means that countless incarnations of Confucius, Washington, Shakyamuni, etc. have existed in history. Liang 1989 [1904], 10.

and it is on this premise that the decisions between barbarism and civilization, victory and defeat in the evolutionary struggle for existence depend.[75]

Liang's conception of the Great Self, which does not represent an entity autonomous of the Small Self, may avoid ham-fisted collectivism, but it remains completely vague from a moral-philosophical point of view. How is the individual to decide between two entities that he is a part of simultaneously, such as his family and the state, or his religious community and society? This remains unresolved. An orientation on the interests of the respectively larger entity, in this case the state or society, at the expense of the family or local religious community would become unsustainable as soon as the interests of humanity are brought into play. It is hardly a coincidence that Liang did not even attempt such reflections. The view of death and life is obviously just that—a "view" that expresses an ethical *attitude*. It is not the foundation of a moral philosophy, political ethics or a religious doctrine.

Insofar as the view of death and life was intended to call forth a profound attitude of personal responsibility, putting death itself within the scope of the individual's responsibility, it becomes clear that Liang highlighted once again the category of action. His adaptions of Buddhism as well as evolutionary theory are then also marked by the fact that they remain free of any appearance of fatalism or determinism. The imperative of a new view or attitude that postulates the world as the object of action becomes clearly visible. This is the "supra-religious" character of Liang's view of death and life, which promises neither relief for the conscience nor salvation, and remains open towards various professions of faith.

## 6 Concluding Remarks

Liang chose the words to designate his "view of death and life" carefully, consciously avoiding the more common wording "view of life and death." Based on what he believed evolutionary theory had postulated, he wanted to demonstrate that an ethically adequate view of life and death had to start from the acknowledgment of death as the precondition for the reproduction of life. In other words, death was not to denote contingency and meaninglessness, but instead should be regarded as a premise for the possibility of improving the actions of future generations. This conception of death constituted an extreme manifestation of Liang's basic orientation towards the postulate of the malleability of history through concerted action. In doing so, Liang drew

75 Liang 1989 [1904], 9.

on an amalgamation of evolutionary theory and Buddhism that he had construed during the early 1900s and finally presented as his own "view of death and life." The salient feature of Liang's "view" is the assumption that science (evolutionary theories), religion and faith (Buddhism) all belong to the ethical preconditions for building modern society in general, and a modern nation state in particular. This was, arguably, the dominant perspective of his interest in Buddhist faith and the idea of the Great Self.

By the mid-1900s, however, Liang had dogmatically gutted the Buddhist faith. Both Pusey and Chang Hao interpret Liang's notion of Buddhism in this manner. Pusey explains that Liang had "'socialized'" the notion of karma "in two ways": once with his claim that "families, clans, races and countries all had collective karmas," and once by "[d]enying the doctrine of reincarnation," with the consequence that now "*only* society … could suffer or enjoy the fruits of one's deeds."[76] Chang Hao reaches a similar conclusion about Liang's writings on Buddhism when he assesses that Liang was more concerned with culturally affirming his "new civic values" than with achieving an "objective presentation of Buddhist doctrines."[77] In this context, Pusey speaks of Liang's "Darwinian Buddhism."[78] Liang's contention with Buddhism indeed suggests that from 1904/05 onwards at the latest, he was primarily concerned with using a gutted Buddhist language to transpose his idiosyncratic appropriation of evolutionary theories into an "attitude."

Overall, it seems as though Liang in 1904/05 took his earlier belief that religions could serve as a conductor for the socio-political efficacy of evolutionary theories in the modern world and, as it were, secularised it. In so doing, "religious faith" served as a conceptual hinge for Liang's attempt to incorporate the whole field of religions into Social Darwinist ethics. It is therefore no coincidence that he explained his understanding of "religious faith" by referring to a particularly broad range of religious convictions (Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism etc.). At the same time, this allowed him to convey the impression that Social Darwinian ethics had an interreligious, or even nondenominational, foundation. For someone such as Liang, who had turned to the subject of religion in the context of addressing the question of China's national unity and socio-political reforms, this must have been a promising outlook. Equally important, by outlining this quasi-reconciliation of religion

76 Pusey 1983, 297–298. Like Pusey, I am not able to judge whether Liang performed this adaption of the notion of karma "on his own authority or with the backing of some unspecified Buddhist school" (ibid. 297).

77 Chang 1971, 237.

78 Pusey 1983, 293. Chang Hao similarly sees a "collectivistic view of karma" in Liang's understanding of Buddhism; see Chang 1971, 276.

and science, Liang must have been convinced that he had opened up a perspective from which to offer a renewed understanding of indigenous "religious thought," and Buddhism in particular. In Liang's eyes, such a reinterpretation might even help prevent a clash of religious thought and faith with progress in contemporary scientific civilization. For Liang, then, the reconstruction of religious faith signified an important step in temporalizing the conceptual field of religions so as to inscribe it into his progressivist, universalist and homogenizing linear view of history.

The fact that Liang eventually replaced the concept of faith with that of a "view of death and life" should not be taken as evidence for his depreciation of religion. It might as well be the case that Liang wanted to preserve the autonomy of the religious field by upholding, at least to a certain degree, the conceptual distinction between religious faith and a view or attitude fostered by Social Darwinism. Chinese intellectual circles that vehemently advocated various brands of scientism discarded this distinction soon thereafter. It was Hu Shi who most prominently discussed the idea of the "Great Self" in this context.[79] Significantly, Hu essentially reduced the Great Self to an expression of his own faith in the omnipotence of science.[80] The belief in the "Great Self" became, as it were, the matter of an allegedly rational faith in science, which was expected to facilitate the comprehensive social diffusion of the scientific worldview. In contrast, Liang Qichao was becoming increasingly skeptical towards euphoric expectations regarding the progress of scientific civilization after World War One.[81] It is therefore unsurprising that he seemingly abandoned, by the 1920s, his earlier attempt to integrate religious faith and evolutionary theory into a view of death and life. Equally unsurprising, Hu Shi disregarded Liang's earlier reflection on the Great Self when he publicly confessed his belief in the immortality of the Great Self against the backdrop of his efforts to propagate a "scientific view of life" in China.

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79 See Hu's article entitled "Bu xiu—wo de zongjiao 不朽—我的宗教" (Immortality—My Religion). Hu had been working on this text over the course of several years, publishing its first version in 1919 and the final version in 1921. There is also an English translation of the text from 1920 by Hu Shi himself.

80 In his "Preface to [the Collected Contributions to the Debate on] Science and View of Life," Hu designated the faith in the Great Self as the "highest religion" and integrated it into the "ten commandments" of his "new view of life." The latter was based on Hu's understanding of science, and in particular on his adoption of evolutionary theory; see Hu 1923, 25–27.

81 Kwok 1965, 136–139.

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CHAPTER 18

# From Universal Faith to Religious Experience: Usages of *xin* 信 in Early Chinese Religious Studies (*zongjiaoxue* 宗教學)

*Christian Meyer*

## 1 Introduction

Conceptual terms such as faith, belief, or belief systems appear most natural to both Western and modern Chinese speakers when dealing with religions in a comparative perspective. They are often used as alternative terms, or sometimes even as substitutes for the problematic term "religion." Famous critics of the term "religion," such as the prominent scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith, have even chosen to use "faith" and "belief" in its place (denoting different aspects of what commonly is called religion).[1] In Smith's as well as similarly in other theories—following Schleiermacher—personal faith then implies an inner aspect of religion and appears as a universal human capacity in contrast to the historically shaped cumulative traditions.[2] Although Masuzawa has strongly criticized such universalisms in the academic field of religions as continuation of Western thought,[3] they seem globally accepted today. In present China and Taiwan, the term *xin*(*yang*) 信仰 is in fact also broadly used in various academic contexts as a translation of these Western terms. It is applied as general category in juxtaposition to terms such as *yishi* 儀式 (ritual)[4] or *wenhua* 文化 (culture), or to denote religious belonging.[5] *Xinyang* is also commonly

1 Smith 1963; cf. Smith 1979. Smith differentiates between personal faith on the one hand and belief (as in "belief system") as the dogmatic aspect of any particular historical religion on the other hand.

2 Smith 1979, esp. Chap. 7 (i): "Faith as generically human." For Schleiermacher, see the chapter of Jiang in this volume.

3 Masuzawa 2005; similarly also Lopez 1998, 33: "Belief appears as a universal category because of the universalist claims of the tradition in which it has become most central, Christianity."

4 See Chen Jinguo 2005, who uses *xinyang* (belief) together with *yishi* (ritual) prominently in his book title.

5 For example, the Taiwanese ethnologist Li Yih-yuan (Li 2004 [1998]) discusses belief and culture in a chapter of *Zongjiao yu shenhua* ("*Xinyang yu wenhua* 信仰與文化"). Cf. similarly Dai Kangsheng 戴康生 and Peng Yao's 彭耀 *Zongjiao shehuixue* (Dai and Peng 2000), which applies the term *xinjiaozhe* 信教者 for a religion's believers.

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used to replace *zongjiao* in the prominent term "popular religion" (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰).[6] Within the field of academic research on religions, it appears as an almost unavoidable and unquestionable term.

In this chapter, I analyze the usages of *xin*(*yang*) in the Chinese academic field of religions and its background.[7] Following this volume's history of semantics approach, I do not pursue the critical question of whether the term faith or belief should be translated as *xin* or *xinyang* and whether it should be applied to other non-Christian or non-(mono)theistic traditions or not.[8] Instead I take the existence of the term *xin*(*yang*) for faith/belief as already given in the *present* situation and therefore as part of interrelated global and local discourses and of an entangled global and local "genealogy of religion."[9] As the present use of the terminology is evident, this study shall go back to a period when the term had only recently been introduced into academia. This leads us to the important transformational period of the late Qing and early Republican periods, especially the 1920s.

In this chapter, I therefore investigate the special contribution that academic research and in particular religious studies (*zongjiaoxue* 宗教學)[10] in the specific period of the 1920s has made as part of the broader genealogy of faith/belief (or *xin*[*yang*]). I shall demonstrate that this academic discipline has been in fact at least one important channel of transfer for the concept and its popularization in higher education. Using prominent examples of

6 Cf. Clart 2007.

7 Though I follow Foucault's emphasis on academia's importance for shaping knowledge formations in selecting this focus, I would be careful to generalize its relevance for other discursive levels, such as everyday uses or inner-religious contexts. I am therefore humbly adding one chapter to this much bigger and richer genealogy by digging into the specific discursive constellations in the important Republican period.

8 For example, Goossaert has directly criticized the "use of faith as a criterion of belonging" that "came in with the adoption of the concept of religion, but it too is ill-adapted to the Chinese religious context." (Goossaert 2005, 16). While there is surely good reason to be cautious about a simplistic use in a Western-Christian sense, the history of semantics approach that is applied here pursues another research interest.

9 Robertson 1988; cf. similarly Beyer 2006. See also this volume's introduction.

10 "Religious studies" (*zongjiaoxue*) is here understood as a distinct discipline focused on religion(s). At the same time, the academic occupation with religion goes far beyond this explicit discipline, and research on religion has always been much more interdisciplinary. I shall include this interdisciplinary academic context when talking about other contributors and changing frontlines in debates on religion as discursive conditions.

As the English name of the discipline has changed several times in the past from "science of religion," or later "comparative religion," to "religious studies" or "academic study of religions," I have here settled on the conventional name "religious studies" as one unified term in the following text to translate the Chinese *zongjiaoxue*.

introductory works, I shall explore more precisely through what channels, actors, motivations, strategies, and adaptations certain aspects of meanings were conveyed exactly, and how they were adapted, as observable in new usages and contexts. Moreover, following the Foucauldian idea of genealogy, I shall investigate the relevant relation of power constellations and knowledge within as well as beyond academia that closely accompanied these processes of adoption. I shall therefore take a closer look at the relevant actors in this process—in particular the authors of newly written introductory works in the 1920s, who were all Chinese Christians, most of whom had studied in the US. In order to understand the function of *xin* in these works, I shall consider what kind of influences the authors received.

In particular, we will see that the discipline of comparative religion—or history of religion, as it was then called—was closely related to a universalist understanding of faith or of the human capacity of believing. In fact, the very ideas of a "general (universal) history of religions" and of "religious experience" that both historically stood in the center of the discipline[11] were—as Masuzawa has shown—not understandable *without* a nineteenth-century European universalism that was derived from and in a sense continued Christian models of history of salvation and of personal piety.[12] But one also has to state that such concepts clearly went *beyond* Christian dogmatist understandings of "orthodox belief." Unlike Masuzawa's critical turn against Western hegemonism, I am interested in the reasons and special conditions of these processes—as well as the ways of adaptation—in order to understand *why* and *how* this concept became so attractive. In order to do so, I will seek to understand how the usages in the selected introductory works fit into very specific discursive constellations of power in its time. In order to understand the function of *xin* in these contexts, I will apply elements from the toolkits of the German representatives of discourse analysis such as Siegfried Jäger and Schwab-Trapp.[13] In particular, I will describe the applied rhetoric of faith/belief/*xin*(*yang*) as part of the strategic attempt to build new power coalitions (or "discursive alliances") through rhetorical "maneuvers

11 Cf., for example, Kippenberg 2002; for the role of "religious experience," see esp. Chap. 12 of his book.

12 For this, cf. again Masuzawa 2005; see esp. her reference to religious experience in the book, e.g., 316, 318 (quoting Troeltsch); cf. Lopez 1998 who refers as non-Western example to Olcott's theosophic adaptation and reinterpretation of Singhalese Buddhism as a "belief system" that influenced also local self-understandings.

13 Jäger 2006; Schwab-Trapp 2010.

of dissociation" (Abgrenzungsmanöver) or "linking" (Kopplungsmanöver).[14] Accordingly, one basic hypothesis of this article is that a universalized concept of *xin*(*yang*) or faith/belief—that had already been decontextualized from its original Christian use in various discourses and therefore had become a floating signifier[15]—was now used as a strategic means of linking those who shared religious belief (real "believers") as a "united front" against secular attacks in the specific "scientistic" intellectual climate of their time. Additionally, my analysis involves questions of translation and knowledge transfer, and I examine how terminologies and definitions borrowed from a variety of Western authors were reformulated for a new audience and put into new horizons of understanding.

Finally, I will discuss the fact that the use of *xin* or *xinyang* in the examined works was not as natural (and unified) as one could expect at a first glance—it was not merely part and parcel of Western discourse about religion. A closer look will reveal not only differences between the conceptions of various academic authors, but also problems they encountered searching for a specific and fixed systematic place of the concept within *zongjiaoxue*. This led to various conceptualizing efforts, including semantic shifts and substitutions by other related terminologies.

The main hypotheses of this article are therefore

1) that religious studies (*zongjiaoxue*) in the 1920s played a recognizable role in introducing the universalist idea of faith/belief as a general human capacity included in the idea of religion and in the idea of a general (or universal) "history of religions," hereby opening the concept from "missionary-theological" to "generally religious";
2) that the use of the term *xin* (faith/belief) in these introductory works was not just technical and "part and parcel" of religious studies once the authors had decided to introduce it to the West, but that this concept instead played a strategic role of enabling new power coalitions and uniting "religious believers" against secularist attackers of religion(s) starting from around the 1910s and 1920s;

14 Schwab-Trapp describes these as discourses in "which discourse participants refer to each other, mutually allot their positions, form alliances or consolidate existing lines of conflict." Schwab-Trapp 2010, 274.

15 A "floating" signifier is in Laclau's view "the one whose emptiness results from the unfixity introduced by a plurality of discourses interrupting each other the floating signifier" (Laclau 2000: 305). For the application of Laclau's term in a similar constellation of competing secular and religious discourses, see Wielander's chapter in this volume.

3) finally, that the semantics of *xin* still posed some inherent problems to finding a specific and fixed place for the concept in the field of *zongjiaoxue* and its inability to clearly delineate "religious" from "non-religious faith," so that authors like the religious thinkers Xie Fuya 謝扶雅 (1892–1991) preferred a terminological shift from *xin* to other terms.

In this chapter, I shall first provide a sketch of the basic discursive and power situation from late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, i.e., the late Qing until the Republican period (with a special focus on the 1920s). In a second step, I will analyze the introductory works of three authors as case studies asking how, how far, and related to which kind of arguments and definitions these authors used the term *xin* (faith/belief) in different ways. Finally, I shall contextualize and evaluate the results for their contribution to the modern genealogy of *xin*.

## 2 Changing Discursive Settings, Actors, and Milieus from the Late Nineteenth Century to the 1920s

### 2.1 *Changing Discursive Settings*

In the last decades of the Qing dynasty, the concept of faith had been made available to Chinese speakers in two main ways: first through missionary use, applied in their churches and in missionary activities,[16] and second, for a wider intellectual public, especially around 1900 in the reform movement (Liang Qichao and others) via its earlier use in Japan.[17] However, these discursive fields of missionary use and intellectual public use in the reform context appear as rather separated arenas that were only loosely connected by some intellectual figures. This picture changes radically only after the revolution and establishment of the Chinese Republic, when Western-style schools and universities were generally established. Christian schools that had been founded earlier now became an integral part of this new educational landscape. The constitutional debates on freedom of religious belief (*xinjiao ziyou* 信教自由) and the future role of Confucianism played an important role in making the concept of religious belief a shared public concern. Already in these debates, it is noteworthy how former discursive coalitions had changed radically from Christian/missionary vs. "heathen" (including Buddhism) to a coalition of religious adherents and secularists actively built by Christian representatives

16 Cf. the chapters by Starr and Jansen in this volume.

17 Cf. the chapters by Krämer (Japan) and Fröhlich (Liang Qichao) in this volume.

against a continued dominance of Confucianism.[18] This front-building and loose coalition of the 1910s, however, changed again in the 1920s when not only Confucianism, but also religion(s) in general and Christian missions in particular, became objects of attack by radical secularists and anti-traditionalists.

After early contributions to the topic in the late 1910s, a radical group of the Paris section of the *Shaonian Zhonguo xuehui* 少年中國學會 (Young China Association) initiated a major intellectual debate in 1920–21. A politicization took place in the following years with the Anti-religious and Anti-Christian movements,[19] reaching a peak in the midst of the Northern Expedition with excessive riots against Christian missionary stations. A parallel phenomenon were the attacks against popular religion to "eradicate superstition" (*pochu mixin* 破除迷信). Yet Buddhism also had to justify itself in an intellectual atmosphere and discursive constellation that privileged modernization and science.[20]

At the same time in the 1920s, a wave of returning students from abroad—in particular from the US, but also from Europe and Japan—brought home a variety of new ideas from their studies. They included students of history of religions or comparative religion, most of them Christians who studied theology with additional courses in history of religions or similar subjects. Among them were Christian intellectuals such as Xie Songgao 謝頌羔 (1895–1974), Xie Fuya, and Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893–1941), but also a few non-Christian scholars such as Jiang Shaoyuan 江紹原 (1898–1983).[21] Comparative religion or history of religions was a new discipline in the West that had only developed in the very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also in North-America mainly in a couple of theology departments.[22] One important background of these new efforts—all with a liberal Protestant background—included American transcendentalism that itself was inspired by readings of Asian traditions and combined their view of history of religions with evolutionistic and ethical elements as well as an interest in mysticism.[23]

The institutional changes of building up a new Western-oriented education system in China led to a demand for textbooks in all fields. The publication of introductory works for the new disciplinary field of religious studies (*zongjiaoxue*) clearly reflects the public prominence of the topic of "religion" and a

18 Liu 2012, 247–276.
19 See, for example, Chao 1986 or Meyer 2015.
20 Cf. the chapter by Travagnin in this volume.
21 Cf. Meyer 2015.
22 See, for example, the detailed study by Shepard 1991.
23 Dorrien 2001, esp. 58–110; Versluis 1993.

demand for academic engagement in this field.[24] While some works were simply translations of Western books,[25] those that were newly written in the 1920s for the Chinese context were all authored by Chinese Christians. I will therefore first give some examples of general academic interest in the concept of *xin*(*yang*) and then concentrate on these newly written works. Afterwards, I shall evaluate the significance of these contributions for semantic shifts. The main background of this time was therefore the radically changed context in Republican China, in particular the combined anti-Christian and anti-religious attacks of the 1920s. In these debates, religion was generally attacked in the name of science and rationality as emotional and irrational faith.[26]

### 2.2 *Early Appropriations and Adaptations of xin*(*yang*) 信仰 *until the 1920s in Academic Writings*

As seen in other chapters of this volume, the term *xin* as a translation of faith/belief was used not just by Christian missionaries, but also by non-Christian and non-religious authors even before the 1920s. An early example of a secularist appropriation is the use of *xin*—and the binomen *xinyang* (Jap. *shinkō*), newly introduced from Japan—by Liang Qichao, for example in his article "*Baojiao fei suoyi zun Kong lun* 保教非所以尊孔論" from 1902. This article marks his short phase of very critical thinking towards religions, in which he defines all religion as *mi-xin* (superstition). In this article, he quotes faith (*xin* or *qixin* 起信) as one of the main characteristics of religion as "the Westerners" see it, obviously referring not only to the Christian creed, but also the Buddhist canonical text *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (The Mahāyāna Awakening of Faith). This text had been the object of joint translation by the missionary Timothy Richard and the lay Buddhist Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911) since 1894, as Jansen points out, and can serve as an early example of a comparative religion approach.[27] In Liang's text, however, religious faith as (irrational) belief in supernatural phenomena is clearly contrasted with rationality and philosophy. This juxtaposition of faith vs. reason that was

24 See Meyer 2015.

25 E.g. Jiang Shaoyuan's translation of G.F. Moore's *The Birth and Growth of Religion: Being the Morse Lectures of 1922* (printed in 1923). It might be noted that in this work belief or faith are not explicitly highlighted as chapter titles, but the list of contents rather includes topics like "souls and spirits," "the emergence of gods," "morals and religion," "religions of higher civilization," "after death," "ways of salvation," or "salvation: religion and philosophy." A handful of later translations of other introductory works were also created in the 1930s to 1940s, which I will not treat here (cf. Meyer 2015).

26 See, for example, Cai Yuanpei's influential writings (e.g., Cai 1917).

27 See Jansen's and Travagnin's chapters in this volume, cf. Timothy Richard (1907); cf. Tarocco (2008).

influenced by his reception of Western critical discourses on religion through Japan became influential and typical of the following modernist-secularist perception of religion. *Xin*'s strong reference to religion and in particular the link with the concept of theism was still valid in 1919, when Zhu Xizu 朱希祖 (1879–1944) defined religion as belief in God or gods in his article "*Lun Religion zhi yiming* 論 Religion 之義名."[28]

Around the same time, however, the reception of an idea of secular "new belief," also imported from Western anti-religious discourses,[29] broadened the connotational field and challenged traditional ways of using *xin* as Christian (or other religious) belief. In missionary and inner-church environments, *xin* may still have been used in a naïve or dogmatic Christian sense. In public and intellectual debates, however, *xin* had lost its clear bond with Christianity and—as a "floating signifier"—had become open for, but also *in need of*, new explanations and more precise definitions. On a semantic level, this meant that *xin* was no longer itself the object of attack by proponents of a secularist scientism, who instead focused semantically on particular characteristics that could be associated with "religious faith," such as irrationality, emphasis on the supernatural world, or detachment from the real world and society. These observations shall now serve as the background for interpreting its use in the new religious studies textbooks by Christian Chinese authors.

## 3 Examples from Introductory Works Written by Chinese Christian Authors and Their Strategies by Using *xin* 信, 1926–1933

While missionaries had written some earlier introductory works on comparative religion as translations of Western books, they had intended these only for textbook use within missionary schools, not for a broader audience.[30] Since

28 Zhu Xizu 1919, 48: "(The acts or feelings which result from a belief in existence of a god, or of gods, having superior control over matter, life, or destiny)" (obviously quoted without source in English).

29 A prominent and influential example is David Friedrich Strauß's *Der alte und der neue Glaube: Ein Bekenntniß* (1872); for Republican China, see, e.g., Ding Wenjiang (1934); for Hu Shi's secular "belief" in the Great Self (*dawo*), see Hu 1919 and Fröhlich's chapter in this volume.

30 E.g. Hayes' translation (4th ed. 1919 [1904]) of Kellogg's *A Handbook of Comparative Religion* and MacGillivray's translation of Grant's *The Religions of the World in Relation to Christianity* (orig.: [*A*] *Handbook of Comparative Religion* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1899]) (MacGillivray 1910). The concept of "belief" was not used very prominently in these works and often appears related to (mono- or poly)theism, but partly also in the sense of a general human capacity.

I will focus here on the particular context of the 1920s, I have chosen works from three different Chinese Christian authors of this time who all apply slightly different approaches due to their varying background and intellectual influences. I will demonstrate how a universalized use of *xin* (faith/belief) was taken for granted, but how at the same time the authors struggled to define *xin* as a more specific concept. Two of the contributors, Xie Songgao and Xie Fuya, had studied in the US and just returned in the early/mid-1920s. The third, Wang Zhixin 王治心, was a more conservative scholar who had remained in China.

### 3.1 *Xie Songgao: Two Introductory Works from 1926 and 1928:* Zhujiao de yanjiu 諸教的研究 (*Studies about Religions*) *and* Zongjiaoxue 宗教學 *ABC* (*Religious Studies ABC*)[31]

I begin with Xie Songgao's two works, which are clearly identifiable by their titles as introductions to the new field of religious studies. The first was written in 1926 and clearly designed as a textbook for use in church schools; it enjoyed reprints up to the 14th edition (in 1949).[32] This textbook still reflects a Christian missionary school background and was published by the Christian Guangxuehui 廣學會 (Christian Literature Society for China). In the first sections of Part One, Xie clearly positions himself as a liberal Christian and addresses different groups of believers and critics of religion, reflecting the frontlines of his time. From the first pages on he uses *xin* or *xinyang* in a clearly Christian sense and in various combinations with *zongjiao*.[33] In the last part of this section (Section 1 *Wuren duiyu zongjiao zhi taidu* 吾人對於宗教之態度), he explains why humankind should not only research religion, but also believe in it (*bixu xiangxinde* 必需相信的).[34] He then names three reasons why religion should be researched, thereby providing important aspects of his understanding of religion or religious faith:[35]

1) as a universal human phenomenon found in the whole "history of religions": "In whatever nation there is always a religion they believe in … and since the beginnings of history, there has been religion" (*wulun zai na*[*i*]*ge minzu zhong, jie you tamen suo xiangxin de zongjiao … erqie zi you*

31 Xie Songgao and Yu Muren 1926; Xie Songgao 1928.

32 Its outline mainly followed Barton's *The Religions of the World* (2nd ed.), but it also integrated a number of other introductions and included newly written passages.

33 Four times altogether by page 1, twice in direct combination with *zongjiao* (*zongjiao de xinyang* 宗教的信仰, *suo xin de zongjiao* 所信的宗教), and similarly on page 2.

34 Xie Songgao and Yu Muren 1926, 3.

35 Xie Songgao and Yu Muren 1926, 4–6.

*lishi yilai, ji you zongjiao* 無論在那個民族中, 皆有他們所相信的宗教 ... 而且自有歷史以來, 即有宗教);

2) as related to being a moral person (using great personalities as examples and role models, such as Confucius, Kant, Spinoza, Roosevelt, Wilson, or Tolstoy) (*gujin xuduo daode xueshi de xianzhe, xiangxin zongjiao de hen duo ... tamen de renge xuewen, ju ji gaochao; raner tamen dou shi xinyang zongjiao de* 古今許多道德學識的賢哲, 相信宗教的很多 ... 他們人格學問, 俱極高超; 然而他們都是相信宗教的);

3) as a not omittable aspect of personal experience (*wuren juede zongjiao de xinyang, shi wei geren jingyan zhong suo bi bukeshaode* 吾人覺得宗教的信仰, 實為個人經驗中所必不可少的), such as consolation in suffering, solution of problems in life, help in decisions in general views on life (*renshengguan* 人生觀), hope for eternal life, and above all the idea that God is love, finally also the idea of forgiveness of sin.

While the concept of faith is here clearly broadened to a universal human characteristic found in the whole of religious history, the last point especially still clearly reflects his personal Christian as well as theological "orthodox" teachings for a Christian school context.

The main part of the book, however, pursues a different path, thereby integrating new ideas from the nineteenth century and from the emerging academic field of research on religions. In its main structure it follows an evolutionist pattern: The final sections of Part One deal with "religion of the primitives" (Chapter *Yuanren zhi zongjiao* 原人之宗教, cf. Barton's Chap. 1, "The Religions of Primitive Peoples"), which the author argues is linked to magic and characterized by an amoral, egoistic attitude. This stage of "primitive religion" is also associated with superstition (*mixin* 迷信, literally, "mis-belief"), this term is clearly not any longer used here as theological or missionary concept for all pagan traditions but as part of the applied evolutionist pattern suitable to the scientistic discourse of this time. Although "primitive religion," in Xie's view, conveys "wrong perceptions," people of this stage also had some kind of belief (Section 6). Within his argumentation, this appears important in order to preserve the idea of universalism of belief. The evolutionist pattern continues in the book's outline as a development from primitive forms of religion via polytheistic to monotheistic faith—which Xie believed to form the endpoint of human progress in religion.[36] In general, Chinese belief in spirits is understood as a stage of animism or polytheistic belief. Religious Daoism, in

36 This stands in clear contrast to Frazer's three stages of religious evolution, from magic through religion to science. He is instead following his main source, Barton (but also not diverging much from Tylor and others).

particular, is portraited very negatively as primitive superstition.[37] This view, however, contrasts with a much more positive view on ancient thinkers such as Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Confucius, who all believed in the uniqueness of ancient Shangdi,[38] thereby identifying possible points of contact between Chinese "higher" traditions and Christianity.

The 1928 book *Zongjiaoxue* ABC is a variation of the previous example,[39] interestingly now published by a non-Christian publishing house and therefore even more oriented towards a wider non-Christian readership. The more personal remarks from the first work are omitted in this version; however, the use of *xin*, *xinyang*, as well as *mixin* is still widespread. The author portrays Daoism and sects as "cheating with their old tricks." He characterizes contemporary Daoism and its historical tradition even more strongly as primitive religion (*chuji zongjiao* 初級宗教), unsystematic polytheism, superstitious, non-progressive, without hope for any positive development and finally without any perceivable (ethical) standard of (moral) personality (*renge biaozhun* 人格標準). Most obvious is here his own distance from "sects" or "secret societies" (today mostly labelled "redemptive societies") such as Daoyuan 道院 or Tongshanshe 同善社 that all fell under the category of *mixin*. In these new sections of the 1928 book, Xie seeks alliance with the new Guomindang government, which stood in conflict with such groups,[40] and strategically distances himself—and Christianity—from those "superstitious" (mis-believing, *mi-xin*) forms of religion.

### 3.2 *Xie Fuya's* Zongjiao zhexue*: Replacing Faith* (*xinyang* 信仰) *with Religious Consciousness* (*zongjiao yishi* 宗教意識)

Our second example is *Philosophy of Religion* (*Zongjiao zhexue* 宗教哲學), authored by Xie Fuya. Large portions (i.e., the first chapters) of the book refer to religious studies (*zongjiaoxue*) and present the fruits of Xie's studies in the United States, which included not only attending courses in theology, but also in history of religions and comparative religion at Chicago and Harvard.[41] Here, he experienced a liberal theology influenced by American

37 Xie Songgao and Yu Muren 1926, 182–186. Interestingly, he views Daoism even more negatively than some of his Western sources, such as Moore; cf. Xie Songgao 1928, 65–66.

38 "… *sui you butong; danshi tamen dou xinyang Shangdi shi zhi you yiwei* 雖有不同; 但是他們都信仰上帝是祇有一位) and having a personal character, ethics and a will (*tianming* 天命)." Xie Songgao and Yu Muren 1926, 194–195.

39 The outline follows another work, Hume's *The World's Living Religions*.

40 Nedostup 2001, 90–114.

41 Cf. my article on Xie Fuya (Meyer 2008–2009).

transcendentalism that downplayed dogmatic systems of belief, but highlighted personal and especially mystical experience.

Xie Fuya bases his book's first chain of arguments—similarly to Xie Songgao, but more precise in detail—on an evolutionist argument. He explains the origins of religion by religious action, followed by a stage of religious feeling (discussing myths, rituals, and religion in relation to magic), then by a stage of "religious belief" (*zongjiao xinyang* 宗教信仰), before finally classifying "religious thought" (*zongjiao sixiang* 宗教思想) as highest. It is remarkable that the explicit term *xinyang* is related here to polytheistic African belief, belief in fetishism, and in ghosts, including ancestral worship (here, he is also discussing the roots of Chinese ancestral worship),[42] not to Christian faith. However, different from the anti-religious interpretation of the evolutionist pattern, for Xie faith and thinking are not irreconcilable, he understood these stages as four forms of activity or aspects of expressing religion[43] that evolve in a ("Hegelian") way not by abolishing, but by preserving the earlier aspects.

At the beginning of the section on the stage of "religious thinking," he takes up the question of belief and explicitly qualifies non-rational, uncritical, and unreflecting belief as "superstitious" (*mixin*), but then reconstructs a stage of "rationalization."[44] And so this stage is also qualified as the "individual stage of religion" in contrast to the earlier ones that are characterized by collectivism. In the following longer sections, he then focuses on the traditions that he regarded as rational and individualistic religions, including not only Christianity, but also Confucianism, philosophical Daoism, and Buddhism. It is interesting to observe that the term *mixin* plays a very minor role than in Xie Songgao's works. However, the comparable evolutionist pattern still reveals a similar strategy of dissociating Christianity from lower forms of religion and associating it with the higher religions that are characterized in positive, modern terms by individuality, rationality, and ethics. One other observation is significant: In general, Xie Fuya applies the term *xinyang* (faith) less than Xie Songgao does, including to Christianity; instead, a cluster of other terms seem to substitute some of its functions: For Xie "religiosity" (*zongjiaoxin* 宗教心) is the "essence of religion"[45] in the tradition of the quoted Schleiermacher and later liberal theology. The extensive Chapter 3 titled "Religious Consciousness"

42 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 56.

43 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 41–42.

44 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 42: "*zongjiao sixiang* 宗教思想 (Rationalization)." Interestingly, he here uses the English term "rationalization" instead of a direct translation "religious thought" that better fits his idea of reconciling reason and faith.

45 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 35.

(*zongjiao yishi* 宗教意識)[46] contains only a rather short section on *xinyang*. Religious belief—defined here as religiosity or religious experience (*zongjiao jingyan* 宗教經驗)[47]—includes an emotional aspect, but without contradiction to rationality or science, describing instead an "attitude" (*taidu* 態度) to the world.[48]

Very clearly, the term "belief" is no longer understood simply as Christian faith or belief. Moreover, it needs to be explained and qualified, even substituted by a better terminology (*zongjiaoxin, zongjiao yishi, zongjiao jingyan, taidu*). These explanative terms are still within the semantic field of a liberal Protestant concept of "Glaube" (faith, belief) that can be traced back to Schleiermacher, who links it with "religiöses Erlebnis" (religious experience).[49] Accordingly, it is described as compatible with rationality and individual religious experience and ascribed a role as a source of morality. Again, similar to Schleiermacher (and somewhat different from Kant), Xie Fuya does not reduce the human capacity of religiosity to either emotions or morality, but defines it as an experience of its own (characterized in its depth as "mystical", hereby taking up most recent trends in liberal theology of his time that spoke positively about mysticism). This approach differs from an apologetic tendency of reducing religious belief to its (ethical, cultural, or other) functions in a secular world (that is often found with other Chinese Christian thinkers of his time). Instead, Xie wants to keep the domain of "religiosity" as a realm of itself and of value by itself. Finally, in its openness it constitutes an open offer to other traditions beyond Christianity, such as Confucianism or Buddhism, of linking up. The much less frequent use of *xin* in contrast to Xie Songgao is significant and might indicate a trend away from the usage of *xin* towards more precise terms.

### 3.3 *Wang Zhixin's Two Lines of Faith in Chinese Religious History*

A third example is Wang Zhixin's 王治心 *Zhongguo lishi de shangdiguan* 中國歷史的上帝觀 (The Idea of God in Chinese History) of 1926, further elaborated and enlarged in his *Zhongguo zongjiao sixiang shi dagang* 中國宗教思想史大綱 (Outline of the History of Religious Thought in China, Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1933). Both works have an exclusive focus on Chinese history. They therefore differ in outline, aims, and content from the first two introductory works. Interestingly, although he never studied abroad and did not name

46 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 119–153.

47 E.g. Laozi's and Confucius' religious experience, cf. Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 74–84.

48 Xie Fuya 1939 [1928], 260.

49 For Schleiermacher's concept, see Jiang's chapter in this volume.

Western sources explicitly, Wang's works still offer some similar arguments as the works of the two Xie, but also include new ideas related to a particular historical view on religion in China.[50]

A first basic idea is that "humankind has a religious faith *a priori*,"[51] which cannot be replaced by rational deduction—the reason why atheists would often suddenly discover their hidden mystical religious nature.[52] This idea seems to directly quote the idea of a religious *a priori* presented by Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), who himself stood in a Schleiermacherian tradition.[53] Religious faith therefore appears as a general human capacity and any religious or mystical experience actualizes it. Wang's main interest is here to conclude that also atheists or philosophers like Confucius or Laozi would have retained traditional religious beliefs even if they undertook speculative and abstract interpretations of heaven at the same time.

The second main idea relates to religious history in China and builds on the first: It is that of two completely different lines of development (*wanquan lianglu* 完全兩路)[54] of conceptions of God or gods in the Chinese history of religion. Starting from an original belief in the One Highest God (Shangdi 上帝 or *tian* 天, Heaven), both lines do *not* describe an evolutionary progress, but rather degeneration: One is the philosophical-skeptical line among intellectuals (literati) influenced by Laozi and later by Buddhism, while the other is that of popular polytheistic belief in various spirits and ghosts. Christian faith, however, would again re-combine the best of the two and amend them with each other—the monotheistic, but abstract orientation of the scholars with the missing emotional life (*ganqing shenghuo* 感情生活) as well as the strayed (*mi* 迷) and obscure (*mohu* 模糊) beliefs of the common people corrected by "some reason," bringing both back—in Wang's view—to its original

50 Wang—like many Christians—was also a member of the Guomindang. This is also reflected in his work *Sun Wen zhuyi yu Yesu zhuyi* 孫文主義與耶穌主義, Shanghai: Qingnian xiehui shubao bu 青年協會書報部 (Wang 1927). An analysis of this book and Wang's relationship with the Guomindang's use of *xin* would, however, exceed this chapter's scope. For usages of *xin* in the Guomindang, see also Thoralf Klein's chapter in this volume.

51 Wang Zhixin 1926, 4: *renlei you xiantian de zongjiao xinyang* 人類有先天的宗教信仰.

52 Wang Zhixin 1926, 4: *yincang de shenmi de zongjiao benxing* 隱藏的神秘的宗教本性.

53 Unfortunately, Wang generally does not reveal his sources and therefore also does not name Otto explicitly.

54 Wang 1926; Wang 1933, 28–29. Similar already Liu Shipei (1960 [1905]): 9B: "*Kongzi* … *xin tian* 孔子 … 信天" vs. belief in ghosts (*gui* 鬼); these ideas surely reflect Late Qing and Republican re-readings of Mozi's conceptions of heaven (*tian*) and ghosts (*minggui* 明鬼). It seems also reminiscent of the old Jesuit argument that Christianity recovers and completes an ancient Chinese monotheism.

and pure monotheistic roots. In this, he also suggests a reconciliation of emotional and rational capacities of the human being that shall be the task of Christianity in China. Religious faith is here clearly linked to monotheism (believing in a god). At the same time, he postulates that Christian mission conversely shall relate back to Chinese thinking and necessarily build up on its base. In particular, in his later version of 1933 Wang highlights the points of contact in the history of religious ideas in China with Christianity, making it appear less foreign than depicted by its critics. At the same time (especially in the later version of 1933), the concept of superstition (*mixin*) is used widely (three times alone on page 29), especially applied to Daoism to dissociate Christianity from these forms of (mis-)belief. Other traditions, especially Confucianism or ancient belief in gods and spirits/ghosts (*xinshen xingui* 信神信鬼),[55] are, in contrast, treated much more positively. The two lines therefore both present two deficient modes of belief (*mi-xin* and only abstract belief) that just have to be recombined and reconciled.

## 4 Interpreting *xin* 信 in Early Chinese Textbooks for Religious Studies and Beyond

The uses of *xin*(*yang*) and *mixin* in early Chinese textbooks for religious studies must be interpreted in light of the discursive situation. All presented examples were written in the mid- to late 1920s, from 1926 to 1928 (with only the elaborated version of Wang Zhixin's second work dating to 1933). It is therefore unsurprising that they all reflect the special situation of the 1920s, when secularist intellectuals and political agitators harshly attacked all sorts of religious traditions, including Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, popular religion, and "sects" ("redemptive societies"). This also marks a clear change in frontlines from (1) Christian missionaries vs. Chinese "heathens" via (2) defenders of freedom of belief vs. Confucianists (in the 1910s) to finally (3) a loose coalition of qualified ("non-superstitious") believers against their secularist attackers in the 1920s.

While all authors apply different strategies in detail, the two Xie mainly use an evolutionist pattern that differentiates higher from primitive or lower religious forms. It allowed to dissociate "higher religions" from superstition as "irrational" and "immoral" wrong or mis-belief (*mi-xin*), as the mostly attacked form of religions, and, conversely, helped to unite those identified as higher rational, individual, and ethical religions. While the first can be understood

55 Wang Zhixin 1933, 29.

as a "maneuver of dissociation," the second presents a classical example of a "maneuver of linking" (Schwab-Trapp).[56] Additionally, Wang Zhixin tried to demonstrate that Christian tradition was not so distant from the national Chinese cultural identity by pointing to many common ideas as possible points of contact. Accordingly, due to the mentioned change of power constellations, these authors used their knowledge from Western religious studies (*zongjiaoxue*) to consciously distance themselves from earlier missionary conceptions and open the concept of belief (*xin* or *xinyang*) from a theologically dogmatic and exclusivist one to a universal (or general anthropological) concept of believing as human capacity that may develop to a stage of "higher religions" (in an evolutionist paradigm).

While the examined works from the 1920s show no strong efforts to interpret *xin* in indigenous Chinese ways—in line with the strong Westernizing influences at this time—a remarkable work titled *Zhongguo de zongiaoguan* 中國的宗教觀 from 1939[57] by a Christian author, the Presbyterian minister Chen Jinyong 陳金鏞 (1868–1939), provides a different approach: In his preface, Chen propagates a fulfillment theology and envisions Chinese traditions (esp. Confucianism) as similar to the Old Testament in its preparatory function to the gospel. In his book, he also includes a section on *xin*, in which he starts from the Confucian understanding of virtue (or *rendao* 人道) as a point of contact and then leads over to the fulfillment in the Christian understanding of *xin* as faith in God (*xinshen*, equated with *tiandao* 天道), but also as what must be put in practice by sincerely following and obeying Jesus.[58] This example makes clear that the attempt to link a Christian-inspired understanding of *xin* with Chinese tradition through religious studies approaches only constituted one approach among many.

These efforts of the 1920s bore fruit in the time of the Anti-Japanese war, when in 1943 various religious leaders, including the famous Buddhist Taixu, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Yu Bin 于斌, the Methodist bishop Chen Wenyuan 陳文淵 (1897–1968), and the "Christian warlord" Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882–1948), supported the founding of the Fellowship of Chinese Religious Followers (*Zhongguo zongjiaotu lianyihui* 中國宗教徒聯誼會) in Chongqing.[59] Though the term *xin* is not explicitly used in its name, the fellowship marks another coalition change that may have been underway as early as the 1920s.

56 Schwab-Trapp 2010.

57 Chen Jinyong 1939, preface (dated February 1937).

58 Chen Jinyong 1939, 173–177.

59 Xue 2003, 184–185.

While it is difficult to measure these works' real effect beyond the remarkable number of reprints,[60] we can observe that the discursive constellations changed in the 1930s and 1940s. The strict secularist and scientistic modernization discourse related to debates on religion of the 1920s lost power, and the question of national and cultural identity gained more influence in their place.

## 5 Conclusion

In this short analysis of introductory works of *zongjiaoxue* mainly from the 1920s, I have shown (1) the role of the academic discipline of religious studies in introducing a universalist concept of *xin* as religious faith into the Chinese intellectual discourse of its time. In particular, these works introduced a concept that went far beyond a previous traditional understanding of believing as earlier introduced by Protestant Neo-Pietist or conservative missionaries. Instead, the concept of *xin* presented in these writings introduced the idea of believing or *xin* both as a general human capacity and as a phenomenon that is found in the whole of the history of religions. Both concepts could be understood as interrelated because the idea of such a general human capacity appears to be proved by its *historical* universality: it is found from the beginnings of humankind until today and in all places. This concept is clearly derived from the understanding of faith that developed in the West, especially in the nineteenth century, building on older ideas of *pistis*/*fides* in the ancient and Christian traditions and finally on Schleiermacherian ideas.[61] And it was itself closely connected to the development of the new discipline called "history of religions" or "comparative religion." In this new discipline, the use and function of faith/*xin* clearly changed as the general approach with its nineteenth-century universalist framework differed from the older theological one. Instead of sticking to Christian orthodoxy, it integrated the idea of evolution and combined it with the idea of a human capacity. Its adopters could thus think of a development from primitive to higher forms of religion. So-called "higher forms" such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism were qualified as rational, individual, moral, and of positive influence on personality, culture, and society. By adopting this evolutionist pattern of its time,

60 There exist an impressive number of reprints, especially of Xie Songgao's first book (14th reprint 1949 and at least a 2nd reprint in Hong Kong 1959), but also of Xie Fuya's *Zongjiao zhexue* (2nd ed. 1939 and later reprints).

61 See Jiang's chapter in this volume.

"religious faith" (*zongjiao xinyang*) needed to be substituted neither by reason nor by a secular "new faith" (*xin xinyang*).[62]

(2) However, the use of such a concept of faith or belief did not occur just by chance, or as part and parcel of religious studies in general, but it was adopted and adapted contextually and by particular actors. As the context of the Anti-religious/Anti-Christian Movements of the 1920s suggests, Christian Chinese scholars of religion used the term *xin* in strategic ways in order to open the concept up from its Christian theological core to a much broader one, negotiating religious Christian and more generalized meanings of *xin* in the Chinese contemporary context. Thus universalized, the "transreligious" concept of *xin*/faith was not just Christian-monotheistic, but an assumed general capacity of human beings, allowing its utilizers to build bridges to other non-monotheistic types of religions, or even beyond, and facilitating discursive alliances against the secularist attacks. Similar interpretations had already been developed under similar circumstances in nineteenth-century Europe in the struggles between Christian thinkers and their critics. They were now adopted to China under specific circumstances when Chinese Christians—and other religionists—encountered anti-Christian and anti-religious attacks similar to those Western theology and Christian churches had encountered since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Simultaneously, theories of evolution from lower to higher religions also allowed distance from superstition (*mixin*). Under the circumstances of anti-superstition campaigns—that were just too closely connected to those against religion—this can be understood as a maneuver of dissociation.

(3) The concept of *xin*, however, did not prove to be a sharp enough analytical tool within the intellectual frameworks to gain a fixed position in the outlines of religious studies introductions. Instead, it pops up again and again as a general, obviously unavoidable term that needs to be explained by other more precise concepts. In particular, its semantic core content of denoting an inner dimension or "experience" of religion that goes back to Schleiermacher led the well-known religious philosopher Xie Fuya to prefer religious experience (*zongjiao jingyan*) or religiosity (*zongjiaoxin*) as better terms, thereby replacing *xin* semantically in places where authors like Xie Songgao would have used it.

Altogether, I find a significant convergence in the parallel genealogies of faith/belief and *xin*(*yang*) in the West and China, while local roots of *xin* played a rather minor role in the academic field of history of religions or comparative religion in this time period. The direct effect of these works is difficult

62 Cf. Wu Zhihui 1998 [1923].

to measure, but the many reprints of all the examined textbooks show their continued meaningfulness to readers of later periods. Even today, the concept of *xin*(*yang*) is still widely applied in Chinese religious studies. This chapter therefore demonstrates a trend away not only from indigenous semantics, but also from an originally heavily Christianity-centered idea of faith in Chinese Christian missions to a more generalized and open concept that constitutes one important layer of modern meanings of *xin*, laying the ground for its uses in present academic contexts.

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CHAPTER 19

# "Our Believing in the Three People's Principles Requires a Religious Spirit": *xin*(*yang*) 信仰 and the Political Religion of the Guomindang, 1925–1949

*Thoralf Klein*

## 1 Introduction

In early 1929, the German theologian Karl Hartenstein (1894–1952), visiting China at the head of a delegation from the Basel Missionary Society, attended a Weekly Remembrance (*Zongli jinianzhou* 總理紀念週) in honor of Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866–1925), the defunct leader of the ruling National Party or Guomindang (GMD). Indeed, personally observing the act was one of the main objectives of Hartenstein's journey: in a manner reminiscent of the "Rites Controversy" of the early eighteenth century, an acrimonious debate had arisen within the Basel Mission on whether the Weekly Remembrance was to be treated as a civic ritual or a genuine religious ceremony. In a letter, Hartenstein summed up his impressions as follows:

> What is obvious is the strong psychological, mass psychological effect of the ceremony. Something is *happening*. [The assembly] is like *one* man. One senses the great responsibility, one is carried away by a strong ideal. […] A—shall I say—metaphysical atmosphere permeated the whole ceremony. The great deceased lives again in his faithful followers. At any rate, the border with the religious is incredibly close. One worships, one bows, one—adores the great deceased, the only savior. One listens to—*the* word, the saving gospel. One passionately *believes* in—Man. It's a cult, no doubt. And the danger that among Christians—Christ is forgotten, among heathens—Christ is despised in view of the man who has the key to all the locked gates of the fettered people.[1]

1 Hartenstein to Burckhardt, Meixian, 31 March 1929, BM/A A-3.22/III,7. I have added the emphasis on "believe"; all other emphases are in the original. On the background, see Klein 2002, 485–492.

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Thirteen years later, a young Guomindang official named Wu Xize 吳錫澤 (1915–?) summed up his thoughts on the same subject. Identifying the ideology of the canonized leader, here (as in many other texts) referred to as the Three People's Principles, as the creedal underpinning of China's quest for strength and modernity, he echoed a debate that had found its way to China by way of Meiji 明治 Japan:

> Our country has always lacked a common religion like Western Christianity that could accommodate the hearts of men and be a place of hope for the spirit of our people (although in the past some people suggested that Confucianism should be adopted as state religion, nothing came out of this). Now the Three People's Principles have already become the central thought practiced by the entire people and all parties and factions. For this reason, we really shouldn't hinder the Three People's Principles replacing religion. Of course, the Three People's Principles are a scientific doctrine, they are different from the doctrines of religion. But our believing (*xinyang* 信仰) in the Three People's Principles requires precisely a religious spirit. The meaning of the so-called religionization of belief (*xinyang zongjiaohua* 信仰宗教化), of the so-called replacing religion with the Three People's Principles, is precisely that—to govern the thought of the people in the entire country, to establish [the Three People's Principles] as the center of belief (*xinyang*) of the people in the entire country. Therefore, our worshipping when we perform the Weekly Remembrance [means that] when somebody examines their work, this then simultaneously also [nurtures] their belief (*xinyang*).
>
> 我國既向來缺乏一種普通的宗教如西方的基督教一樣以統攝人心，作為人民精神的寄託所（以前雖有人主張以孔教為國教，但沒有甚麼結果），現在三民主義已成為全國人民以及各黨各派所舉行的中心思想，則我們正不妨以三民主義代替宗教。當然，三民主義是一個科學的主義，與宗教的教義迥乎不同的，但我們之信仰三民主義，確證需要有宗教精神，所謂信仰宗教化，所謂以三民主義的思想來代替宗教，其意思也便在於此——以三民主義來統領全國人民的思想，樹立全國人民信仰的中心。所以，我們的做禮拜，我們在做紀念週的時候，所以自己檢討工作，同時亦致其信仰.[2]

2 Wu Xize 1942, 3. On the contextualization in Meiji-era intellectual debates, see the contribution of Hans-Martin Krämer to this volume.

In a sense, both texts are outliers: one coming from a foreign observer, the other going beyond ordinary Guomindang parlance in its advocacy of a religious spirit. But they do shed light on how the concept of belief (denoted by the words *xin* 信 or *xinyang* 信仰) was an important aspect of GMD ideology and political mobilization. This is an important aspect of Nationalist rule; however, it has so far received little scholarly attention. Rebecca Nedostup's ground-breaking work on the religious policy of the GMD, and especially her concept of different "affective regimes," imply that the Party had a set of basic tenets around which it sought to build new political and social rituals competing with religious practices.[3] She also maintains that while the Party was grappling with granting the freedom of religious belief (*xin jiao zhi ziyou* 信教之自由, a phrase also adopted from Meiji Japan) while simultaneously attempting to eradicate "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信), the Nationalist regime was strictly secular.[4] Other scholars have examined the personality cults of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石, 1888–1975) and, more recently, Wang Jingwei 汪精衛 (1883–1944), paying attention to the rhetoric, rituals and symbols that formed an integral part of these.[5] In any case, there is no denying that the GMD used *xin*(*yang*) not only to describe parts of the religious field of China which it meant to reorder,[6] but also to denote the response it expected from party members, if not the entire population, to its own core tenets. Thus, the Nationalist terminology and rhetoric surrounding belief must be taken seriously and made sense of. To add to our understanding of the Nationalist regime by doing so is the aim of this essay.

Despite its weaknesses, some of which I will discuss below, Guomindang rule can be called China's first totalitarian regime in the sense that the party not only was guided by Sun Yat-sen's ideology (which I will discuss in more detail later), but also aimed for his ideas to permeate all aspects of the nation's political, social and cultural life. This started with Sun himself. The final version of Sun's *Three People's Principles*, delivered as a lecture series in 1924, famously opens with a definition of "ideology-as-belief" and discusses its wider implications, employing the term *xinyang* no less than five times:

3 Nedostup 2009, 228–229.

4 Ibid., 38–42; 272, 279. Cf. also Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 123–139.

5 Harrison 2000, 207–239; Chen Yunqian 2009, esp. 24–40; Musgrave 2007; Wang Liping 1996; Taylor 2006; Taylor 2015; Taylor 2019; Du Yue 2019.

6 On the religious field in China and its political overtones, see Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 9–11.

> Gentlemen: Today I've come to talk to everyone about the Three People's Principles. What are the Three People's Principles? To give the simplest definition, the Three People's Principles are the Principles of Saving the Nation. What is a principle (*zhuyi* 主義)? A principle is an idea, a belief (*xinyang*) and a power. The general [attitude] of humanity towards an issue is that they will first study its central principles, [so] ideas emerge first; when the ideas are thoroughly known, belief (*xinyang*) arises; when there is belief (*xinyang*), it generates power. Therefore, a principle first proceeds from ideas and only then reaches belief (*xinyang*); next it generates power out of belief (*xinyang*); afterwards it becomes firmly established.
>
> 諸君：今天來同大家講三民主義。甚麼是三民主義呢？用最簡單的定義說，三民主義就是救國主義。甚麼是主義呢？主義就是一種思想，一種信仰和一種力量。大凡人類對於一件事，研究當中的道理，最先發生思想；思想貫通以後，便起信仰，有了信仰，就生出力量。所以主義先由思想再到信仰，次由信仰生出力量，然後完全成立。[7]

While Sun occasionally acknowledged religious belief as a phenomenon *sui generis* that might actually be helpful to maintaining national cohesion,[8] he was far more interested in using the ideological dimension of *xinyang* for the purpose of political mobilization. After Sun's death, party leaders like Chen Guofu 陳果夫 (1892–1951) and Wang Jingwei adopted a similar rhetoric, arguing that belief was a source of strength and unity.[9] Neither Sun nor his successors offered any precise definition of what they understood by the term *xin*(*yang*), but their usage (as well as Wu Xize's and, implicitly, Hartenstein's) points to the overlap and intermingling between the political and the religious that political theorists have sought to grasp with the help of, among others, the concept of political religion. It is to this relationship between the political and the religious that we must first turn.

7 Sun Zongshan 1986b [1924], 184.

8 In this case, Sun refers to Arabs and Jews, see ibid., 187–188.

9 Nedostup 2009, 112, 243, 270.

## 2 Belief and the Concept of Political Religion

Unlike other contributions to this volume, the present essay does not take its starting point from a sampling of the various semantic uses of *xin* and its derivatives, most notably the modern, reinforced version *xinyang*, in GMD texts. Of course, party texts use *xin* in its everyday sense of trusting that what somebody else says is true or of being trustworthy. A random example comes from a short passage in Sun Yatsen's 1917 *Doctrine of Sun Wen* (*Sun Wen xueshuo* 孫文學說), underlining the author's attempt at convincing his readers intellectually: "Perhaps there are still people out there who do not believe (*xin*) [my argument]; I ask them to take a look at reforms in Siam" (或猶不信者，請觀於暹羅之維新).[10] In a poem composed for the inauguration of the Huangpu 黃埔 Military Academy in 1924 (which later became the Party and national anthem), Sun exhorted the soldiers: "... pledge hard work, pledge courage, you must be trustworthy, you must be loyal" (矢勤矢勇必信必忠).[11] A more systematic discussion appears in a 1941 text by an author hiding behind the pseudonym Yu Gong 愚公 ("the Foolish Old Man"), who distinguished three kinds of trust: public confidence (*gongxin* 公信), mutual confidence (*huxin* 互信) and self-confidence (*zixin* 自信). And he admonished his audience, whom he addressed as "comrades" (*tongzhi* 同志) to "trust in themselves and trust others, love themselves and love others" (自信信人，自愛愛人).[12] Such usage suggests that the GMD acknowledged trust/confidence and trustworthiness (both rendered as *xin*) as key components of its moral and ideological value system. Even *xinyang* could occasionally take on this meaning; it was Sun's term of choice as he was searching for a translation for the term "confidence" in the Chinese version of his pamphlet *The International Development of China*, first published in English in 1920.[13]

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10 Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 202.

11 Text available, among others, from https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/中華民國國歌 (accessed 6 June 2017).

12 Yu Gong 1941, 9.

13 Thus, "the confidence of the Chinese people must be secured in order to gain their coöperation and enthusiastic support" in Sun Yat-sen 1920, v, becomes "*bixu she fa de Zhongguo renmin zhi xinyang* 必須設法得中國人民之信仰" in Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 253; this is closely followed by a similar use of the terms confidence vs. *xinyang* in both versions. The preface to the Chinese version is dated on the tenth anniversary of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, 10 October 1921.

Most of the time, however, *xinyang* was used in GMD writings and documents in two ways: it could either denote belief in one of the organized religions of China and was thus an equivalent of *xin jiao* 信教. More frequently, and most crucially for this essay, it referred to the beliefs held within the political universe of the Guomindang itself. It is the latter aspect which interests us here, and understanding it requires a move beyond a mere semantic analysis of *xin*, *xinyang*, and other derivatives of *xin* for three reasons: firstly, the language and rhetoric of belief were not confined to this one term; secondly, the term itself is insufficient in describing the object of belief; and thirdly, it one-sidedly emphasizes the intellectual dimension of believing. These objections already imply that I am proceeding from a working definition of belief which needs to be spelled out. However, such a definition only makes sense when contextualized within a broader conceptual framework mapping the meeting ground between the political and the religious. In what follows, the concept of political religion will serve that purpose.

Political religion is a theoretical concept rooted in a specific understanding of the trajectory of European modernity since the Middle Ages,[14] a modernity which from the nineteenth century onwards made an impact in other parts of the world as well, not least China, usually through complex processes of adaptation and interaction with preexisting concepts rather than through linear and unidirectional diffusion. The American and French Revolutions of the late eighteenth century, in particular, ushered in two important transitions: they transferred symbols from the religious to the political sphere, and they desacralized the monarchy. At the same time, newly emerging philosophies of history and political theories (e.g., by Hegel, Comte, and Marx) borrowed heavily from theology. The processes of secularization and rationalization that they underwrote therefore remained incomplete; indeed, the dawn of the age of mass politics around 1890 offered a fertile ground for theories, symbols and practices drawn from religion. In an age of globalization in which all forms of politics (not just democratic but also dictatorial ones), had to be justified with a view to a public sphere,[15] these theories, symbols and practices could serve as vehicles to legitimize the rule of a particular ideology, person, or political organization. Both communism and fascism drew on these sources, and their appeal was reinforced through the cult of the nation during the First World

14 A very useful introduction to the historical context, genealogy and limits of the concept is Musiedlak 2010, to which much of the following is indebted. See also Gentile 2006 and, recently, Müller 2017, 16–18.

15 Cf. Bendix 1978, especially 8.

War, which thus paved the way for the communist and fascist dictatorships of the 1920s to 1940s and beyond.

The concept of political religion is, however, hotly contested—not only because of its association with the theory of totalitarianism, but because it remains an open question if and to what extent religious concepts can be applied to a political sphere that, in the vast majority of cases, defined itself explicitly and avowedly as secular.[16] The point is, however, not to argue that religion (which is a heterogeneous phenomenon to begin with) can be simply equated with political ideologies and the movements they shape and vice versa. Rather, introducing the concept of religion to describe the field of politics permits a comprehensive understanding of both ideological and practical aspects of radical political movements and regimes. Most importantly, it addresses the expectations of thorough individual commitment which such movements and regimes habitually communicated to their followers—a commitment that was meant to touch the whole person rather than just the intellect, to engender a sense of purpose and hope for the future, and to nurture a sense of self-sacrifice in the name of higher-order principles.

At the core of political religion thus lies a secular eschatology. This includes, but is broader than, what Roger Griffin has called the "palingenetic myth," by which term he understands the idea of a thorough and dramatic renewal or rebirth after a period of crisis.[17] Historically, this specific brand of eschatology has aimed at transforming society in the interest of a specific class (in communism, the proletariat) or by creating a purportedly united and strong nation (in fascism). On the way to realizing this goal, as ideologues and leaders postulated, the resistance of adverse groups and forces (dominant classes, political opponents or seemingly "alien" groups) must be overcome.[18] This was presented as a necessity as well as a foregone conclusion, because the process of attaining the overarching political and social goals was presented as driven by objective (and therefore irresistible) laws and forces that transcended individual agency and of which collective action was merely the executor, be they the "laws of nature" or those arguably governing the development of social formations. At the same time that Sun Yat-sen was developing his Three People's Principles, the line between transcendence and immanence became blurred

16 See, among others, Maier 2007, Roberts 2009, Baumeister 2014 and Müller 2017, 65–69. On China, see Klein 2014, 52–55; the Nationalist era is covered in Nedostup 2007, 36–37.

17 Griffin 2013 [1991], 32–36. According to Griffin, this type of myth can be found in non-political contexts, too. Note that ibid., 29–31, Griffin rejects the concept of political religion.

18 For this reason, Voegelin 1993 [1938], 40, speaks of the "apocalyptic dynamics" of political religions.

in much of the "Western" literature of the 1920s, including but not limited to communist and fascist writings.[19] In this sense, both Communists and Fascists offered a redemption of sorts in striving towards the utopian end goal of a perfect, if secular and inner-worldly state that constituted, to borrow Francis Fukuyama's term, an "end of history": having reached this ideal state, further progression was neither desirable, nor indeed possible, even if life would continue to go on.[20]

It is in this broader context that I will situate my understanding of belief. In another departure from the general practice in this volume, I will be using the term "belief" rather than "faith" as a translation of *xin*(*yang*) throughout the essay (except where I rely on translations by others). This has partly pragmatic reasons, as it allows the translation of *xin*(*yang*) as a noun ("belief") and verb ("believe") containing the same word stem, with the aim of preserving the unity of morphology and semantics. More importantly, "belief" better captures the exclusively inner-worldly character of political religions, setting them apart from the so-called "faith religions" and their transcendental dimension.[21] In contrast to Wilfred Cantwell Smith, I take belief to denote more than an intellectual activity.[22] I do, however, find his concept of faith as *engagement* immensely helpful and have adapted it for my own definition of belief. At the same time, I acknowledge that political religions differ considerably from religions that are predominantly geared towards doing, such as Chinese popular religion: in the latter, religious activities are grounded in a set of basic postulates but are comparatively independent of these.[23] Within political religions, belief plays an avowedly central role and will be understood in what follows as a phenomenon that involves, or is aimed at involving, people on a number of levels: intellectually as a set of propositions held to be true, emotionally as a deep attachment to a cause and a readiness to exert oneself on its behalf, and practically as a translation of knowledge into activities, as well as a moral code

19 Gumbrecht 1997, 281–291; on communism and fascism see ibid., 281–283.

20 On the concept and its rootedness in the Hegelian and Marxian philosophies of history, see Fukuyama 1992, xi–xxiii, 57–69; Duara 1995, 85–87, 110.

21 On the basis of a keyword search in the draft manuscript version of this volume, I have concluded that most chapters use both "faith" and "belief" interchangeably, though not always with equal frequency. Of those contributions that show a preference (explicitly or implicitly), five opt for "faith" and two (including this chapter) for "belief." In particular, Gerda Wielander, whose chapter covers similar ground to this one, has opted to translate *xinyang* as "faith."

22 See Smith 1979, 6–16, on the relationship between faith and belief; for an etymology of the word "belief," see ibid., 105–127.

23 See the discussion of belief in religiosity in Chau 2006, 59–77; cf. also Chau 2011 and Paper 1995, 30, 265 and 271. Also note Adam Chau's contribution to this volume.

of conduct. As with "faith religions," belief is held individually in political religions, but at the same time it has a social dimension inasmuch as communities form around it.[24] Where the content of belief (i.e., the propositions held to be true), is "creedal,"[25] it is defined not by the believers themselves, but by religious institutions or—as in our case—political organizations, either directly or by way of government institutions. It is the creedal aspect which secures the place of ideology within the universe of political religions, as it defines the content of what is prescribed as belief, commands the loyalty of individuals, while at the same time enhancing group identity. On the other hand, the secular eschatology emanating from ideological texts has rarely been sufficient to inspire political action or even loyalty by itself: it has had to be translated into symbols and rituals to inculcate loyalty and trigger responses to the ideological message from among adherents. Inasmuch as belief is both expressed and engendered not only by merely accepting the fundamental ideological propositions as true, but also through the deployment of such objects and actions, it has a palpably performative component.[26]

In its combination of ideology, belief and practice, the GMD fits the above definition perfectly. Although it was by no means the first to sacralize political issues in China—this happened even before the downfall of the Qing 清 monarchy (1644–1911)—, it has been rightly credited with introducing a vocabulary of belief into the political realm.[27] In the absence of any precise definition of belief by Guomindang authors, this essay will approach the issue in a roundabout way: firstly, by examining the vocabulary and rhetoric surrounding belief in Nationalist party and government texts, including both published and unpublished materials. As will be shown, the use of religious language in GMD texts drew on a variety of traditions. Secondly, by looking at the "creedal" dimension of belief as found in the authoritative corpus of texts penned by Sun Yat-sen. Thirdly, by analyzing the relationship between *xin*(*yang*) and the performative practice of political rituals, in particular the Weekly Remembrance for Sun Yat-sen. I argue that it is the combination of belief and practice that, despite some inbuilt contradictions, made GMD ideology a fully-fledged political religion. I will, however, point to the Nationalists' weaknesses in monitoring belief through practice.

24 See Day 2011, 51–55.

25 I borrow the term from Day and Lynch 2013, 200, where it is offered without any further explanation.

26 Cf. Day 2011, 194.

27 Nedostup 2007, 29. For a more in-depth discussion, see Klein 2014, 55–57.

## 3 The Religious Lexicon of the Guomindang

There can be no doubt that the concept of belief played a key role in GMD thinking. This began with the term *xinyang* itself. During the first Weekly Remembrance of the party central in 1927, the senior party leader Hu Hanmin 胡漢民 (1879–1936) explained the importance of belief as follows:

> The most fundamental issue within the Party is that each party member must thoroughly understand the Three People's Principles and absolutely believe (*juedui de xinyang* 絕對的信仰) in them. If the understanding of the Party doctrine is not clear, and the belief insufficient, we can hardly hope he will be a good party member. [...] We know that not only must we not be content with worshipping the Premier's [zongli 總理, Sun's honorific title at the time] strategies and behavior during his lifetime; [also] the Premier's Three People's Principles are the greatest force and have the broadest usefulness. In all the world there is no other ideology that is greater and broader than they. We must firmly believe (*xinyang*) in them, we must not have the slightest doubt.
>
> 黨裏面最根本的事，是黨員個個對於三民主義，徹底的認識，絕對的信仰。如果對於黨義認識不清，信仰不足的，便難望他做一個忠實的黨員了。[...] 我們知道，我們不但應當崇拜 總理，生平的策略和行止而已，總理的三民主義，力量最大，效用最廣，舉世沒有第二個主義，更大更廣於他的，我們要堅確的信仰，不能有半點懷疑 ...[28]

In this passage, Hu comes as close as possible to defining belief. Firstly, he emphasizes the connection of the Party ideology and of belief in it. On the one hand, he juxtaposes it with mere "worshipping" (*chongbai* 崇拜, possibly a slur at practices of popular religion). Secondly, he orientates his audience towards the late party chief's teaching, even more than his person, as the object of this belief. And finally, he defines the propositional element of belief as the absence of doubt.

At the same time, *xin*(*yang*) reveals its meaning only in conjunction with other terms that GMD rhetoric adopted from various religious traditions. Some of these terms had a specifically Christian connotation. Especially in the early years before the completion of the Northern Expedition (1926–1928), the terminology was by no means clear. An interesting example comes from an article published in June 1925 in the journal *Zhongguo junren* 中國軍人: the author, a certain Hong Yun 洪筠, credits Marx with having created the "Bible of the

28 Hu Hanmin 1927, 36–37.

proletariat" (*wuchanjieji Shengjing* 無產階級聖經), while Sun Yat-sen is said to have produced a "classic" (*jingdian* 經典).[29] What this differentiation means is not easy to grasp; if it is meant as reflecting a symbolic cultural hierarchy, then it is most likely a downplaying of Sun Yat-sen by a communist critic and reflects tensions within the Nationalist-Communist united front as it existed between 1923 and 1927.

After Chiang Kai-shek purged the GMD from its communist members following the blow dealt to communist labor organizations in Shanghai 上海 on 12 April 1927, the application of Christian terms to Sun's ideology became more regular. His doctrine was now commonly referred to as "gospel" (*fuyin* 福音). For example, in November 1928 the Jiangsu provincial government issued a number of slogans on the occasion of Sun's upcoming birthday; the second of these ran: "The Premier's birthday is a gospel second to none of obtaining the salvation (*de jiu* 得救) of humanity" (總理誕辰，是人類得救的無二福音).[30] The presence of Christian terminology is by no means surprising. Christianity, and especially Protestantism, had long been viewed in East Asia as *the* paradigmatic religion, which reformers from other traditions sought to emulate.[31] Besides, not only was the late party chief a Protestant Christian, if perhaps a less-than-orthodox one, and believed his mission to have been divinely inspired.[32] Other GMD leaders were also steeped in the Christian faith or converted to it, most importantly Chiang Kai-shek, who succeeded Sun to the paramountcy and, after a preparatory period of three years, was baptized in 1930. Since Chiang's diaries became available at the Hoover Institution, scholars have revised their understanding of his Christian faith, accepting it as genuine, if not as the only influence on his thinking and decision-making. For Chiang—as was probably true of most of the Christian top brass within the GMD—believing in the Three People's Principles and in Christianity was perfectly compatible:

> The Three-People's Principle [sic!] is the faith of my political career; the Christian teaching is the only faith in my spiritual life. I urge myself to follow Jesus as the model to help the people and the world, without falling lax for any moment of my life.[33]

29 Hong Yun 1925, 2.

30 "Zongli danchen jinian biaoyu" 1928, 55.

31 See Nedostup 2009, 9, as well as the introduction to Hans-Martin Krämer's chapter in this volume.

32 Wells 2001, 102–112.

33 Chiang Kai-shek, diary entry, 24 October 1930, cited in Bae Kyounghan 2009, 4. I have no access to the original, so can only assume that the text has *xinyang* to mean "faith." Peter Chen-main Wang 2014, esp. 207, offers a balanced assessment of Chiang's Christian belief.

This compatibility could also work the other way round: in his 1940 history of Chinese Christianity, the eminent church historian Wang Zhixin 王治心 (1881–1968) took a slightly different approach to the same topic. Citing a letter written by Sun Yat-sen during his captivity in London in 1896, he not only asserted Sun's Christian belief (*xinyang*), but he also paralleled the Three People's Principles (*Sanminzhuyi* 三民主義) with the "Jesus Principles" (*Yesuzhuyi* 耶穌主義), which would save the world. The three principles of "Peoplehood," People's Power and People's Livelihood, which will be discussed in more detail below, were portrayed as somehow corresponding with the Christian concepts of freedom, equality and universal love (*bo'ai* 博愛).[34] At the same time, the use of Christian terminology in Party writings also confirms the influence of Christianity not only on other religions, but also on secular ideologies such as communism.[35]

While Christian vocabulary thus strongly informed the Nationalists' language of belief, its importance should not be overstated. A number of prominent Party leaders such as Lin Sen 林森 (1868–1953), Dai Jitao 戴季陶 (1891–1949), and Ju Zheng 居正 (1876–1951) were active Buddhists, while sharing with other strands within the GMD a reverence for science and a disdain for "superstition."[36] And much as their Christian counterparts, some Buddhist leaders at least were keen on aligning themselves to the new regime. Despite their fragile relationship with a Nationalist regime that sought to regulate and monitor control Buddhist religious activities, they accepted a distinction between political and religious beliefs while at the same time trying to reconcile both: in a speech given in 1931 at Henan 河南 University, Venerable Master Taixu 太虛大師 (1890–1947), argued that "Buddhist learning" (*Foxue* 佛學) and the Three People's Principles were "in complete harmony" (*bingxing bubei* 並行不悖).[37] In another address, delivered at the symbolic space of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Changzhou 常州 in 1936, the eminent Buddhist reformer accepted that "the Chinese National Party has become the center of the political belief of the Chinese masses" (中國國民黨成為中國民眾的政治信仰中心).[38] Four years later, however, as a guest speaker at a Weekly Remembrance held by Yunnan 雲南 University, he talked about belief in Buddhism, Christianity, and even communism, yet did not use the terms *xin* or *xinyang* with regard to GMD ideology.[39]

34 Wang Zhixin 1998 [1940], 262–265.

35 See Ryklin 2008, 31–33; Kenzler 2014 provides an interesting case study.

36 See Nedostup 2009, 17.

37 Taixu 1931, 96. For the context see Nedostup 2009, 43–53, 280–281.

38 See Taixu 2011 [1936].

39 Taixu 1940, 161–162. For Taixu's rapprochement with the GMD, see Ritzinger 2017, 118–120.

Apart from the overtly Christian word *fuyin*, the terms that made up the Nationalists' language of belief must thus be viewed against a broader religious background. One of these terms was *xintu* 信徒, which, combining the words for "believe" and "be on foot," can be translated as "believer" as well as "follower." It was used, for example, in a petition by eight students from Guangdong 廣東 University, who asked the National Government, then still based in Guangzhou 廣州, for passports to travel to the upper reaches of the West River (Xijiang 西江), which in all likelihood meant Guangxi 廣西 province. Deploying various derivatives of *xin*, they explained:

> We humble students are all believers (*xintu*) in Sunyatsenism (*Sunwenzhuyi* 孫文主義), and deeply believe (*shenxin* 深信) that in order to complete the National Revolution, one must first make the masses understand Sunyatsenism; after that, we can all together unite under the banner of the blue sky and white sun [the Party flag] and exert ourselves in the struggle.
>
> 竊生等皆孫文主義之信徒，深信欲完成國民革命，必須先使民眾了解孫文主義，然後能共同集中於青天白日旗幟之下，努力奮鬥.[40]

With its obvious etymological connections to *xin*, *xintu* worked two ways: it construed a community of followers and related it to the late Party leader. As the example shows, this could manifest itself bottom-up from the party rank and file, but it was equally exploited top-down by the leadership. In Christian circles, *xintu* figured as a specifically Protestant term that was subsequently transferred to the followers of Sun Yat-sen.[41] But the word also has Buddhist overtones. In his speeches, Taixu often uses the term for the adherents of Buddhism, but on at least one occasion he also made a remark about "the followers (*xintu*) of Mr. Sun" (*Zhongshan xiansheng zhi xintu* 中山先生之信徒).[42]

The term that perhaps had the most varied connotations and the broadest appeal was *jiu* 救, to save. In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries and Chinese clergy introduced the idea of (individual) salvation through belief (e.g., *xin ze de jiu* 信則得救).[43] But long before that, Buddhists used the word in various combinations (such as *jiushi* 救世, "saving the world" or

40 Lu Liansheng 盧連生, Wu Keji 吳克繼, and Guo Yuanzhao 郭元詔 to National Government, 26 Jan. 1926, ZDELD, 19, Guangzhou Guomin Zhengfu 廣州國民政府, 417.

41 Wang Zhixin 1998 [1940], 259. For the Protestant context, see Chloë Starr's contribution in this volume.

42 Taixu 2011 [1936]. For the term *Fojiao xintu* 佛教信徒, which was but one way of his referring to Buddhists, see Taixu 1928, 66, and Taixu 1935, 113.

43 See Chloë Starr's contribution to this volume.

*jiuji* 救濟, "providing relief") to describe the way of salvation from suffering.[44] Around 1900, the binome *jiuguo* 救國 (national salvation or literally, "saving the state/country") came to describe the overcoming of China's national crisis, operating in conjunction with other terms such as the "carving up" (*guafen* 瓜分) of China's territory or the pressing question about the "existence or downfall" (*cunwang* 存亡) of the Chinese nation.[45] *Jiu* was thus transferred to the realm of secular eschatology, expressing the hope in a palingenetic national renewal. It was in this sense that Sun Yat-sen had, in the opening passage of his *Three People's Principles*, defined his ideology as a "doctrine to save the nation," referring to the liberation of China from foreign imperialism and domestic warlordism. After the Japanese invasion of 1931, *jiuguo* was widely used to mobilize the population for the support of occupied Manchuria.[46] Religious organizations and leaders were quick to emphasize that their religions could make an important contribution to the national cause.[47] Occasionally, Party texts even extended the meaning of *jiu* beyond the confines of the Chinese nation. For example, an article in the magazine *Yi tiao xin* 一條心 from 1939 exhorted its readers to "implement the Three People's Principles, which will save China and save the world" (實現救中國救世界的三民主義).[48] This seems to echo the formula of *jiuguo-jiushi* appearing, with clear political overtones, in Taixu's speeches as early as the 1920s; whereas the Christian Wang Zhixin distinguished between the Three People's Principles, which would save the country (*jiuguo*), and Christianity, which would save the world (*jiushi*).[49]

Finally, Confucianism also had a part to play in the GMD rhetoric of belief, even though it is not a religion in the strict sense of the term and is best described, in the apt definition by Joachim Gentz, as a "specific mixture of religious practice, religious criticism and religious politics."[50] How deeply rooted in Confucianism Sun Yat-sen actually was is a matter of debate, but he explicitly drew on Ruist texts and terminology, as will be shown below.[51] Especially after the GMD reintroduced the cult of Confucius as part of the New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong 新生活運動) in the mid-1930s, Party

44 *Foguang da cidian*, 4593–4594.
45 Rankin 2002, 339–340.
46 See, for example, Mitter 2000, 159–168.
47 See Tarocco 2007, 84, on the Buddhist case.
48 Wu Wangji 1939, 1. See also note 31, above.
49 Taixu 1923, 35; id. 1926, 58; Wang Zhixin 1998 [1940], 265.
50 Gentz 2009, 246.
51 Sun's relationship with Confucianism is discussed in Wells 2001, 113–121; see also Chang and Gordon 1991, 125–130.

leaders and other public figures expounded Sun's dictum "in order to make revolution, one must first transform the heart" (*geming xian gexin* 革命先革心).[52] For example, in 1939 the then president of China's Supreme Court, Jiao Yitang 焦易堂 (1880–1950), delivered a speech on this very theme, followed by another on "to transform the heart, one must make one's intentions sincere" (*gexin yao chengyi* 革心要誠意).[53] This most explicitly echoes the language of the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), where it says in the opening chapter: "Those who want to make their hearts correct first make their intentions sincere" (欲正其心，先誠其意).[54] As this near-literal quotation demonstrates, GMD leaders harked back to a time-honored concept of political ordering through self-cultivation. China's Confucian past could occasionally be mixed with borrowings from other traditions. Already in a report delivered during a weekly remembrance in June 1927, Ye Chucang 葉楚傖 (1887–1946), then a leading party official in Shanghai, argued that in the past every aspiring official had to "have received the baptism of Confucius and Mencius" (*shou Kong Meng zhi xili* 受孔孟之洗禮), i.e. studied the Confucian classics and passed the state examinations; now the GMD was doing the same in demanding that candidates for the civil service should "have received the Guomindang's baptism," i.e. understood the writings of Sun Yat-sen.[55]

Drawn from multiple and diverse traditions, the above lexicon created a web of meanings surrounding the semantics of belief within and beyond the GMD. *Fuyin* sacralized Sun Yat-sen's teachings and elevated it beyond the status of an ordinary philosophy, while *xintu* construed a community of believers. *Jiuguo-jiushi* defined an object of revolutionary activism that carried within it the idea of an "end of history." References to Confucian self-cultivation were undoubtedly meant to be supportive of revolutionary mobilization and the translation of belief into action, which we will examine in more detail in the last part of this essay. The key term *xinyang* defined a type of belief that belonged to the political realm but was seen as both akin to and compatible with religious belief. It also related the individual followers of Nationalist ideology to the late Party leader and, more importantly, to his teachings. It is the latter which defined the creedal belief that the GMD sought to inculcate in its members, the bureaucracy and the political and cultural elite, and its

52 See, for example, Jiang Zhongzheng [i.e., Chiang Kai-shek] 2018 [1934]; Taixu 2011 [1936]. For the political context, see Chung 2000, 161–165; Nedostup 2007, 42–44 and 49–51.

53 Jiao Yitang 1992 [1939], 182.

54 The Chinese text can be found in Legge 1861, 222. Author's translation.

55 "Ye weiyuan zhengzhi baogao" 1927, 4.

contents (and hence the contents of belief) will be discussed in detail in the following section.

## 4 Creedal Belief: the Ideology of Sun Yat-sen

From the above examples, it should have become clear already that *xin*(*yang*) was not primarily directed towards the person of Sun Yat-sen, although his exemplary conduct "during the days when the Premier was in the world" (*yu Zongli zai shi zhi ri* 于總理在世之日)[56] remained an important focal point, as we shall see later. However, the actual focus of *xin*(*yang*) was his ideology. This was, as we have already seen, frequently referred to as the Three People's Principles; but since the publication bearing that title was only part of a larger corpus of texts authored by the late Premier that the GMD wanted remembered, it is more precise to call them "bequeathed teachings" (*yijiao* 遺教), an expression also frequently found in Party texts. Already during Sun's mortal agony in Beijing in the spring of 1925, the Party leadership took steps to canonize his writings. The foundational text for exploring what may be defined as the Party's creed therefore actually is Sun Yat-sen's "Last Will and Testament" (*Zongli yishu* 總理遺屬). This is a document either dictated by the dying leader himself or drafted by his long-time associate Wang Jingwei, whose role was then downplayed in the official record to that of note-taker (*bijizhe* 筆記者). It was signed by Sun on his deathbed, with nine party grandees acting as official witnesses and signatories, and published immediately after his death.[57] Its contribution to GMD rule can hardly be overstated: it went on public display and was read at the opening of party and government meetings as well as during the Weekly Remembrance. Being able to recite the text by heart was seen within the GMD as a token of loyalty to the late party leader.[58] The text itself highlights Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary merits and exhorts party members to accomplish the as yet unfinished revolution. Religious language, including any reference to *xin*(*yang*), is conspicuously absent. But inasmuch as the Premier's

56 GMD, Central Executive Committee (hereafter: CEC), *Tonggao di 147 hao* 通告第一四七號, ZDELD, 230, *Lu-Haijun Da Yuanshuai Dabenying* 陸海軍大元帥大本營, 37.

57 Sun Zhongshan 1986c [1925], 639–640. Among the witnesses were Song Ziwen 宋子文 (1894–1971), his (and Sun's) brother-in-law Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙 (1881–1967), the subsequent conservative interpreter of Sun's writings Dai Jitao and Sun's own son Sun Ke 孫科 (1891–1973). Quotes in the text are taken from Schoppa 2003, 69–70, who argues in favor of Wang Jingwei's authorship, as does Bergère 1998, 405. According to her, Sun's authorship is a later GMD tradition, which is accepted by Wang Liping 1996.

58 Chen Yunqian 2005, 73–74.

teachings were at the core of *xin*(*yang*), his political testament holds the key to understanding to what the content of belief was meant to be. Sun specifically exhorts his "comrades" (*tongzhi* 同志) to "be guided by my writings" and explicitly mentions four of these, which will be discussed below. As there exist good introductions to Sun's political ideology and writings,[59] this discussion can be brief and limit itself to the most immediately relevant points.

The list is headed by the *Plan for National Reconstruction* (*Jianguo fanglüe* 建國方略), published in 1921. This is the longest and most heterogeneous of the four texts and strings together three independently published writings, now presented as a coherent program of China's psychological, economic and social reconstruction. Of these, the opening section, *The Doctrine of Sun Wen* (*Sun Wen xueshuo* 孫文學說, published in Chinese in 1917 and in English as *Memoirs of a Chinese Revolutionary* a year later), had the strongest long-term import. In what is at heart a philosophical treatise, Sun Yat-sen uses a number of examples (money, nutrition, Chinese writing and others) to prove that "action is easy and knowledge is difficult" (*xing yi zhi nan* 行易知難), explicitly reversing a famous maxim by the neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529). According to Sun, following Wang's ideas was largely responsible for the weaknesses of the early Republic, as it had paralyzed the revolutionaries, resulting in a political chaos that could only be resolved through a wholesale reconstruction of China. On the other hand, he sees the relationship between knowledge and action as an evolutionary process in human history; thus, in the age of science, it is now possible to comprehend the fundamental principles.[60] Even so, Sun insists that this should not stop the Chinese from acting without knowledge in order to accomplish the "way of saving the country" (*jiu guo zhi dao* 救國之道).[61] This is partly because he accepted intellectual inequality as a matter of fact. In *The Doctrine of Sun Wen*, the author divides the population into three classes: "inventors" (*famingjia* 發明家) who create and develop ideas, "propagators" (*guchuijia* 鼓吹家) who imitate and promote the inventors' ideas, and "executors" (*shixingjia* 實行家) who lack knowledge but strive to put the ideas into practice. With minimal alteration, this taxonomy made its way into *The Three People's Principles* a few years later.[62] The key to action "lies completely

59 For a more elaborate introduction to these texts, as well as their contexts, I recommend Wells 2001, Bergère 1998, 352–394, and Chang and Gordon 1991.

60 Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 157–159 and 197–204; cf. Sun Yat-sen 1918, 5–12 and 106–118. The classic analysis of the relationship between knowledge and action since Wang Yangming is Nivison 1953, see 137–138 on Sun Yat-sen.

61 Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1921], 222–225, the quotation is on p. 225.

62 Ibid., 201 and 203. For the later version, cf. Sun Zhongshan 1986b [1924], 298 and 323; the term for "propagators" was changed to the more socialist-sounding *xuanchuanjia* 宣傳家.

with those who know and awaken later [i.e., the propagators] not being moved themselves in order to move others" (全在後知後覺者之不自感以感人而已).[63] *The Doctrine of Sun Wen* is complemented by two more sections: *The International Development of China*, briefly mentioned above, is a tiresomely detailed scheme for developing China's infrastructure and industry with the help of foreign capital originally published in English;[64] the final part, a plan for reorganizing the political structure, was quickly superseded by new directions in Sun's thinking.

The remainder of the list in Sun's "Last Will and Testament" consists of three documents issued in 1924 and appearing in non-chronological order: thus, the *Fundamentals of National Reconstruction* (*Jianguo dagang* 建國大綱), adopted by the National Government on 12 April of that year, follow in second place.[65] The shortest and most condensed of the four texts, it outlines the Guomindang's planned seizure of power and the restructuring of the state according to Sun's constitutional ideas. This would take the form of a staged approach to revolutionary government, beginning with a period of military dictatorship to eliminate domestic opposition and propagate Nationalist ideology. As soon as all provinces were pacified, Party rule would move on to the next stage of political tutelage (*xunzheng* 訓政). The GMD would dispatch trained personnel qualified through exams to each district to prepare the population for self-rule, which would start at the local level. Attaining self-rule was thus a gradual process; once it had been completed all across China, the third phase of constitutional government would be implemented at the national level. By creating state institutions based on the division of five powers (legislative, executive and judicative power from European constitutional theory, examination and control from the Chinese bureaucratic tradition), working out a constitution on the same basis and holding national elections on the day of its promulgation, China would reach the end goal of its revolutionary transformation. This essay does not provide the space to discuss the weaknesses of this revolutionary roadmap; what matters in its context is that the canonical texts authored by Sun Yat-sen, or at least promulgated in his name, include

63 Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 203. Interestingly, the same phrase is translated in the official English version as follows: "It will depend entirely on the *faith* of the disciples and followers in their forerunners the pioneers, and the approval of their contemporaries." Sun Yat-sen 1918, 116 (emphasis added).

64 Sun Yat-sen 1920 is the first book edition, based on a series of articles in the periodical *Far Eastern Review* (*Yuandong shibao* 遠東時報) in 1919. For the Chinese version, see Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 247–411.

65 Sun Yat-sen 1953 [1924], 9–16.

a detailed action plan of how to transform the Chinese state according to his ideals.

Elaborating on two earlier texts under the same title penned in 1905 and 1919 respectively, *The Three People's Principles*, third on the list, is Sun Yat-sen's most lengthy and coherent exposition of his political doctrine. The 1924 version takes the form of a series of lectures delivered between January and August of that year, although the cycle remained incomplete. The first of the three principles is that of nationalism or, if one wishes to retain the pun on *min* inherent in all of them, "Principle of Peoplehood" (*minzuzhuyi* 民族主義). This picks up the rhetoric of national crisis and extinction prevalent in political discourse since the turn of the century. Sun identifies three threats to China's existence. Two of these, the political and economic intrusions, are the result of "Western" imperialism and the unequal treaties China had been forced to conclude since the 1840s. The third is demographic: as China's population stagnates, it is at risk of being swallowed up by the growing populations of other, especially "Western," countries. Through a combination of these forces, China, once a leading country in the world, has been reduced to the condition of a "hypocolony" (*cizhimindi* 次殖民地) of the foreign powers.[66] Although China presents a world-historically unique case in that state and nation are fully congruent, it lacks a nationalistic spirit to resist the foreign encroachment. It is therefore crucial to revitalize the national spirit of China's population through an active policy of awakening people's consciousness of the present crisis, overcoming the social fragmentation and clannishness of the Chinese people, creating democratic institutions, and carrying out a policy of Gandhian-style non-cooperation with the imperialists.

In the sixth and final lecture on nationalism, Sun harnesses the Confucian tradition to his objective of raising national consciousness. Echoing both contemporary Chinese and "Western" cultural theorists in his conviction that while the "West" is more advanced in terms of material civilization, China's superiority lies in the spiritual realm, Sun evokes the values of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), loyalty (*zhong* 忠), common-mindedness (*ren* 仁), sincerity (a rare use of *xin* in GMD texts), righteousness (*yi* 義), adding love (*ai* 愛) and peacefulness (*heping* 和平) to the mix.[67] Explicitly drawing on the *Great Learning*, Sun not only advocates the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation as a means of strengthening China. He also vows that once China will have attained a sufficient level of power, it will help smaller nations overcome their suffering by eradicating imperialism, thus "making the world peaceful" (*ping tianxia*

66 Sun Zhongshan 1986b [1924], 201–202, the term itself appears on p. 202.
67 Ibid., 243.

平天下). Envisioning an end goal of world unity and the Great Community (*datong* 大同), Sun borrows heavily from Confucian utopianism to envision an end of history.[68]

The next principle, *minquanzhuyi* 民權主義, is often mistranslated as democracy; in fact, it makes more sense to render it as "People's Power," adhering to Sun's own definition of the term as "the political power of the people."[69] For despite regarding *minquan* as the world-wide trend of his day[70] and drawing heavily on "Western" political theory and history, Sun does not advocate a "Western"-style democratic system. On the contrary, he finds fault with two fundamental elements inherent to the theory of democracy: firstly, he expresses his conviction that liberty is not a problem in China, as the country has historically enjoyed an abundance of it. Secondly, Sun explicitly rejects the innate equality of people (as opposed to the equalities of opportunity and of moral faculty). Reiterating his ideas about intellectual inequality and the three different classes of people, he deems it necessary to devise a political system in which sovereignty is vested in the people but effective rule rests with a political leadership capable of governing.[71]

Sun solves this problem by introducing the distinction between power (*quan* 權) and ability (*neng* 能). The former locates sovereignty with the people and gives them controlling power (also called political power, *zhengquan* 政權) through the four political rights of election, recall, initiative and referendum. The latter, also identified as administrative power (*zhiquan* 治權), is translated into a system of checks and balances under the Five-Power constitution. Within the political system, both are interlocked, theoretically limiting the power of the government while enabling it to rule efficiently.[72]

In his discussion of the third principle, "People's Livelihood" (*minshengzhuyi* 民生主義), Sun addresses what he sees as the social question in China, the root cause of which he thinks is the replacement of human labor by machinery. The GMD leader engages with both utopian socialism and what he calls "scientific" socialism, i.e. Marxism. Despite crediting Marx with having based socialism on scientific study, Sun also argues that "scholars from

68 Ibid., 247 and 253. The terminology resembles that of Kang Youwei's 康有為 (1857–1927) *Book of the Great Unity* (*Datong shu* 大同書), written in 1902 and partially published by the time Sun wrote *The Three People's Principles*. Whether Kang exerted a direct influence on Sun or whether both were merely drawing on the same sources is a matter of debate; cf. Chang and Gordon 1991, 129–130, and Bergère 1998, 392–393.

69 Sun Zhongshan 1986b [1924], 254.

70 Ibid., 266.

71 Ibid., 322–323, 324–325.

72 See especially the diagram ibid., 352.

various countries all believed (*xinyang*) in him" (各國學者都是信仰他) and "If they were people who had meticulously studied the Marxian doctrine, they believed in him even more" (如果是過細研究了馬克思學說的人，更是信仰他).[73] Still, he rejects central Marxian concepts, especially the theory of surplus value and the idea of class struggle, as unsuited to the socioeconomic conditions in China.

To resolve the social question, Sun proposes two measures: the equalization of land rights (*pingjun diquan* 平均地權) and the control of capital (*jiezhi ziben* 節制資本). Identifying land speculation as a major cause of China's social plight, he devises a scheme whereby all landholdings will be assessed and all future increases in value entirely skimmed off by the state. As he considers private capital rather marginal in China, he assigns the state a dominant role in raising and managing the national capital required to advance China's industry, exploit its raw materials, and develop its infrastructure. Echoing both Lincoln's Gettysburg address and (again) Confucian utopianism, he equates the implementation of the Three People's Principles as creating as a polity "of the people, by the people, for the people" (*minyou, minzhi, minxiang* 民有，民治，民享) and "the world of the Great Community hoped for by Confucius" (*Kongzi suo xiwang de datong shijie* 孔子所希望的大同世界).[74] At the same time, Sun seeks to resolve China's food supply problem by ending tenancy and giving all peasants ownership of their land under the slogan "the tiller shall have his land" (*gengzhe you qi tian* 耕者有其田),[75] but also through the mechanization of agriculture, scientific methods of cultivation and improvements in infrastructure. This last point forms part of a larger discussion on what he defines as the four basic human needs (food, clothing, shelter, and mobility), left incomplete because the author did not live to write the two final lectures.

The "Manifesto to the First National Congress" of the GMD, approved at the Party's reorganization meeting under Sun's guidance on 23 January 1924, completes the list of texts canonized in the "Last Will and Testament." This document begins by providing an account of the Manchu Qing dynasty's overthrow, the failure and political disintegration of the Republic and

73 Ibid., 362–363. There is a certain semantic fuzziness in the use of *xinyang* here. As the term refers to Marx as a person, it can be taken in its literal meaning "trust and look up to". On the other hand, as Sun identifies Marx as the founder of "scientific socialism" (*kexue de shehuizhuyi* 科學的社會主義) and given his equation of "principle" or "ism" (*zhuyi*) and "belief" (*xinyang*) in in the preface to *The Three People's Principles*, the dimension of believing would not have been lost on Chinese readers.

74 Ibid., 394.

75 Ibid., 399–400.

the dual plight of warlordism and continued foreign imperialism.[76] It moves on to discuss the solutions proposed by the major political groupings in China—constitutionalists, federalists, the promoters of a peace conference and those of a "merchant government" (*shangren zhengfu* 商人政府)—often grossly simplifying or even polemically misrepresenting their ideas. Using the language of belief, the text concludes that "although some proceed from an honest intention to save the nation (*jiuguo*), in the end it is all empty talk; those who are worse don't even have honest intentions, but only proceed from sarcastic comments [made] out of evil intentions!" (雖或出於救國之誠意，然終為空談，其甚者則本無誠意，而徒出於惡意的譏評而已).[77] Having dismissed competing ideas, the author establishes the Three People's Principles as "China's only way out" (*Zhongguo weiyi shenglu* 中國唯一生路) of its present calamity.[78] As befits a party manifesto, the text concludes by translating the Principles into a set of foreign and domestic policies, which the GMD pledged to implement. The former category includes the abrogation of the unequal treaties and their substitution with new, equal ones, the cancellation of any foreign debts incurred by unauthorized governments within China, as well as the Boxer Indemnity imposed on China in 1901 (whereas loans not harmful to the country would be paid off). The latter lays down structures of national, provincial and local governments (adopted from the *Fundamentals*), equal political rights for the entire population, universal conscription to replace the recruitment of soldiers, as well as a catalogue of measures geared towards social welfare.

This ensemble of writings provided a blueprint for a complete overhaul of the Chinese nation-state—politically, socially, economically and culturally. It was intended to solve the two major problems that had bedeviled China in the early twentieth century—political fragmentation through warlordism and international inequality through Western (and later Japanese) imperialism. At the same time, it exhibited an inherent paradox: the language used was often one of science rather than belief; Sun went out of his way to demonstrate that his theories were grounded in the work of scholars. And yet his theory was primarily one of action. But this was exactly the point where belief entered the scene. To quote the classic study by David Nivison, Sun claimed for his political ideas "the force of an ideology which, to succeed, need only be believed."[79]

76 Sun Zhongshan 1986a [1924], 114–125.
77 Ibid., 118.
78 Ibid.
79 Nivison 1953, 137.

As the man himself put it in the foreword to *Sun Wen xueshuo*, introducing yet another derivative of *xin*:

> If we believe with all our heart (*xinxin* 心信) that something as difficult as moving mountains and turning sea into dry land is doable, there will eventually be a day of success; if we believe with all our heart that something as easy as turning our hand over or breaking a twig is not doable, there will not be a time of obtaining results either.
>
> 吾心信其可行，則移山填海之難，終有成功之日；吾心信其不可行，則反掌折枝之易，亦無收效之期也。[80]

The GMD thus understood belief in Sun Yat-sen's "teachings" as the best and indeed the only way of bringing about the great transformation of China. Belief was crucial; however, after the Premier's death, the Party was left with the problem of how to inculcate it in its followers and the political, educational and military elites, and of how to translate belief into action as envisioned by Sun. This brings me to the third section, in which I explore the relationship between belief and practice in the GMD.

## 5 Performative Belief: the Weekly Remembrance

Having come to power on the national level through the National Revolution between 1925 and 1928, the GMD was faced with a number of problems: it required legitimacy to rule a country that was nominally unified at best, it needed to secure the loyalty of the civil service, it had to rely on mobilizing people to complete the revolutionary process envisioned by Sun Yat-sen, and it also needed to overcome serious internal cleavages. Instituting the personality cult of the defunct leader served all of these goals: it allowed the GMD to capitalize on Sun's national popularity as one of only a few incorrupt politicians,[81] and it focused the attention of the various cliques within the party on a father figure who by virtue of his being conveniently dead stood above any factional strife. A wide spectrum of activities kept the memory of the late head of the party alive. This included the various stages of entombing

80 Sun Zhongshan 1985 [1917–1919], 158.

81 Schiffrin 1980, 216. In the first Nationalist capital of Guangzhou, however, people were less respectful towards Sun and his memory, see Poon 2011, 94–95.

his body, culminating in Sun's interment on Zijinshan 紫金山 near Nanjing 南京, where he had made a sacrifice for the restoration of Han Chinese rule after the Xinhai 辛亥 Revolution of 1911.[82] Large memorial halls were built, among others, in Changzhou and most prominently in Guangzhou, where a university was also named after Sun, as were streets, urban districts, parks and schools across the country and not least his native district of Xiangshan 香山, renamed Zhongshan 中山 in 1925.[83] The majority of public holidays and some of the party's commemoration days were linked to the memory of Sun. Such days included, among others, the Premier's birthday and dying day as well as the so-called Double Tenth, the anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolution in 1911.[84] Finally, the honorific title of Premier, which Sun had chosen for himself, was substituted with that of *guofu* 國父 ("Father of the Nation"), bestowed on him posthumously in 1940.

In this "universe of Sun," as Rebecca Nedostup has called it,[85] the Weekly Remembrance, which I have mentioned a couple of times above, occupied a special place for various reasons: this ritual was held regularly and at the closest interval, and it was directed at the political, social, military and cultural elite. For this reason, it will be the focus of my subsequent analysis. It was to be conducted every Monday morning in all party branches, government institutions and units of the armed forces; subsequently, schools were also added to the mix. The first regulations, issued in 1926, defined the objective of the Weekly Remembrance as follows:

> ... to remember forever the Premier and to enable all comrades to take in his spirit of struggle and sacrifice on behalf of the entire people, as well as his wise, humane, and courageous (*zhi ren yong* 智仁勇) personality, under the influence of which they will continue to strive for the implementation of the [Party] doctrine.
>
> ... 為永久紀念總理且使同志皆受總理為全民奮鬥而犧牲之精神與智仁勇之人格所感召以繼續努力貫徹主義.[86]

82 Harrison 2000, 133–44 and 207–30; Wang Liping 1996; Musgrove 2007. On Sun's sacrifice in 1911, see Harrison 2001, 197.

83 Chen Yunqian 2009, 325–410.

84 Neizhengbu Nianjian Bianzuan Weiyuanhui (ed.) 1936, F4–F8; Chen Zungui 1937, 278–283. See also Nedostup 2009, 239–240; Poon 2011, 94–100.

85 Nedostup 2009, 259.

86 "Zongli jinianzhou tiaoli" 1927. A revised version is in *Zhonghua Minguo fagui daquan* 1936, 5721. Unless otherwise specified, the subsequent discussion is based on these two versions.

Interestingly, while text of the regulations—in contrast to some of its subsequent interpretations—lacks any reference to the notion of belief, it does draw on Confucian ideas: the combination of wisdom (*zhi* 智), humanity (*ren* 仁), and bravery (*yong* 勇) occurs both in the *Confucian Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸).[87] This is another proof of how the GMD sought to draw on the Confucian concept of self-cultivation to inspire political activism.

Described by an early observer as "holy and inviolable" (*shensheng bu ke qinfan* 神聖不可侵犯),[88] the Weekly Remembrance was a carefully crafted ritual that observed a neat sequence of actions, such as the singing of the Party anthem, officially introduced in 1933; the song became the national anthem in 1943 and of course included the exhortation to be trustworthy and loyal quoted in the introduction of this essay. Also on display were paraphernalia such as the national and party flags, added in the mid-1930s and made an official part of the ritual in 1937, shortly before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War.[89] Most of the symbols and activities were connected to Sun Yat-sen, however: in addition to singing the party anthem he had penned, participants had to bow three times to his image (similar to other holidays), and the chairman read his "Last Will and Testament," which the audience recited alongside him. The 1926 regulations also provided for a "speech or political report," a wording that was changed in 1930 to "a talk on the Premier's bequeathed teachings (*Zongli yijiao* 總理遺教) or a work report."[90]

The centerpiece of the Weekly Remembrance was the observation of three minutes of silence, during which the audience again faced Sun Yat-sen's image. This was intended to be a moment of critical self-reflection in which participants would ponder the Premier's teaching in the first minute, re-examine their work of the past week in the second and make plans for the present week in the third. One author even encouraged participants to use a watch to ascertain

87 *Lunyu* 論語, book 9 (*Zihan* 子罕), ch. 28: "The wise do not have to be confounded, the humane do not have to worry and the brave do not have to fear" (智者不惑，仁者不憂，勇者不懼). Cf. *Zhongyong* 中庸, ch. 20, no. 8: "Wisdom, humanity and bravery, these three, are the absolute virtues of the realm" (知、仁、勇三者，天下之達德也). The original versions of these passages can be found in Legge 1861, 89 and 271. Author's translations. I am indebted to Joachim Gentz for drawing my attention to this connection.

88 Zhou Zhidao 1926, 13.

89 For the anthem, see GMD, CEC, official letter, 3 May 1933, AH, Guomin Zhengfu 國民政府, 332, fol. 411–413; a set of regulations on how to sing it repeatedly during the ceremony is in *Zhonghua Minguo fagui daquan* 1936, 5721. For the flags, see "Xiuzheng zongli jinianzhou tiaoli" 1937.

90 Cf. "Zongli jinianzhou tiaoli" 1927 and the version in *Zhonghua Minguo fagui daquan* 1936, 5721. See also Yu Youren 于右任, CEC of the GMD, to National Government, 26 Nov. 1930, GMD, *Huiyi jilu* 會議記錄, 18.14.3.

that the correct length of each minute was observed.[91] In introducing this element, the GMD leadership aimed at instilling a revolutionary work ethic in party members, civil servants, soldiers and students. It exhorted individual contributions to the larger project of completing the National Revolution and creating and strong and modern China.

The Weekly Remembrance incorporated a set of different perspectives: individual activities were balanced against collective ones; creedal elements (the collective reciting of texts, especially of the "Last Will and Testament") were intended to reinforce group identity by referring to a shared framework of propositions and truth-claims, which were reinforced through exegesis and instruction (the talks), while the individual, self-introspective examination of personal conduct and targets were based on the idea of self-cultivation. Belief was undoubtedly regarded as underpinning all this yet was often addressed in a cursory manner. Take the report that He Yingqin 何應欽 (1890–1987), one of Chiang Kai-shek's most trusted lieutenants in the army, gave in November 1927 as part of a Weekly Remembrance:

> Our holding the Weekly Remembrance is completely different from [the way] Christian believers worship [God], seeking promotion to [the rank of] official, wealth, pure happiness and peace. It is because (1) we should remember the unflinching exertions the Premier made on behalf of the revolution during his lifetime; (2) we should examine in detail the work we did ourselves in the last week, whether or not we worked hard for the party; (3) we ought to scrutinize ourselves, whether or not we have fulfilled the mission the Premier gave us, whether we have implemented the Three People's Principles, and whether we have made plans for the interest and happiness of the people; (4) the Premier's heritage are the National Party and the National Revolutionary Army; we should consider how to cherish this heritage, how to consolidate and develop it; we party members must examine ourselves whether or not whether we are already true revolutionary soldiers, whether or not we truly are hard-working party members …

91 Xu Ru 1938, 11; for the meaning of the three minutes of silence see Zhongguo Guomindang Zhejiang Sheng Dangwu Zhidao Weiyuanhui Xunlianbu 1929, 196–198. "Chen tingzhang zhi yanshuoci" 1927, 1–2, also emphasizes that "in the face of the Premier," participants should consider last week's errors and speed up next week's hard work.

> 我們被紀念週，並不像基督教徒的做禮拜以求升官、發財清吉平安一樣，是因為:
> 第一，是 總理生平致力革命，百折不回，我們當紀念，
> 第二，檢點我們自己一週以來所做的工作，是否為黨努力，
> 第三，當反省。總理給予我們的使命，我們做到了沒有，即是實行三民主義，為人民謀利益幸福，我們做到沒有，
> 第四，總理的遺產便是中國國民黨及國民革命軍，我們應當想想對這些遺產如何愛惜，如何使其鞏固及發展，我們黨員應反省我們是否真正已經做到一個革命軍人，是否真正是一個努力國民黨員. . . [92]

He's rejection of Christianity as a model is not atypical, especially in the early period of Nationalist rule. One cannot help feeling that he and others went out of their way to emphasize the differences because the parallels were so obvious. With his orientation towards action, his extolling of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary model and heritage as well as the late Party leader's ideology, and finally his emphasis on self-examination, He Yingqin was clearly moving within the ideological framework left by the Premier. One could therefore assume that he was also taking the latter's ideas about belief on board. But He Yingqin even made explicit reference to the language of belief as well, as he went on to exhort his listeners: "All believers in the Three People's Principles, unite! Realize the Three People's Principles!" (三民主義信徒團結起來！實行三民主義！)."[93] He thus construed his listeners as a community of believers analogous to the believers in Christianity (*Jidujiaotu* 基督教徒), while at the same time trying to goad them into action. That there clearly existed a connection between belief and action within the GMD is made clear in a directive issued by the provincial executive committee of Guangdong about a year earlier:

> We find that when entering the Party, party members must believe in the party doctrine (*xinyang dangyi* 信仰黨義) and realize party doctrine; therefore having entered the Party, they must pledge to give their lives for the Party; they must accept wholesale the Party's discipline, organization and resolutions; they are absolutely not allowed to have their individual ideas ...

92 "Bangbu di-yi jinianzhou zhong He zong zhihui zhi baogao 蚌埠第一次紀念週中何總指揮之報告," unidentified newspaper clipping, 22 Nov. 1927, GMD, *Huiyi jilu*. Another text explicitly rejecting the Christian model is "Zongli jinianzhou de yiyi zai nali" 1927, 7.

93 "Bangbu di-yi jinianzhou zhong He zong zhihui zhi baogao."

> 查黨員入黨，原為信仰黨義，及實行黨義，故入黨之後，即以身許黨，凡關於黨之紀律組織決議，均應全部接受，絕不容猶個人觀念 …[94]

Not content with mere exegesis and admonition, the Nationalist regime sought ways to monitor the loyalty of the elites through the Weekly Remembrance. In so doing, it focused on two issues. The first was the correct execution of the ritual. Time and again, higher authorities within the Party admonished their subordinate institutions to conduct the Weekly Remembrance as prescribed in the relevant regulations, which indicates there were departures from the prescribed norm at the local level.[95] Shifting the ceremony to a day other than Monday was a particular nuisance, especially where the targeted day was the (Christian) Sunday.[96] An even more perennial problem was attendance. Already the 1926 regulations stipulated that more than three consecutive absences from the Weekly Remembrance were a punishable offence. But despite repeated attempts at tightening the rules, the party found it well-nigh impossible to deal with offenders.[97]

If the party struggled to deal with infractions of its self-imposed standards, the debates surrounding the futility of enforcing them only masked a more deep-seated problem: that the GMD had no effective mechanisms to gauge loyalty. As early as September 1927, the writer Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) commented astutely on the problem in a side remark made during a speech at an academic symposium in Guangzhou:

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94 "Sheng dangbu duiyu xiaji dangbu banli rudang shouxu zhi xunling" 1926.

95 CEC, Organisation Department to National Government, 6 Aug. 1927, AH, Guomin Zhengfu 國民政府, 332, fol. 372; Organisation Department to CEC Standing Committee, 4 Mar. 1936, GMD, *Huiyi jilu*, 5.3–9.29; see also Zhang Lisheng to CEC Secretariat, 26 Feb. 1939, GMD, *Huiyi jilu*, 4.3–117.21.

96 CEC Secretariat to National Government, Civil Officials Bureau, 14 March 1934, AH, Guomin Zhengfu, 332, fol. 426–428; Henan Special Commissioner for Party Affairs Bureau to CEC, 12 Oct. 1935; CEC Resolution (192nd session), October 1935; CEC to Henan Special Commissioner for Party Affairs Bureau to CEC, 25 October 1935, all in GMD, *Huiyi jilu*, 4.3–209.32; Jiangsu Provincial Government, Personnel Department to Ministry of Finance, 2 Feb. 1947, JSSDG, 1003 乙, fol. 332; Jiangsu Provincial Government, Personnel Department to Social Services Department, 2 Feb. 1947, JSSDG, 1009 甲, fol. 168. Wu Wangji 1939, 1, conceded that the Weekly Remembrance was sometimes held on Sundays.

97 "Ge ji dangbu dangguan wu gu bu chuxi Zongli jinianzhou chengxie banfa 各級黨部當官無故不出席總理紀念週懲戒办法" (draft), ca. July 1929, GMD, *Huiyi jilu*, 3.3–42.15, cf. CEC Secretariat to Jiao Yitang 焦易堂 and Zhang Daofan 張道藩, members of the Standing Committee, n.d. (13th meeting), GMD, *Huiyi jilu*, 3.3–32.5; Lin Sen 林森, National Government, to Kong Xiangxi 孔祥熙, Executive Yuan, July 1939, AH, Xingzhengyuan 行政院, 068, fol. 004.

> Now the warlords used to suppress the Nationalists, [but] when the force of the Northern Expedition Army was stronger, they hung the blue-sky-and-white-sun [GMD] flag and declared they already believed (*xinyang*) in the Three People's Principles and were followers (*xintu*) of the Premier. But as this was not enough, they also perform the Weekly Remembrance. Now at this time, should the real followers of the Three People's Principles go [to the Weekly Remembrance], or shouldn't they? If they don't go, they [the warlords] might say you oppose the Three People's Principles, [might] pronounce [them] guilty, kill them. But if in their sphere of power there is no other method, then conversely the true followers of the Premier ought not to talk about the Three People's Principles. [Because if] they perhaps hear other people start talking sanctimoniously about them and frown, they would [also] appear to be opposing the Three People's Principles.
>
> 那軍法從前是壓迫（國）民黨的，後來北伐軍勢力一大，他便掛起了青天白日旗，說自己已經信仰三民主義了，是總理的信徒。這樣還不夠，他還要做總理的紀念週。這時候，真的三民主義的信徒，去呢，不去呢？不去，他那裡就可以說你反對三民主義，定罪，殺人。但既然在他的勢力之下，沒有別法，真的總理的信徒倒會不談三民主義，或者聽人假惺惺的談起來就皺眉，好像反對三民主義模樣。[98]

Echoing the rhetoric of belief from Guomindang texts, Lu Xun points out the core of the problem: belief is an attitude that exists within an individual and is difficult to access by means of external monitoring. The difference between what person outwardly professes and inwardly believes can be exploited; in other words: belief can be feigned. This does not mean that mechanisms to externalize internal attitudes are inconceivable; both the Catholic church and communist parties have been quite successful in developing mechanisms of member accountability: the former in the form of confession, the latter in the form of criticism and self-criticism.[99] However, the GMD never did and until the end of its rule on the Chinese mainland never managed to solve the problem of monitoring loyalty.

98 Lu Xun 1973, 502–503.

99 See Unfried 2006.

## 6 Postscript: a Firm Establishment of Belief?

The Guomindang made use of a rhetoric of belief using terms drawn from diverse religious traditions. The meaning of *xin*(*yang*) can only be understood within this wider lexicon. What exactly constituted belief was seldom clearly defined; however, Party texts leave no doubt about the centrality of belief to revolutionary mobilization. In the absence of any precise definition, we can infer, from what evidence we have, that the GMD understood belief as propositional, meaning to the acceptance of Sun's writings as the appropriate and only recipe for China's transformation into a strong and modern nation; as creedal, defined by the defunct Party leader's writings; and as performative, both in terms of participating in the *jinianzhou* and other rituals and of active involvement with the revolution by means of a self-cultivation reminiscent of Confucianism. This was linked to the idea of bringing about a palingenetic renewal of China, whereby a unified, sovereign and internationally respected nation would reach an "end of history."

There is, however, a somewhat ironic postscript to this. In 1946, the Guomindang undertook an experiment in constitutional government under the guidance of its American allies. As part of this process, the Weekly Remembrance was not completely abolished but was limited to the institutions of the Party itself; in government institutions and schools, it was substituted with a monthly assembly (*yuehui* 月會) that preserved some of the national symbolism but dropped most of the references to Sun, including the reading of his "Last Will and Testament" and the three minutes of silence. In a letter to the party's central committee, Wang Maogong 王懋功 (1891–1961), chairman of the Jiangsu 江蘇 provincial government, passed on the following rationale for this move, which can also be found in other party documents at the time:

> We find that the Weekly Remembrance and [the practice] of reading the Last Will and Testament during meetings were originally [established] to remember the illustrious and great personality of the Premier. Today the Three People's Principles have profoundly entered the hearts of people, and the hearts' belief [in them] has already been firmly established …
>
> 查國父紀念週及開會默讀遺囑等辦法原為紀念總理崇高偉大之人格[。]今三民主義已深入人心中心信仰業已確立 …[100]

100 Wang Maogong to Social Services Department, 3 May 1947, JSSDG, 1009 甲, fol. 168; the same formula can be found in CEC of Shandong GMD to party branches in all districts

But even that was not the end: as the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan in view of imminent defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communists, one of their first measures was to reintroduce the Weekly Remembrance.[101] Continued until the democratization process begun in the late 1980s put a stop to the GMD's dictatorial rule, the Weekly Remembrance provided a link connecting the notions of belief developed by Sun Yat-sen in the late 1910s and early 1920s with the end of the global Cold War.

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JSSDG Jiangsu Sheng Dang'anguan 江苏省档案馆 [Jiangsu Provincial Archives], Nanjing 南京, China.

SDSDG Shandong Sheng Dang'anguan 山东省档案馆 [Shandong Provincial Archives], Jinan 济南, China.

ZDELD Zhongguo Di'er Lishi Dang'anguan 中國第二歷史檔案館 [Second Historical Archives of China], Nanjing 南京, China.

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101 Headquarters, Taiwan provincial garrison, short notice, July 1949, AH, Ziyuan Weiyuanhui 資源委員會, 003-010101-1480, fol. 0002, complete with a set of regulations, "Taiwan sheng dang zheng jun jiguan Guofu jinianzhou juxing banfa 台灣省黨政軍機關國父紀念週舉行辦法," ibid., fol. 0003. For the *yuehui*, see ceremonials bureau to secretariat, 15 Oct. 1947, AH, Guomin Zhengfu, 140, fol. 553; "Guomin zhengfu yuehui juxing banfa 國民政府月會舉行辦法," 14 Oct. 1947, ibid., fol. 554–555. The monthly assembly had first been held in 1939 as part of wartime mobilization, see Li Zhiqiang 1995, 121.

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CHAPTER 20

# Belief in the Dao, or Knowledge of the Truth? Contested Interpretations of *xin* 信/*xinyang* 信仰 in Yiguandao Discourses

*Nikolas Broy*

## 1 Introduction

> Dao is not a religion, it's a belief sent by God to help us. (Taiwanese Yiguandao activist speaking to South African neophytes, Cape Town, November 2017)

When I first started my research about the Yiguandao religious movement 一貫道 ("Way of Pervading Unity," emic transcription: I-Kuan Tao), questions of believing and faith were rarely raised during the conversations I had with Dao followers, and they were also barely touched by the existing scholarship. Rather, issues related to the "Dao" (i.e., the one universal and eternal cosmic truth), individual cultivation, and moral conduct were the "hot" topics to be discussed and expounded by Yiguandao activists as well as in the literature. However, after I began to dig deeper into the vast corpus of Yiguandao writings that consists of patriarchal genealogies, ritual handbooks, brochures, moral tractates, and a great number of spirit revelations, it appeared that "belief" plays a crucial role in its discourses about moral cultivation, proper conduct, and religious practice. Thus, belief is not only considered the very foundation of human thinking and behaving, but it is also associated with civility, morality, and salvation. Furthermore, the modern world as supposedly lacking this form of belief is regarded as materialistic, without purpose, and simply lost.

In this chapter, I seek to trace the patterns and topics in Yiguandao discourses about belief/faith from early twentieth-century China to contemporary Taiwan and beyond. The Yiguandao religious movement came into being in late nineteenth-century Shandong Province and it exhibits an innovative synthesis of the Three Teachings (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism), sectarian traditions, and popular religious influences. In addition, Yiguandao teachings proclaim to include Christianity and Islam in what is perceived of

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as the unity of the Five Teachings.[1] I shall begin my investigation by exploring discourses and practices related to belief/faith in the late imperial period milieu of popular sects, from which Yiguandao emerged. This is to demonstrate that Ming and Qing sectarian writings already exhibit a relatively explicit semantic binary of belief-salvation and disbelief-doom, and that these codes inform the discussion in Yiguandao and other sectarian groups to this day. In Section 3, I shall reconstruct the basic topics and patterns in the early phase of Yiguandao's development from a regional religious tradition to a nationwide movement by the end of the 1940s. I argue that all major themes about belief were already fundamentally raised and discussed during this period. In this third section I will deal with the period after 1949, when Yiguandao was banned in the People's Republic of China but was able to establish itself as a major religious tradition in Taiwan. I show that the already existing discourse about belief has been both continued and enriched since the 1950s. In the fourth part, I shall outline a counter-discourse that appears to have emerged particularly in recent decades. This new line of reasoning builds on the internal distinction made between Dao and religion, according to which the Dao as the universal truth is to be separated from religious belief, i.e., the incomplete interpretations of this truth by humans. Finally, I will summarize and contextualize my findings in the conclusion.

Throughout the chapter, I maintain an open approach to the topic by contextualizing and interpreting the terminology for each case. This is to assure that no a priori understanding of the Chinese terms will affect the analysis. Thus, Yiguandao materials not only employ a variety of terms including *xin* 信, *xinxin* 信心, and *xinyang* 信仰 in a positive sense, or *mixin* 迷信 and *xiexin* 邪信 in a negative. But also, the meanings of the Chinese term *xin* such as (1) trustworthiness, (2) belief and faith, and even (3) letter are often very much entangled in the discussions. Because Yiguandao discourses about belief are thus profoundly influenced by various intellectual, religious, political, and scientific debates, this specific case also highlights the interaction between various fields of knowledge (including religious groups and traditions, but also political, philosophical, and even scientific fields).

1 The most detailed studies of Yiguandao include: Jordan and Overmyer 1986, 213–266; Song 1983; Song 1996; Lu 2008; Lin 2010. The most recent and, by far, most thorough account, which is based on one decade of fieldwork, is Billioud 2020.

## 2 The Late Imperial Connection: Ming-Qing Sectarian Accounts on "Believing"

Browsing through the late imperial religious landscape shows that matters related to belief/faith were an important concern for popular sectarians during the Ming and Qing dynasties. This is significant insofar as Yiguandao emerged from this religious milieu, and from the "Way of Former Heaven" (Xiantiandao 先天道), in particular—a sectarian tradition I shall explore below. When talking about "popular sectarianism," I refer to voluntary religious congregations that came into being and were maintained outside officially recognized and/or state-sanctioned religious organizations and tended to produce novel syntheses of religious symbols, beliefs, and practices for which the imperial state and the established religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism discredited them.[2]

Because the scope of this contribution is limited, I will confine myself to some brief comments. To start with, I shall discuss the "Non-Action Sect" (Wuweijiao 無為教), a popular Buddhist tradition that emerged in late sixteenth-century southeastern China from the "cult of the book" related to Patriarch Luo's *Five Books in Six Volumes* (*Wubu liuce* 五部六冊), which are widely regarded as one of the most influential nonmonastic Buddhist writings of the late imperial period.[3] The *Five Books*, which are venerated by followers to this day, already appreciate belief as an important requirement for religious cultivation. For instance, the Patriarch's purported autobiography dates the beginning of his religious journey to an incident when his ears caught the phrase "if you want to trust and accept [something], you have to pick it up and examine it on your own" that was recited by Buddhist monks during a funerary ritual next door.[4] This sentence stems from the *Ritual Amplification of the Diamond Sūtra*—a popular Song period exposition of the original text—and it appears to render belief as something that is gained from empirical observation and critical evaluation. Other sections of the corpus appreciate the "faithful heart" (*xinxin* 信心) not only as a requirement to attain salvation but also as the distinguishing feature between pious practitioners and those who are doomed to stay within the cycle of rebirths. For instance, the "Holy

2 For a detailed discussion of the analytical category of sectarianism in the study of religions in China, see Broy 2015.

3 For an in-depth study of this religious tradition, see Barend ter Haar 2014; Broy book manuscript.

4 *Kugong wudao juan* 苦功悟道卷, MJZJ 2:22a14–17. 要人信受，拈來自檢看. The quotation is from *Jin'gang keyi* 金剛科儀, j. 4: "若還信受。拈來自檢看。[…]汝若信受此法。爾試拈來自家檢點看," in *Manji zokuzōkyō* 卍続蔵経, vol. 92:331a02–07.

Patriarch of the Ultimateless" (Wuji Shengzu 無極聖祖—a figure similar to, or an early alias of, the "Eternal Venerable Mother" (Wusheng Laomu 無生老母), who was worshipped by many popular sects, including Yiguandao) is said to have "given birth to heaven and earth, he regulates them, and provides for mankind. The sentient beings of the world are the poor children: You have been admonished to return home, but you lack faith."[5] Likewise, another section claims that "only with the faithful heart am I able to return home and repay [the Holy Patriarch's grace]. With the faithful mind and by returning home I repay the grace and love [of my parent]. Countless eons have misled and deluded me. Only now am I recognizing my most intimate parent," i.e., the Holy Patriarch.[6] Consequently, Book 4 of the corpus is entitled *Precious Scroll about the Realization of Self-Reliance without Cultivation, Which Rectifies* [*One's*] *Faith and Dispels Doubts* (*Zhengxin chuyi wuxiu zheng zizai baojuan* 正信除疑無修證自在寶卷).

While the distinction between belief-salvation and disbelief-doom is encoded rather implicitly in these texts, other sectarian groups such as the "Way of Former Heaven" (Xiantiandao) articulated this conviction more frankly. I will turn now to this enormously potent sectarian tradition not only because notions of believing figure prominently in its writings during the second half of the nineteenth century, but also because it is a direct forerunner of Yiguandao.[7] During the turbulent decades of the 1830s through the 1840s, when Xiantiandao was subject to fierce government persecution, sectarian patriarchs began to spread prophecies about the imminent end of the world. In one instance, sectarian writings cite older predictions that during the years *yin* and *mao* 寅卯 (most probably referring to 1842–1843) all "wicked ones" (*eren* 惡人) would be completely annihilated, while only the "believers" (*xinzhe* 信者) would be saved.[8] Clearly linking nonbelieving with evilness, faith becomes a qualifying feature of the chosen few who will be summoned to return to Mother's heaven. Other early nineteenth-century Former Heaven texts also point out that Mother's grace extends only to the "believing people" (*xinren*

5 *Poxie xianzheng yaoshi juan* 破邪顯證鑰匙卷 (*Kaixin fayao*), MJZJ 2:253a14–15. 無極生下天和地，治下天地養眾生。大地眾生為窮子，著你歸家不信心.

6 *Weiwei budong Taishan shen'gen jieguo baojuan* 巍巍不動太山深根結果寶卷 (*Kaixin fayao*), MJZJ 2:454b14–15. 信心歸家纔是報，信心歸家報恩情。無量劫來迷了我，今日纔認貼骨親.

7 On Xiantiandao and its sectarian networks, see Topley 1963; Lin 1986; Ngai 2015.

8 *Renxing jicheng* 仁性集成, ZWDS 24:229b02–05. 寅卯而後劫至，收取世上惡人，五魔踏碎世界三災掃蕩乾坤，旱澇饑饉疾疫，水火劫盜刀兵，收盡惡種萬億，用充劫運從橫，善者得見天目，惡者不見太平，信者得度末劫，不信喪命亡魂。

信人).[9] Similar sentiments were also articulated in spirit-written morality books of this period, as the discussion by Vincent Goossaert in this volume shows. On the other hand, the *Realization and Origin of the Eight Characters* (*Bazi jueyuan* 八字覺源)—a text most likely from the 1840s that is dedicated to the eight Confucian virtues (*bade* 八德), among which *xin* is number four—touches on its meaning only cursorily.[10] While the characterization of *xin* as trustworthiness and crucial to the "Five Constants" (*wuchang* 五常)—a standard grouping of the most prominent Confucian virtues—is similar to a 1937 Yiguandao spirit-revelation discussed below,[11] notions of believing appear to be entirely absent from the discussion.

Luckily, however, other scriptures and documents elaborate on this topic. Clearly linking belief to wisdom and insight into the true nature of the cosmos, they articulate attitudes that likewise dominate later Yiguandao discourses. For instance, the probably early 1850s *Precious Raft to Revert to the Origin* argues that those not believing in the Dao are the stupid and misled ones—i.e., those who will not be spared in the final apocalypse.[12] The scripture also laments that without proper exploration it is difficult to believe in its teachings. Therefore, neophytes are requested to meticulously study Former Heaven books in order to distinguish true from false, to achieve a faithful heart (*xinxin*), and know the Dao.[13] Consequently, unfaithfulness is considered a serious moral shortcoming that needs to be refined; furthermore, Dao cultivators are not supposed to "believe in heretic teachings and forget the True Principle," i.e., the Dao.[14] Thus, believing is clearly related to knowledge and intellectual understanding.

During the late 1860s and early 1870s, belief appears to have played an even bigger role in Xiantiandao self-understandings and its ritual practices. For instance, moral admonitions ascribed to Patriarch Lin Yimi 林依秘 (1804–1865/1873) uphold that acknowledging the truth is the true form of pious

9 *Liben* (*Kaishijing*) 禮本 (開示經), MJZJ 9:433a12–b01. 老爺天恩慈悲，男女眾某信人等跪在老爺蓮臺之下，哀求求老爺開恩求母慈悲，求能言求智慧求醒悟求老爺把理性散將下來與信人等明心見性正理身心當來護道。

10 *Bazi jueyuan* 八字覺源, MJZJ 9:66a–71b. For a rough dating of the text, cf. Wang 2015, 662–663.

11 *Bazi jueyuan*, MJZJ 9:66a02–06, 71a16–b04.

12 *Guiyuan baofa* 歸原寶莪, MJZJ 9:8b08–09, 33a05. 愚迷人不信道難免劫收。 [...] 縱有愚人不信。

13 *Guiyuan baofa*, MJZJ 9:41a02–04. 先天道不講透令人難信, [...], 如若是眾求道暫莫應允，只教他把書看明覺偽真，如果是信心誠知道切徑。

14 *Guiyuan baofa*, MJZJ 9:40b10. 勸諸友若犯着這些毛病，[...]，一入竅心性迷把道不信。 MJZJ 9:44a09–10. 不許他信邪法迷失正理。

belief (*xin zhi du* 信之篤), and only those who cherish this Dao in their minds and deeds are true believers. On the other hand, those who are shaken in their faith in an instant do not truly believe. Accordingly, neophytes need to take an unbreakable oath in front of Buddha in order to "strengthen their faith" (*jian qi xin* 堅其信).[15] Thus, the patriarch appears to have made the ritual confession of "not believing in heresies" an essential part of the initiation procedure, as all neophytes were required to take this oath in front of the altar.[16] Yet other regulations attributed to his predecessor Peng Yifa 彭依法 (1796–1858) proclaim that firm belief is—in addition to good command of the sect's teachings and being accustomed to a vegetarian diet—another requirement for initiation.[17] This prominent role assigned to faith within sectarian ritual and teachings is truly extraordinary, and it may very well reflect Christian influence. Thus, already during the late 1860s European Christian missionaries reported about converts from the ranks of former Xiantiandao sectarians who appear to have been using the autonym "Blue Lotus Sect" (Qinglianjiao 青蓮教).[18] Similarly, George Miles's 1902 study of a Former Heaven group in Hankou (part of modern Wuhan) also relies heavily on insider knowledge that he gained from Christian converts who appeared to have previously been Xiantiandao sectarians.[19] Yet, further investigations are needed in order to determine the extent to which Christian and sectarian groups in late imperial China not merely competed for a similar following but creatively exchanged, transformed, and remodeled religious ideas, symbols, and practices.

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15 *Jinshi yaoyan* 金石要言, YGDZ-ZSZB 5:217–218. 領抽在外辦道原本這點信道真心為甚一見邪妖，就失其守，不信道而反信邪妖乎 [...] 認之真, 纔信之篤 [...] 守此道而始終如一，守此道而表裡不二，不改其守，又何至稍亂其信，其不信者 [...] 所以我等辦道都要到佛前，立個不投魔從邪洪誓，以堅其信焉。

16 *Jinshi yaoyan*, YGDZ-ZSZB 5:230. 無論男女知識眾生等均向佛前自立洪誓一道，永不投魔，誓不信邪。

17 *Shiliu tiaogui* 十六條規, YGDZ-ZSZB 4:115. 亦有得道先信; *Guiju zhunsheng* 規矩準繩, YGDZ-ZSZB 5:241–242. This section is entitled *sanyuan tiaogui* 三元條規 and attributed to the Patriarch. 凡未食齋，初發心學道眾生，先命伊將書用心體會，齋戒數月，如果信道心篤 [...]。

18 See, for instance, *Les Missions catholiques: bulletin hebdomadaire de l'Oeuvre de la propagation de la foi* (1869), no. 45, 30 April 1869, 140–141, discussed in Takeuchi 1998, 124–125. Cf. Bays 1982, 49.

19 Miles 1902, 1–2. The group he describes appears to have used the autonym "Sect of the Gold Jasper" (Yaochimen 瑤池門)—a common reference to the realm of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母), with whom the Eternal Mother often is conflated—but it is clear from the context that it belongs to the Xiantiandao tradition.

## 3 "The Mother of Virtues": *xin* 信 in the Early Yiguandao

When first browsing influential introductory booklets that circulated widely in late 1930s Yiguandao communities, such as the 1937 catechism *Answers to Doubts about the Unity Sect* (*Yiguandao yiwen jieda* 一貫道疑問解答), references to questions of believing or occurrences of the Chinese word *xin* prove scarce. They appear only marginally, such as in one question that asks why only few people believe in the true Dao; likewise, when proposing a classification of four kinds of humans, the "ignorant ones" (*yuren* 愚人) are characterized as those who do not believe in the six forms of rebirth (a standard Buddhist concept).[20] Interestingly, the same binary (belief—wisdom, disbelief—ignorance) is employed in the probably early 1850s *Precious Raft* analyzed above. It is important to note that in both instances *xin* is used in negation (*bu xin* 不信), so as to imply deviation from an accepted standard. Moreover—and also similarly to the Former Heaven tradition—Republican-era Yiguandao revelations frequently charge this binary with an eschatological meaning, proposing that those who do not "uphold and believe" (*zunxin* 遵信) the teachings will not be granted access to the "cloud city" (*yuncheng* 雲城),[21] i.e., Mother's paradise.

The only other passage in the *Answers* to employ the term *xin* is a response to a modernist critique that considers venerating deities "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信).[22] This view is refuted by regarding veneration as a sense of duty towards the supreme god "Eternal Venerable Mother" (Wusheng Laomu), whom Yiguandao practitioners consider the Mother of humankind. Apparently, this critique is related to the general political and ideological climate of the Republican era that saw various forms of secularist attacks on what was perceived as "superstitious" and a major hindrance for China's modernization.[23]

Digging deeper into the corpus of written pre-1949 materials, one will find that *xin* plays a much more crucial role in individual moral cultivation than is apparent at first sight. For instance, the preface to the 1919 revelation

20 *Yiguandao yiwen jieda*, YGDJJ 1:230–231: 道是真道，然而人多不信！是為什麼？; 267–268: 愚者[...]不信有六道輪迴。

21 *Hunyuan budai zhenjing* 混元布袋真經, MDSX 2:38. 不遵信布袋經無根做怪，不能進雲城內可惜可哀。

22 *Yiguandao yiwen jieda*, YGDJJ 1:224–225. 求道可矣，敬神得勿迷信乎？ Cf. *Jin'gong Zushi chandao pian* 金公祖師闡道篇, séance #13, *bingzi*/4/19, YGDZ-SDZB 1:176: "People of the present age only know themselves, but they do not know Heaven. They only claim that [believing in] deities and Buddhas is superstition and that the Way of Heaven is heterodox." 今人知己不知天，盡說仙佛是迷信，反說天道是異端。

23 Cf. Nedostup 2009; Broy 2016, 37–68.

*Letter from the Home* (*Jiaxiang xinshu* 家鄉信書) introduces *xin* as "honesty" and "truthfulness," which an ancient proverb identifies with the "mother of the Dao, virtues, and all merits." Playing with the ambiguity of the Chinese word, which also means "letter," the passage concludes that *xin*—and thus this very written document as well as the moral qualities of believing and trustworthiness—is the road back to humankind's original home (i.e., the eternal realm of Mother).[24] While not stated explicitly, this characterization of *xin* as the starting point for further religious practice is cited from the famous *Flower Ornament Sūtra* (*Huayanjing* 華嚴經, Skt. *Mahāvaipulya Buddhāvataṃsaka-Sūtra*), which elaborates on the importance of "deep faith" (*shenxin* 深信, Skt. *śraddhā*) in the Buddhist dharma. According to the sūtra, *xin* is not only the "origin of the Dao and the mother of merits," but it also opens the path towards *nirvāṇa*.[25] Apparently, the message depicted in the *Letter* draws on rich Buddhist discourses about the essentiality of believing. Thus, Chinese Buddhists are also likely to refer to this very quotation to underscore the meaning of "belief" in their religious tradition.[26] Accordingly, it is no wonder that a follow-up booklet to the *Answers* published in 1940 proclaims that after having been initiated into the Dao, the first thing to do is to firmly establish one's faithful heart (*xinxin* 信心). Here too, believing or having confidence—as the term *xinxin* is open to both meanings—is considered the "mother of cultivation" and the "origin of all merits" (thus paraphrasing the excerpt from the *Huayanjing*). Without believing, even taking classes about the Dao will be to no avail.[27] Similarly, the 1942 spirit revelation *Recognizing the Road to Revert Home* proclaims that a firm belief (*xinxin*) is needed in order to spread the Dao. Furthermore, deep faith is considered the very first step in the cultivation career of every neophyte.[28] Finally, a 1944 handbook states that *xin* is the inherent nature of humankind's true self. Without it, humans would be nothing more than animals, and this is why the *Analects* have Confucius saying

24 *Jiaxiang xinshu* 家鄉信書, preface. 信者誠實之謂也所以古人云信為道德功德之母 [...] 信者 乃歸家之路徑而返本還原之密旨。 For a detailed discussion of this pamphlet, see Pettit 2016, 58–68.

25 *Da fangguangfo huayanjing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T10 #279, 72b16–18. Translated in Cleary 1993, 331–332. 深信於佛及佛法亦信佛子所行道，及信無上大菩提， 菩薩以是初發心，信爲道元功德母，長養一切諸善法，斷除疑網出流，開示涅槃無上道。

26 For a thorough discussion, see Tam's chapter in this volume as well as Hamar 2016.

27 *Xingli tishi* 性理題釋, 19. 入道後要想前進以何為先？若欲前進，應該先將信心立穩方可，因為信為修道之母，功德之源，人若無信，占課也不靈，何況修道乎？

28 *Huanxiang juelu* 還鄉覺路, MDSX 6:11, 22. 行道更要信心堅，，自古至今皆有死，無信不立聖訓談，信心堅決兼萬善，信中得悟妙無邊。 [...] 得道初步當篤信。

that "[the government] cannot be established if the people do not have faith [in their rulers]" (*wuxin bu li* 無信不立).[29]

This understanding of *xin* as foundational to human interaction and moral cultivation is further developed in various spirit revelations. For instance, the first of the *Six Commandments* [*As Strong As*] *Stone and Metal* already proclaims that only if the faithful heart is firmly established will one be able to understand the true nature of the Dao. Furthermore, the text continues, this morale means to "not bend even if tried for a hundred times" (*baizhe buwan* 百折不彎) and to bravely withstand temptations and animosities.[30] Received during the summer of 1937, one séance within a series of revelations about the nature of the eight Confucian virtues (*bade*)—itself an innovation of nineteenth-century spirit-writing communities that sought to compound a single thread of Confucian social morality[31]—particularly deals with *xin*, as it is generally accepted as the fourth of the eight virtues.[32] Here, *xin* is described both as humankind's inherent inclination towards truthfulness and trustworthiness, as it ought to be applied among families and friends in order to establish firm relationships; but it is also employed in the sense of "believing in something," such as in one's abilities. Finally, the revelation concludes that it is not possible to cultivate the Dao without *xin*.[33] This text appears to be influenced by the probably 1840s Xiantiandao scripture that equally focuses on the eight virtues, the *Bazi jueyuan* 八字覺源, which was already mentioned in Section 2. In another revelation received in Ji'nan (Shandong Province) in 1939, the deity stresses the importance of believing in traditional morals and cherishing the true principle (i.e., the Dao) while at the same time attacking those "misguidedly or blindly believing in religion and science" (*mixin zongjiao huo kexue* 迷信宗教或科學).[34] This argument seems to be informed by conservative discourses that refute the alleged supremacy of scientific rationality that

29 *Daoxue xin jieshao* 道學新介紹, YGDZ-YLZB 1:438. The citation is from *Lunyu* 12:7. 信為自性之本質，信則生人，頂天立地，失信則生其他動物，皆頭前尾後橫行，故曰無信不立。

30 *Jinshi liujie* 金石六誡, YGDZ-SDZB 1:239, 249. 信心定真妙理自能得曉 [...] 有份子信心在百折不彎，有份子抱守道不怕考煉，有份子並不怕謗語流言。 [...] 一個個信心定志確心恆。

31 Fan 2015, 228–230.

32 "Shiquan zonglun 十全總論," revelation by Jigong Huofo 濟公活佛, dated Min 26/7/13, YGDZ-SDZB 1:327–329.

33 "Shiquan zonglun," YGDZ-SDZB 1:327–329. 所謂信者何？實也，誠也[...]信者人人當學，此信不得外學，而是良知良能；此信人人本有，胡不實行者。 [...] 朋友無信，平格不正；家中無信，家道難成；[...] 失了信修道難成。

34 "Santian zhukao Dai Fu xiansheng cixun 'Fang yi zhan jiushi mingdeng' 三天主考 呆父先生慈訓〈放一盞救世明燈〉," dated Min 28/2/27, YGDZ-SJZB 1:360–362, esp. 362.

many secularist modernizers proposed as the sole way to establish a modern China. At the same time, similar sentiments are articulated in Buddhist discussions that caution that blind faith in whatever is labeled as science is likely to turn into a superstition itself (that is also called "blind belief in science," *mixin kexue* 迷信科學).[35] However, the Yiguandao argument differs to the extent that it also takes religion (as human-made distortions of the one universal truth) into the equation (a topic to be explored in Section 5).

The same line of reasoning is applied in the *Record about Making Progress According to the Truth*, a booklet produced after the first "stove meeting" (*luhui* 爐會)—a training camp for committed Dao followers—had been held in Beijing in 1941. The first section, which specifically deals with how to exercise "true faith" (*zhengxin* 正信) towards God (Shangdi 上帝, i.e., the Eternal Mother), argues that modern evolutionary theory is wrong in claiming that humankind evolved from primates. Science may claim omnipotence but is not even close to doing what God can do, as humans equipped with souls have been created only by Mother. Accordingly, "we need to take out our true heart, preserve our unchanging intentions, cease fallacious ideas, resist improper conduct, resolve our minds and bodies, purify our thoughts, appreciate heaven's mercifulness, and repay the heavenly grace. This is [the way to establish] true faith in and dispel doubts about God."[36] By preserving a true heart and putting one's trust in God (*xinlai* Shangdi 信賴上帝), the book continues, one will also be able to overcome any lack of confidence or conviction that may arise—both from within oneself (*neikao* 內考) and incited by external pressure (*waikao* 外考, e.g., mocking behavior of others, government hostility etc.).[37] Accordingly, belief in God is considered both the very nature of humankind and the basic tool for Dao followers to deal with moments of uncertainty.

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惟勸我道親，競信道德，崇信真理，勿迷信宗教或科學，惟以道德救國濟世，以建大同。

35 See Stefania Travagnin's chapter.

36 *Shuaizhen jinxiulu* 率真進修錄, YGDZ-YLZB 1:178–180, esp. 179–180. 我們必須拿出真心，抱定恆志，息異端，拒詖行，清理自己身心，純正自己念頭，體貼天慈，報答天恩，這才對上帝正信與釋疑。

37 *Shuaizhen jinxiulu*, YGDZ-YLZB 1:196–197. 如何應付魔考？ [...] 只要你抱定真心，信賴上帝 [...] 外考，即親友毀謗， 鄰里譏笑，保甲恫嚇，官府不容，以及武力干涉等情，應付方法，就是信之以理，既明真理。 On the Yiguandao theory of tests (*kao* 考), cf. Jordan and Overmyer 1986, 256–257; Lu 2008, 53–55.

## 4 The Powers of *xin* 信: Post-WWII Discourses

After the advent of the People's Republic of China and the large-scale persecution of Yiguandao and similar religious groups in the early 1950s, the island of Taiwan developed into a major stronghold of the movement during the latter part of the twentieth century. Even though the political and social climate was similarly hostile until Yiguandao was finally granted legal status in 1987, the movement was able to consolidate itself into one of Taiwan's major religious traditions.

Many of the aforementioned texts were still being reprinted and read by Yiguandao members during this period, but new booklets and pamphlets also began to take up questions of believing as well. One of those, the *Basics of Dao Learning* (*Jichu daoxue* 基礎道學), introduces the "faithful heart" (*xinxin*) as the foundation of religious cultivation. Drawing on the aforementioned distinction between "true belief" (*zhengxin*) and "superstition" (*mixin*), the handbook postulates that not all things are to be believed equally. While "true belief" consists of emulating the moral model of the deities (i.e., ancient worthies), upholding knowledge of karmic retribution, and believing in the powers of moral cultivation, "superstition" is summarized as begging the gods for protection and venerating "extraordinary things, feats of strength, disorder, and spiritual beings"—which is the traditional Confucian rendering of inappropriate topics that the *Analects* (7:21) report Confucius avoided talking about.[38] Quoting the famous Republican-era medical doctor, scholar, and engaged lay Buddhist Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952), probably best-known for his *Dictionary of Buddhist Studies* (*Foxue dacidian* 佛學大辭典, 1922), the *Basics* further claim that "if there is no such thing but one believes in its existence, it is called superstition; but if something truly exists and you believe in it, this is called true belief."[39] This quotation comes from Ding's 1920 *Essentials of Buddhist Studies* (*Foxue cuoyao* 佛學撮要), thus indicating that the author(s) of the *Basics* must have been well-versed in Buddhist literature.[40]

38 *Jichu daoxue*, YGDZ-YLZB 3:271. 修道者，首先就是要有信心，信什麼呢？就是相信修道可以證果成真，相信因果輪迴報應之理。由於信有正信和迷信，所謂信道拜佛，學神仙修道行德是正信，非為迷信，求神庇佑敬怪力亂神才是迷信。Similarly, the 1944 *Daoxue xin jieshao*, YGDZ-YLZB 1:438 mentioned above describes *mixin* in these Confucian terms.

39 *Jichu daoxue*, YGDZ-YLZB 3:271. 無其事而信以為有，謂之迷信，實有其事而信之，謂之實信.

40 *Foxue cuoyao*, reprinted in *Dingshi Foxue congshu* 丁氏佛學叢書, vol. 1:38. I am indebted to Gregory Adam Scott for sharing his knowledge about the location of this quotation with me.

Finally, and yet again building on thoughts that had been established in earlier texts, the *Basics* claim that because "demonic tests" (*mokao* 魔考, i.e., temptations to part from the Dao) reveal a practitioner's true mindset, cultivation must begin with belief.[41]

Similarly, a small but unfortunately undated pamphlet entitled *Discussing Belief* (probably 1970s) treats the topic in a detailed manner.[42] Here, *xin* is given unequivocal praise as it is considered the source of humans' motivations as well as the place to find rest, comfort, and safety. Among various examples, the text compares this state to trusting a bank, because it equally provides savers with a feeling of security, knowing that their money is safe there. Furthermore, without the power to believe people will not be successful in their doings, and everything they try will be doomed to fail.[43] While there is also a material side of *xin* that seeks worldly and instant benefits, it is only its spiritual form that is characterized by an unflinching belief in the heavenly truth. Thus, the text utterly criticizes what is perceived as pleasure-seeking hedonism among today's youth, while the more intelligent ones may be inclined to "worship science" (*chongxin kexue* 崇信科學).[44] Small-mindedly focusing on imminent and bodily pursuits, however, they tend to ignore what will come after one's mundane existence has vanished. Consequently, the pamphlet urges its readers to exercise faith, which it summarizes as follows: "Today, we believe that 'Our Only God Venerable Buddha' (Weihuang Shangdi Laofo 維皇上帝老佛) is absolutely true; we believe that our master's true principle is the only one and that it is entirely right. […] We take Dao learning as essence and

41 *Jichu daoxue*, YGDZ-YLZB 3:271. 很多人，修了幾年的道，連仙聲佛影沒有看到，便說修道是假，仙佛非真，或是受了魔考，信心便瓦解，而退了道念。所以修道必從信心起.

42 *Tan xinyang* 談信仰. Since some of the stories mentioned in the text are dated to the late 1960s, the original version of this pamphlet may have originated in the early 1970s.

43 *Tan xinyang*, 1–3. 信仰是精神寄託之所，也是精神穩定良方，人生不能離開信仰，離了信仰即失去信心原動力。 […] 例如有錢數萬存在家裡，總不放心，心很不安，只要存入合作社或銀行，心情自然安定下來，因為他對合作社銀行有了信仰。 […] 信仰使精神上有安全感，也是一種保障，人生為何需要信仰，因為人有不生不死的精神，人若沒有信仰，失去信心，等於心死，對於一切事物都沒有興趣，都不會成功。

44 *Tan xinyang*, 3–6. 信仰有物質片面的(一切現實利益)，有精神全面的(真理道德)。[…] 信其理，誠其意，明其道，知其非，離道不遠矣，如此信仰，才是真正的信仰。[…] 目前大多數青年，信金錢，信物質，信現實享受，有的聰明者，信科學而不信真理學。[…] 人多不信真理原因，趨於物質聲色，崇信科學，不信理學，原因科學給人生享受利益提高，解決目前現實困苦和困難，人眼光多是近視的。

science as its function. This is the Way of the *Doctrine of the Mean*."[45] Building on the traditional Chinese distinction between absolute reality (essence) and other fields of knowledge that may be applied for more concrete purposes (function), this section also draws on topics prominent since the late nineteenth-century "Self-Strengthening Movement," which urged China to value and preserve its "Chineseness," while applying Western knowledge only on a more practical basis.

As one of the handbooks that most Dao practitioners have come across during the early phase of their cultivation, the *Records of Progress in Illuminating Virtues and Renewing the People*—a textbook intended to provide neophytes with basic knowledge about the Dao—offers equally illuminating insights into Yiguandao attitudes toward *xin*. Similar to the small pamphlet discussed above, the *Records* (its earliest edition dates to 1951) claims that "confidence" (*xinxin*) can achieve everything. Here, the text quotes from the intellectual writings of the "father of modern China," Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), who was equally convinced that "if my heart believes that something is possible, even difficult things such as 'moving mountains or reclaiming land from the sea' (*yishan tianhai* 移山填海) can be achieved one day. But if my heart does not believe so, then even the easiest things such as breaking the bough of a tree will not work out."[46] In addition, *xin* is attributed a crucial role in humankind's moral cultivation, as it is considered to stand at the center of the "Five Constants" (*wuchang*)—a standard grouping of the most prominent Confucian virtues. By quoting from the Confucian classics *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Analects*, the center—and thus *xin*—is considered the foundation of the entire world and the place where the Dao will emerge. Humans without *xin* are compared to "carriages without crossbars" (another citation from the *Analects*); they are similar to wild animals, and their mind will meander purposelessly like a boat traversing the vast sea without a rudder.[47] Similarly to the

45 *Tan xinyang*, 10–11. 今天我們信仰維皇上帝老佛是千真萬確的，信仰吾師唯一真理不二法門絕對沒有假 [...] 以道學為體，以科學為用，才為中庸之道。 The appellation "Weihuang Shangdi" is derived from an announcement by King Tang as collected in the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), cf. *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義, j. 8, 162a (written slightly differently as 惟皇上帝).

46 *Mingde xinmin jinxiulu* 明德新民進修錄, 77. 吾心信其可行則移山填海之難，終有成功之日；吾心信其不可行，則反掌折枝之易，亦無收效之期。 This excerpt is quoted from the preface in *Sun Wen xueshuo* 孫文學說, section "Jianguo fanglüe 建國方略", 3.

47 *Mingde xinmin jinxiulu*, 77–78. 天地有五常，仁義理智信是也，信能統四端，兼萬善，而居五常之中，「中也者天下之大本」，「本立而道生」，故信為道之根源也。孔子說：「民無信不立」，又說「人而無信，不知其可也。大車無輗，小車無軏，其何以行之哉?」[...] 如若無信，就如禽獸一般；[...] 人生在世，

books discussed above, the *Records* also distinguishes the "true Dao" (*zhengdao* 正道) from "heterodox beliefs" (*xiexin* 邪信) and superstition (*mixin*), such as venerating fox spirits, trees, oxen, snakes, and stones, or fraudulently using *fengshui* 風水 and spiritual healing techniques in order to make money (all of which are common accusations against the purported "superstitious" character of Chinese popular religion). Consequently, one is requested to choose one's belief wisely, unless one wants to be found "believing purposelessly and wildly" (*hu xin luan xin* 胡信亂信).[48]

In another chapter, the *Records* introduce the important principle of *xin yuan xing zheng* 信愿行證—literally, "belief, vow, practice, verification" and a guiding rule of conduct for Yiguandao practitioners in the course of their cultivation.[49] Usually taught to neophytes as early as their first series of introductory classes, the principle argues that belief is the very first step in spiritual cultivation. Making a vow comes next—for instance, pledging to become a vegetarian (a usual and highly valued practice in Yiguandao). Vows are important in one's cultivation as they enable practitioners to define goals to achieve, thus raising individual levels of dedication and thereby also the commitment to the entire community.[50] Belief is crucial in this mechanism as it serves as a sort of fingerpost to indicate the direction of cultivation. Consequently, the text claims, "without belief, one cannot make a vow. Without making a vow, there is no guide in practicing. Without practicing, there will be no proof in order to fulfill one's vow."[51] While the term itself appears for the first time in the *Records*, the author of the preface to the 1942 revelation *Realizing the Road to Revert Home* also argues that one function of taking the oaths during the initiation ceremony is to strengthen one's belief and thus to embrace the Dao in practice.[52] This important guideline is outlined in many writings

若無信仰，則精神無所寄託，必定空虛渺茫，就如同大海中無舵之舟，漫無止處，前程莫測。 The citations are from the *Daxue Zhongyong* 大學中庸, 46「中也者天下之大本」; *Lunyu* 1:2 「本立而道生」, 2:22 人而無信，不知其可也。大車無輗，小車無軏，其何以行之哉？」.

48 *Mingde xinmin jinxiulu*, 78, 82. 正邪並陳之社會中，信仰之選擇，不可不慎重為之，否則一味胡信，亂信，人云亦云，人拜亦拜，逢廟燒香，遇神叩頭，狐精、樹神、牛、蛇、石頭等亦當神膜拜，盲修瞎煉，結果不但毫無所得，亦將墮沉苦海而不自知，實屬可憐而又可惜也。 [...] 邪信(迷信)，畫符念咒，邪行異端，藉機斂財之類，遺害百姓。

49 *Mingde xinmin jinxiulu*, 150–153.

50 For a detailed treatment of this mechanism, see Lu 2008, 71–90.

51 *Mingde xinmin jinxiulu*, 152. 非信無以立愿，非愿無以導行，非行無以證所信而滿所愿也。

52 *Huanxiang juelu*, MDSX 6:xu3. 而於求道之始。先立大愿 十條。一意使其堅定信力。抱道奉行。

of the movement,[53] and it is at least partially modeled after the Chinese Buddhist concept of *xin jie xing zheng* 信解行證 (literally, "belief, understanding, practice, verification") that represents a similar model of sequential stages in Buddhist practice.[54] As explored in Tam Wai Lun's chapter, it originated in Qingliang Chengguan's 清涼澄觀 (738–839) commentary to the aforementioned *Flower Ornament Sūtra*.[55]

Likewise, a Japanese-language manual designed to instruct temple owners stresses a similar sequential model of believing that starts from exerting confidence (J. *shinjin* 信心) in one's path of cultivation: after initially "halfway believing, halfway doubting" (J. *hanshin hangi* 半信半疑), the Dao follower will eventually end up "believing perfectly" (J. *enshin* 圓信) in the truthfulness of the Dao, the self-strengthening powers of cultivation, and the fact that all humans are Mother's beloved children.[56] Other writings also explicate normative principles that need to be "believed in" (*xiangxin* 相信) by Dao cultivators: while the first three center on accepting the "truthfulness" of the Dao, the Heavenly Principle, and the Heavenly Mandate (*tianming* 天命), the other five prescribe belief in (4) reincarnation and the laws of karmic retribution, (5) the soothing powers of the "three treasures" (*sanbao* 三寶, which, however, differ from the Buddhist tradition), (6) the divine messages revealed in spirit-séances, (7) the transforming powers of divine beings, and (8) that these beings all emerged from humans who cultivated themselves in an excellent way.[57] In my fieldwork experience, Yiguandao practitioners bring up the first three principles—i.e., "Dao, Principle, and the Heavenly Mandate are all real" (*dao zhen*, *li zhen*, *tianming zhen* 道真, 理真, 天命真)—most frequently when describing their creed.

## 5 "Believing" versus "Knowing"

Even though most Yiguandao writings appear to appreciate the crucial importance of *xin* both as individual quality (trustworthiness) and faith in the Dao, another thread of discourses seeks to disintegrate "believing" and Dao

53 *Xin yuan xing zheng* 信愿行證; *Yiguandao tongshi jiangyi* 一貫道通識講義 / *An Overview of I-Kuan Tao*, 1:309–332; 2:227–237.

54 Cf. Hammerstrom 2015, 82.

55 See also Hamar 2016.

56 *Danshu shushi* 壇主須知, 2–5.

57 *Xin yuan xing zheng*, 22–82. 道真，理真，天命真，相信生死輪迴因果報應是真，相信三寶能安頓身心，相信仙佛聖訓是真，相信仙佛顯化，先說後應是真，相信聖賢仙佛由人修行 (chapter headings).

cultivation. While the latter is thought to be related to the universal, unchanging, and eternal truth, belief is associated with the realm of "religion," i.e., the human and thus necessarily incomplete interpretations of this truth. This distinction has been made in Yiguandao writings at least since the 1940s and probably earlier,[58] and it represents the prime reason why Dao followers tend to deny having "faith" in a more conceptual meaning. It appears that recent decades in particular have witnessed a growing desire among practitioners to clearly separate Dao from religion, which is most probably related to the increase in worldwide missionary activism, particularly since the 1990s.[59] Many prospective converts appear to conflate the two and thus consider Yiguandao just another religion.

One of the most trenchant critiques of this view is the 2011 brochure *The Myth of Seeking the Dao and Belief*.[60] Here, religious belief (*xinjiao* 信教, *xinyang* 信仰) is contrasted with "seeking the Dao" (*qiudao* 求道), a common term for becoming initiated into the movement. In the same vein as introduced above, religion is described as human-made interpretations or even distortions of the one universal truth. According to Yiguandao theology, the complete truth was not to be disseminated in its entirety until the early twentieth century. Consequently, religious teachers in human history were only able to transmit partial elements of this truth, which eventually leaves all religions bound to specific historical, social, and political contexts. These particularistic human transformations of the one truth are characterized by having sacred scriptures, congregations, rituals, religious teachers and followers, as well as "belief in deities" (*xinyang shenqi* 信仰神祇). Consequently, because religion is considered a human creation, it is thought to be about seeking worldly benefits, while salvation (*chaosheng liaosi* 超生了死) can be obtained only by cultivating the one true Dao.[61] It is interesting to note that this understanding of religion does not take into account claims of various religious traditions to represent their own path towards salvation, but rather integrates all existing religions into a large narrative dominated by the Dao. In this context, religious belief (*xinyang*) is thought of as an expression of the "belief in others" (*xinta* 信他), which is characterized by trusting something or someone because of depending on, relying on, seeking, and worshipping external entities.

58 *Daoxue xin jieshao*, YGDZ-YLZB 1:432–435; see also *Renli guizhen* 認理歸真, YGDZ-YLZB 3:7–10. However, earlier sources also distinguish between Dao and religion, such as the 1939 revelation discussed above.

59 For an introductory overview of Yiguandao's spread across the globe, see Broy 2020, 175–179.

60 *Qiudao yu xinyang de misi* 求道與信仰的迷思.

61 *Qiudao yu xinyang de misi*, 10, 19–20, 28–37.

Accordingly, the book claims, religious belief is not different from idolizing musicians, actors, or spiritual mentors (such as Yoga teachers). This, however, will be of no avail to achieve a true "faithful heart" (*xinxin*), which can only be attained by "believing in one's true self" (*zixin* 自信): somewhat departing from the everyday usage of the term as "having confidence in oneself," the brochure clearly uses *zixin* to refer to faith and trustfulness in humans' spiritual self and their original nature. Quoting the famous *Platform Sūtra* which is associated with the sixth Chan Buddhist patriarch Huineng 慧能 (638–813), the text claims that "without recognizing one's 'original mind' (*benxin* 本心), it is of no avail to study the Buddhist dharma."[62] Consequently, realizing one's original nature is considered one of three essential requirements for initiation into the Dao, namely (1) to have karmic affinities to receive the Dao by having practiced good deeds before, (2) to have faith (in one's original nature), and (3) to have made a vow to practice the Dao.[63]

Interviewees during my fieldwork frequently raised similar convictions about the discreteness of Dao and religious faith. In one instance, a high-ranking practitioner of Yiguandao's Fayi Tian'en 發一天恩 branch ("Promoting Unity, Heavenly Grace") told me that

> … things related to religion are easy. It is just to do things in a certain way, and that's it. Even if it does not make any sense at all, you do it like this. For instance, to believe God. Right? To believe God is okay. But don't think, don't ask. But the Dao is not like this. […] Each and every religion is about worship, […] but this is not what is important—cultivation is. […] The Dao does not tell people to believe or to worship.[64]

Similarly, another informant from the Fayi Chongde 發一崇德 ("Promoting Unity, Cherishing Virtues") branch pointed out that Dao cultivation comes from within, while "religious beliefs" (*zongjiao xinyang* 宗教信仰) are to seek for good luck or other mundane improvements, while at the same time leaving

62 *Qiudao yu xinyang de misi*, 40–41. 不識本心，學法無益, cited from *Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing* 六祖大師法寶壇經, T 48, #2008, 349a21–22.

63 *Qiudao yu xinyang de misi*, 49. 因為求道之前要具足三種因緣，並且行了足夠的善行與教化，才有可能逢遇明師指點，那就是無緣不渡，無信不渡，無愿不渡。

64 Fieldwork in Taipei, 28 April 2017. 宗教的東西是容易的，就是這樣做就好了，就算沒有意義也是這樣做 […] 好像說 believe God 是不是，believe God 就好了，什麼其他的 don't think, don't ask，那道不是這樣子。 […] 任何一個宗教都是 worship，[…] 拜不是中間，修是中間。道不是叫人去相信，去膜拜。

the question of recognizing one's inner nature untouched.[65] Probably most incisively, a high-ranking American-Taiwanese representative of the same branch put it that "religion is made by humans, you may believe or not, but Dao is the truth, you must do."[66] As these examples demonstrate, contemporary Dao followers appear to share modernist critiques of religious believing as mindless obedience, while Dao cultivation is portrayed as the only path towards recognizing one's true nature. Even though this discourse seeks to take a rationalist stance by claiming to represent "knowledge of the self" rather than religious worship, to exhibit faith (*xin*) in a certain set of notions reintroduces the concept of faith into the discussion.

## 6 Conclusion

The conviction that belief in the teachings of the sect is required in order to attain salvation appears to have been an important characteristic of popular sects not only in the late imperial period. Medieval "Buddhist-inspired" (borrowing Barend ter Haar's term) scriptures such as the probably late sixth-century apocryphal *Sūtra on the Realization of Understanding* already proclaim that those who will be punished during the apocalypse at the time of Buddha Maitreya's descent are those who consume meat and alcohol and do not believe in the advent of the savior.[67] Yet a cursory look at relevant materials suggests that both "belief" and *xin* were not primary topics in Ming and Qing sectarian writings. Nevertheless, the notion of belief as essential to enlightenment and salvation appears to have been a well-established understanding in these groups. Furthermore, most sects appear to have constructed some form of binary that imagined belief-salvation to be clearly distinguished from disbelief-doom. While some groups may have viewed this binary in a more subtle and implicit way (such as the Non-Action Sect), others have proclaimed outright that the nonbelievers will be annihilated in the final apocalypse. Similar visions were also articulated in spirit-written morality books of the late imperial period, as Vincent Goossaert shows in his contribution. Moreover, it

65 Fieldwork at Fayi Chongde 發一崇德 branch, Caotun township 草屯鎮, Nantou County, 8 May 2017.

66 Fieldwork in El Monte City, Los Angeles County, 2 February 2018. Note that this is a quasi-quotation from my mental protocol.

67 *Puxian Pusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩説證明經, T 85, #2879, 1366c12–16. 彌勒俱時下。餘有受罪人。飲酒食肉者。不信有佛出世。不信有彌勒下。如是之人等。九孔同流。耳中血出。鼻中血出。眼中血出。口中血出。如是之人末劫終盡。盡入地[獄]無有出期. For a detailed treatment of this and similar texts, cf. Seiwert 2003, 134–154.

is obvious that these tracts also circulated among sectarian groups. Particularly since the nineteenth century, both milieus engaged in ever greater interaction. For instance, the fourteenth-century revelation by Xuantian Shangdi 玄天上帝 discussed by Goossaert was cited by a Xiantiandao patriarch in 1836 to underscore the eschatology of the faithful in an apocalyptic prophecy made for the years 1832 to 1833: "The virtuous people will get to see the light of day, but the wicked ones will not see the [era] of Great Peace. Those who believe will be saved at the end of the final period, while those who do not believe will lose their souls."[68] Further research is needed to determine whether this formulation has evolved into a stock phrase in similar apocalyptic visions.

Still, believing and *xin* appear to have become major topics of reflection and discussion in sectarian groups only in the twentieth century. It is difficult to ascertain whether this development is related to increased interaction with non-Chinese religious traditions (particularly Christianity, which of course puts great emphasis on matters related to faith) and Western modernity since the late nineteenth century. Yiguandao discourses appear to have taken up matters related to faith, believing, and *xin* particularly since the late 1930s, and all major themes have emerged already during this period. Even though the purported engagement with Christianity may have fueled Yiguandao notions of believing, references to Christian counterparts are nearly absent from the discourses and they also represent a quite recent phenomenon.[69] Rather, the writings demonstrate a profound commitment to traditional Confucian and Buddhist notions of *xin* in the sense of individual trustworthiness, thus creating a unique discourse that cannot be reduced to Christian or modern influence but which engages with the rich Chinese intellectual and religious traditions. Thus, the discussion is embedded in a variety of discourses, including Buddhist (e.g., *Flower Ornament Sūtra*, *Platform Sūtra*, Ding Fubao, the principle of *xin yuan xing zheng*), Confucian (citations from *Lunyu* and *Zhongyong*), intellectual (Sun Yat-sen), and modernist ones (such as the secularist attacks on traditional moral values). Only recently, and yet under apparent Christian and Western influence, Dao followers seem to have dropped the notion of "belief" to a certain extent, as they consider it too much entangled with "religion," i.e., human-made interpretations of the one universal truth.

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68 Goossaert cites the *Wudangshan Xuantian shangdi chuixunwen* 武當山玄天上帝垂訓文, revealed in early 1302 (Dade 5/12/24 = 23 January 1302), in ZWDS 22:416a11–13. For the Xiantiandao prophecy, see *Renxing jicheng*, in ZWDS 24:229b02–05. The quotation is: 善者得見天目[日]，惡者不見太平，信者得度末劫，不信喪命亡魂。

69 See, for instance, the brief discussion of Christ's notion of "absolute belief" (*juedui xinnian* 絕對信念), which is required for salvation, in *Yesu de xingdao jingshen* 耶穌的行道精神, 69.

Still, to have faith in the Dao appears to remain a prominent topic in contemporary sectarian groups in Taiwan. For instance, Yiguandao offshoots such as Haizidao 亥子道 promise salvation to those who believe (*xinyang*) in their teachings.[70] Likewise, other modern sectarian groups that equally emerged during the first half of the twentieth century, such as the Daoyuan 道院, expose similar understandings that knowledge of the Dao and the self must come prior to "believing." In addition, it claims that belief is a rational engagement with the one universal truth, and is thus the very foundation of modern science.[71] Others, such as the "Fellowship of Goodness" (Tongshanshe 同善社), mirror Yiguandao's appraisal of believing as the most powerful force guiding humans' motivations and actions.[72]

To conclude, it appears that the concept of "believing" in Chinese popular sects is both central and marginal at the same time. While this statement may appear paradoxical at first sight, there seems to be a disproportion between the level of religious practice on the one hand and that of terminology and religious concepts on the other. Thus, analyzing Yiguandao and other sectarian discourses in regard to "belief/faith" clearly reveals that "believing" is indeed a relevant and significant practice, or what Max Weber would call *Lebensführung* or "conduct of life"—i.e., a structured and purposeful whole of behavior and practices.[73] To believe in the absolute truth of the Dao and the teachings of the sect while at the same time rejecting certain other ideas is an essential element of individual commitment and collective identity. It is very clear that this *practice of believing* is to be distinguished from mere "knowing something," as it is grounded in nonempirical and divine entities and encoded in strict binaries of belief—salvation and disbelief—doom that can be traced back to popular sects of at least the medieval period. In regard to *religious concepts*, however, "belief/faith" (or its Chinese counterparts, such as *xin*, *xinxin*,

70 *Baiyang shouyuan tianzhen Haizidao shengjing* 白陽收圓天真亥子道聖經, book cover, no pagination. 天國的福音：信仰亥子道一成仙作佛，信仰亥子道一天堂逍遙，信仰亥子道一能證無極，信仰亥子道一超脫輪迴。

71 *Daoci jiben shuji huiji* 道慈基本書籍彙集, 67–68. 夫信仰者，必有先知先覺，從至性的感覺上，窮究出一種極明瞭，極渾涵，極大極真，[...] 就是信仰的大本源。[...] 謹就從前訓所言，可以明確地辨別出，信仰為理性之探求，有至深之學理，科學之根據。

72 *Xuanjiang beiyao* 宣講備要, 157–158, esp. 157. 信仰充實人們生活的精神內涵，信仰給足了人們在物質後的精神給付，而信仰之力量，補強了生命的弱點，堅定了生命的目標，志願，尤其修行，必須由信心[...]. In a later section, the handbook also discusses a principle similar to Yiguandao's "belief, vow, practice, verification," see 246–270.

73 While this important analytical concept has not been developed systematically in Weber's oeuvre, I refer to the discussion in Krech 2001, 70–73.

and *xinyang*) does not play an equally prominent role and is often surpassed by other notions that sectarians are more eager to explore in their writings and to discuss with outsiders, such as the Dao and its efficacy, or the need to cultivate one's moral nature in order to be reborn in Mother's paradise. This discrepancy, I assume, is one of the reasons why it feels so difficult at first sight to detect references to "belief" (both as practice and concept) in sectarian discourses: They tend to be concealed behind more prominent teachings and symbols but nevertheless assume prominent roles in the day to day "conducts of life" of committed sectarians.

## Abbreviations

MDSX A six-volume collection of spirit revelations and other texts (primarily from the Republican Period) published by Dao followers in 2016 and disseminated for free by the Taipei Yiguandao bookstore Mingde xinling shufang 明德心靈書坊—hence my abbreviation as Ming De Sheng Xun 明德聖訓.

MJZJ Wang Jianchuan 王見川 and Lin Wanchuan 林萬傳, ed. 1999. *Ming Qing minjian zongjiao jingjuan wenxian* 明清民間宗教經卷文獻. 12 vols. Taipei: Xinwenfeng.

T Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎, Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, eds. 1982 [1924–1934]. *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Reprint Taipei: Xinwenfeng.

YGDJJ Wang Jianchuan 王見川, ed. 2011. *Minzhong jingdian: Yiguandao jingjuan, Liu Bowen jinrang yu qita* 民眾經典：一貫道經卷、劉伯溫錦囊與其他. 5 vols. Taipei: Boyang wenhua.

YGDZ-SDZB Lin Rongze 林榮澤, ed. 2009–2015. *Yiguandao zang: Shengdian zhi bu* 一貫道藏. 聖典之部. 43 vols. Taipei: Lantai chubanshe.

YGDZ-YLZB Lin Rongze 林榮澤, ed. 2010–2015. *Yiguandao zang: Yili zhi bu* 一貫道藏. 義理之部. 8 vols. Taipei: Lantai chubanshe.

ZWDS Hu Daojing 胡道靜 et al., ed. 1992–1994. *Zangwai daoshu* 藏外道書. 36 vols. Chengdu: Bashu shushe.

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*Bazi jueyuan* 八字覺源. N.d. MJZJ 9.

*Da fangguangfo huayanjing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, Skt. *Mahāvaipulya Buddhāvataṃsaka-Sūtra*, T10 no. 279.

*Danshu shushi* 壇主須知. N.d. Banqiao: Zhengyi shanshu chubanshe.

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*Guiju zhunsheng* 規矩準繩. Reprint ed. 1895. YGDZ-ZSZB 5.

*Guiyuan baofa* 歸原寶筏. Reprint ed. 1903. MJZJ 9.

*Huanxiang juelu* 還鄉覺路, prefaces dated 1942, MDSX 6.

*Hunyuan budai zhenjing* 混元布袋真經. N.d. (revealed in 1926), MDSX 2.

*Jiaxiang xinshu* 家鄉信書. N.d. [1919]. Taipei: Shengfa yinshua yongpin youxian gongsi.

*Jichu daoxue* 基礎道學. N.d. YGDZ-YLZB 3.

*Jin'gong Zushi chandao pian* 金公祖師闡道篇. N.d. (series of revelations received in 1936), YGDZ-SDZB 1.

*Jinshi liujie* 金石六誡. N.d. (revealed in 1936), YGDZ-SDZB 1.

*Jinshi yaoyan* 金石要言. 1889. Yushan Laoren 玉山老人 (Lin Yimi). YGDZ-ZSZB 5.

*Kugong wudao juan* 苦功悟道卷. 1980 [1596]. Reprint ed., MJZJ 2.

*Liben* (*Kaishijing*) 禮本 (開示經). N.d. (probably in the 1820s), MJZJ 9.

*Liuzu dashi fabao tanjing* 六祖大師法寶壇經, T48 no. 2008.

*Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯註. 2004. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

*Mingde xinmin jinxiulu* 明德新民進修錄. 2006. Banqiao: Zhengyi shanshu chubanshe.

*Poxie xianzheng yaoshi juan* 破邪顯證鑰匙卷 (*Kaixin fayao*), MZJZ 2.

*Puxian Pusa shuo zhengming jing* 普賢菩薩說證明經, T85 no. 2879.

*Qiudao yu xinyang de misi* 求道與信仰的迷思. 2011. Taipei: Mingde chubanshe.

*Renli guizhen* 認理歸真. N.d. (first edition probably 1950s), YGDZ-YLZB 3.

*Renxing jicheng* 仁性集成. N.d. (preface dated 1836), in *Wuqi laozu quanshu* 無欺老祖全書, ZWDS 24.

Shangshu zhengyi 尚書正義. 1982. In *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Ruan Yuan 阮元, vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

*Shiliu tiaogui* 十六條規, YGDZ-ZSZB 4.

*Shuaizhen jinxiulu* 率真進修錄. N.d. (first published 1941), YGDZ-YLZB 1.

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*Tan xinyang* 談信仰, no bibliographical information.

*Weiwei budong Taishan shen'gen jieguo baojuan* 巍巍不動太山深根結果寶卷 (*Kaixin fayao*), MJZJ 2.

*Wudangshan Xuantian shangdi chuixunwen* 武當山玄天上帝垂訓文. N.d. (revealed in early 1302 [Dade 5/12/24 = 23 January 1302]), ZWDS 22.

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# PART 4

## *Contemporary Usages in Special and Everyday Language Discourses in Mainland China and Taiwan*

∴

CHAPTER 21

# *Xin* 信 in the Discourse on Conversion among Tzuchians in Shanghai

*Huang Weishan*

## 1 Introduction

In an interview in 2010 in Shanghai, one informant, Woo, spoke about his experience of conversion and how he converted other people. It was an occasion on which he used three different meanings of the term *xin* in one page of transcription. "The possession of diligence, confidence (信心), and courage is the source of morality. One must be very assiduous to do what he is supposed to do, and believe (相信) there always will be nature's way to achieve the goal. To tell people the vision of Tzu Chi is the idea of saving people and holding the belief (信念) in compassion …" (認真，信心和勇氣都具備的話，這也都是個酵母[功德母]，只要他自己很認真去做自己該做的事情，相信一定會有水到渠成的時侯 … 告訴他慈濟的理念，救人的觀念，慈悲的信念 …), Woo said.

What are the institutional meanings of *xin* 信 (faith, belief, or trust) in the teachings of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation (hereafter Tzu Chi)? One might easily discover hundreds of thousands of online articles referring to the term *xin* which are represented as the organizational positions for the concept of *xin*. In this paper, I intend to understand the denotation and connotation of *xin* in practitioners' accounts of their conversions and practices. My data is based on practitioners' conversion narratives from 2010, when I conducted on-site interviews, and in 2018 I revisited these accounts. In their stories of conversion to Tzu Chi, the narratives share common features: first, the common trigger for their conversions was their Taiwanese friends' invitations. Secondly, the tie among Taiwanese merchant networks in the region remains strong. Tzu Chi, one of the few non-merchant-based organizations, provided an alternative for Taiwanese associational life. The distinctiveness of their stories is evident in the various ways they appropriate the concepts of *xin* (belief) and how the interviewees tended to reconstruct their vivid religious experiences during the interviews. When I reviewed those transcriptions eight years later, I came to the conclusion that these conversion narratives do not represent institutional positions. In these stories, the themes, claims, and the experiences

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that one might call "original," are quite different from the institutional teachings. Woo's multiple usages of *xin* are an exceptional case among all of the interviewed informants because most of interviewee did not refer to the word *xin*. I will provide data and analysis to demonstrate these variations. The intention of this work is to demonstrate Tzu Chi practitioners' interpretations of *xin* in practice.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation 佛教慈濟基金會, with its millions of members in Taiwan and overseas, is indeed the largest NGO in Taiwan today, with more than 300 Tzu Chi offices worldwide.[1] As the record from 2012 shows, there was a total of 77,621 certified Tzu Chi commissioners 慈濟委員 globally in 34 regions. Of this total, there were 50,240 certified commissioners and 27,381 Tzu Cheng Faith Corps members 慈誠委員.[2] Among them, 29,766 commissioners and 19,064 Faith Corps members are in Taiwan. Additionally, 3623 commissioners and 1324 Faith Corps members are overseas members. Commissioners and Faith Corps members are lay leaders who serve as the backbone of global missions. The spread and settlement of ethnic Chinese immigrants in many major cities worldwide is the most significant factor behind Tzu Chi's global network. In China, they require at least two to three years of training in each local area and are certified by the Religious Bureau 宗教部 at the headquarters in Hualien City 花蓮市, Taiwan.

The focus on social and humanitarian services distinguishes the Tzu Chi Foundation from other Han Buddhist groups not only in Taiwan and China, but also globally. The founder, Cheng Yen 證嚴法師 (1937–),[3] was initiated as a Buddhist nun in 1963 and was influenced by her master, Yin Shun 印順 (1906–2005), who taught his followers to "be committed to Buddhism and to all living beings" (為佛教為衆生).[4] This reform is truly Ven. Cheng Yen's own innovation. The followers of Master Cheng Yen must also join the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation in Taiwan. Therefore, the identity of being a devoted Buddhist is associated with the secular charitable identity of Tzuchian (i.e., Tzu Chi members).

In the 1990s, as a foreign and organized religious group, the commissioners of Tzu Chi Foundation behaved as missionaries who risked their business interests by insisting on conducting Buddhist evangelism among Taiwanese immigrants in Shanghai. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Tzu Chi identities served as a tool for distinguishing themselves from the members of the Taiwanese

1 See www.tzuchi.org (accessed 20 July, 2016).

2 Commissioners are lay leaders who have been certified. Tzu Cheng Faith Corps members refer to male commissioners.

3 Cheng Yen is her name's official spelling, www.tzuchi.org (accessed 20 July, 2016).

4 Lu Huixin 2004: 2.

Merchant Association by preserving strong group ties. This result was different from what had been suggested by the early model of migration theory in the United States, where religious identities were applied or assigned along ethnic lines.[5] Once Tzu Chi was successfully registered in the PRC in 2008, its NGO legal status permitted the organization to recruit local Chinese members, a significant breakthrough for the expansion of organization membership that crossed ethnic boundaries to include local Chinese. Many cross-group interactions were documented in Tzu Chi activities in Shanghai.[6] My research showed that the indigenization of Tzu Chi members in China (which is also a growing phenomenon in various Tzu Chi overseas branches) mirrored another phenomenon, particularly in China: the overriding of ethnic divisions through religious affiliations. However, the data I use in this paper is limited to Taiwanese who agreed to be interviewed and recorded in Shanghai. Only two interviewees are Chinese entrepreneurs. In addition, the discourse analysis among Taiwanese entrepreneurs is separated from the discourse analysis among local Chinese in Shanghai by both ethnic and class variances.

Class also has been another important variable separating the working and social lives of the Taiwanese and Chinese in China. Most Taiwanese immigrants, entrepreneurs, and business professionals live a completely different expatriate life through maintaining separate working spaces and dormitories in the industrial parks.[7] The ethnic separation in urban areas is different. Taiwanese business expatriates live their lives as transnational migrants traveling between their family homes in Taiwan and "guest" homes in China. The population of Taiwanese entrepreneurs and business professionals in my research[8] are Taiwanese born.[9] The first generation of Taiwanese in China were entrepreneurs running their own manufacturing companies, but usually had no college education, while the younger Taiwanese business professionals who worked for them tended to have college degrees.[10]

This article will cover the following themes. First, I will start by stating my research method and research period. The definition of major terms, such as "conversion," will also be included. Second, the set of interview data in 2010 will be studied for the patterns of word choices. Tzu Chi core teachings on *xin* will be analyzed as the institutional position. The materials of this investigation

5 Huang 2018.

6 Huang 2018.

7 Based on my observations during field trips to Shenzhen in 1999 and Kunshan in 2010.

8 Interview meetings were conducted between 2010 and 2014.

9 I.e., they were born in Taiwan and were not returned mainlanders.

10 Among my interviewees, children of the first-generation Taiwanese were born in Taiwan and all had attained college degrees in Western countries before they joined their parents' businesses in China. However, they are not the main research targets that I studied.

include Tzu Chi mottos, catchphrases, and Cheng Yen's key statements, such as the declaration of the establishment of a "Tzu Chi School" (慈濟宗門). Third, I will analyze the relationship between Tzu Chi institutional teachings and the vocabularies adopted by practitioners, concluding with discussing the connotations of *xin* among interviewed practitioners. In the conclusion, I include summaries of two Tzu Chi high profile commissioners' interpretations of *xin* and discuss how those interpretations align with the institutional position.

## 2 Research Methods

In James Beckford's article, "Account for Conversion," he critically questions if actors' self-reported accounts of religious conversion are objective or unproblematic reports on experiences. He problematizes "religious actors' own views of reality and their own accounts of experience as the primary materials for interpretation."[11] His research illustrates how Jehovah's Witnesses' conversion accounts are typically constructed based on a set of guidelines, which fits well into the Watchtower movement's evolving organizational rationale.

The Tzu Chi practitioners in some ways show the multifaceted nature of conversions. This paper will focus on, first, a narrative analysis of lay practitioners' accounts, particularly on their employment of the term *xin*. More than seventy Tzu Chi volunteers were interviewed during 2010 and 2014; however, only seventeen of them had been recorded during their interviews. The research methods involved participant observation and formal and informal interviews, but this data could not be admitted in this paper because of the lack of recording for semiotic analysis. The transcriptions of these interviews were made in 2013 and 2014. One of my informants, Sister Chiou, provided valuable connections and referred me to other Taiwanese Tzuchians in Shanghai in the first year of my research. The second kind of data I employ is the organizational teachings of Tzu Chi Foundation based on its publications, especially on Master Cheng Yen's key statements. As the master's publications are so numerous, I deliberately focus on the recurrent usage of *xin* and its associations or subordinations. By comparing practitioners' narratives and the master's teachings, I seek to determine if the practitioners were reporting on their own accounts and processes of "believing."

All of the Tzu Chi followers I interviewed were involved with either poverty relief or disaster relief in rural China; therefore, they reported on their actions

11 Beckford 1978, 250.

rather than an abstract idea of their belief without following any specific organizational instructions. It was Tzu Chi's motto that *xing* 行 (practice) is a crucial part of belief. It has always been Tzu Chi's policy to invite the wealthy to experience "impermanence" by participating in disaster relief. During this effort, thirty or forty of the "bosses" slept in one room. They were physically involved with cleaning streets, cooking for victims, delivering relief goods, and visiting households in need. In the evening, they gathered in groups and shared their thoughts on Tzu Chi practices. Witnessing others' sorrow is the way of reaching the upper class, whom the master considers difficult to teach enlightenment to because they have too much pride to give to the needy. The method is to teach them to witness impermanence and suffering in order to live with gratitude for whatever they experience at the moment. This method is also adopted by the bosses to teach their high-ranking staff.

Conversion is understood as the adoption of new religious beliefs or identities that are different from the convert's previous systems of belief. In the case of my informants, some of them already believed in Buddhism before they joined the Tzu Chi group. Although they may not adopt a new worldview, the critical changes new Tzu Chi converts face concern the commitment to practice the faith and the change in social identities. The converts must devote themselves to religious voluntarism. The converts also identify themselves as Tzuchians rather than pan-Buddhists. The "new" reference that members learned from the Tzu Chi group, based on my interviews and observations, revolves around enthusiastic devotion to benevolent works.

## 3 *Xin* 信 in the Lay People's Narratives and in Organizational Teachings

In this section, I will summarize the use of the word *xin* in two different accounts.

### 3.1 *Transcription Data*

In this account of interview recordings in 2010, there are seventeen Tzu Chi followers, eleven males and six females. The gender ratio of Tzuchians entrepreneurs does not reflect the gender proportion among the rank-and-file members, which is about eighty percent of female volunteers. Fifteen of them are entrepreneurs and the other two (one male and one female) are Tzu Chi full-time office staffers in Suzhou 蘇州. Sixteen of them are older than 50 years old and only one interviewee is younger than 40 years old (and thus belongs to the second generation of Tzuchians). The bias in this sample is that the majority of interviewees are economic elites with modest educational backgrounds.

Therefore, those entrepreneurs (particularly the ethnic Taiwanese) do not reiterate sophisticated Tzu Chi vocabularies in the conversation.[12]

The informal interview questions are designed along three lines of inquiry: first, their histories of belief and practice before they joined the Tzu Chi Foundation; second, the stories concerning immigration from Taiwan to China; third, the influence of Tzu Chi teachings in their lives in Shanghai, particularly in their business practices. Therefore, the open-end questions were never specifically designed to elicit their understandings of *xin*. Here is an overview of the variety of associations with their usage of *xin*:

TABLE 21.1 Usages of *xin* and their associations.

| Interviewees | 宗教信仰/信仰 | 相信 | 信(動詞) | 信賴/信任 | 信心 | 信念 | 信佛(教) | 迷信 | 淨信三寶 | 自信 | 正信 | 信眾/信徒 | 轉信 | 寫信 | 愚信 | 信解行 | 誠正信實 | other names | total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F1 | 4 | 5 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| M1 | 2 | 7 | | 6 | 2 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 19 |
| F2 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 33 |
| F3 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| F4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 15 |
| M2 | | 2 | 3 | | | | | 3 | | 1 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | | 20 |
| F5 | | 2 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| M3 | 2 | 3 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | 7 |
| M4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | 1 | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | 8 |
| M5 | 2 | | 3 | | | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | 10 |
| M6 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 5 |
| F6 | | 2 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| M7 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| M8 | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| M9 | 7 | 5 | | 3 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 17 |
| M10 | | 7 | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | 10 |
| M11 | 4 | 5 | | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 15 |
| SUM | 35 | 58 | 13 | 20 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 188 |

12 Ethnic Taiwanese refers to Taiwanese immigrants from Taiwan since the 1980s. Chinese entrepreneurs refer to local entrepreneurs in China.

The translation of terms related to *xin* (from Chinese to English) in the informants' narratives:

TABLE 21.2 Translation of terms related to *xin*

| **Chinese characters (pinyin)** | **English** |
|---|---|
| 宗教信仰 / 信仰 (*zongjiao xinyang/xinyang*) | Religious belief |
| 相信 (*xiangxin*) | Believe |
| 信（動詞）(*xin*) | Believe (verb) |
| 信賴 / 信任 (*xinlai/xinren*) | Trust, have faith in |
| 信心 (*xinxin*) | Confidence |
| 信念 (*xinnian*) | Belief |
| 信佛（教） (*xin fojiao*) | Believe in Buddhism |
| 迷信 (*mixin*) | Superstition |
| 淨信 (*jingxin*) | Pure faith |
| 自信 (*zixin*) | Self-confidence |
| 正信 (*zhengxin*) | Righteous belief |
| 信眾/信徒 (*xintu*) | Believers |
| 轉信 (*zhuanxin*) | Conversion |
| 寫信 (*xiexin*) | Write letters |
| 愚信 (*yuxin*) | Ignorant belief |
| 信解行 (*xin jie xing*) | Believe-understand-practice |
| 誠正信實 (*cheng zheng xin shi*) | Honest and trustworthy |

In this set of data, *xiangxin* 相信 (to believe) has been used in fifty-eight instances. *Xinyang* 信仰 (religious belief) has been used in thirty-five instances. *Xinlai* 信賴 or *xinren* 信任 (trust, to have faith in) has been used twenty times. *Xin fo* 信佛 (belief in Buddhism) has been used nine times. *Xinnian* 信念 (belief, principle) has been used eight times. *Xinxin* 信心 (confidence) has been used seven times. There are two negatively connotated combinations in the above summary of usages of the term. One is *mixin* 迷信 (superstition) and the other is *yuxin* 愚信 (ignorant belief). *Mixin* has been used six times and *yuxin* has been used in one instance. A positive connotation, *zhengxin* 正信 (righteous belief), is actually in contrast to *mixin* 迷信 (superstition). Other terms associated with *xin* were used less frequently, but they will be brought back into the discussion in later sections when I compare the relationship between *xin* used in spoken language during the interviews and in the core teachings of the Tzu Chi Foundation.

### 3.2 *The Core Teachings of the Tzu Chi Foundation relating to xin* 信

In this section, I will try to lay out the core teachings of Tzu Chi and, in particularly, their relations with *xin* to advance my understanding of *xin* used in practice.

In one of Master Cheng Yen's past statements, "Still Thought Lineage, Tzu Chi School" (靜思法脈，慈濟宗), the master states her vision of the movement, using *xin* thirty-two times, all in positive connotations and in the following ways:

1. The motto, "To cultivate inwardly, we must be honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful, and to practice kindness, mercy, happiness, and offering" (內修誠正信實、外行慈悲喜捨), is used in nine instances in the statement.[13] In this case, *xin* means being faithful and truthful.
2. Orthodox faith 正信 is used twice. (Righteous faith will not cause doubt 正信不生疑惑)
3. Confidence 信心 is mentioned four times.
4. Trust 相信, 信任 is mentioned four times.
5. *Xin* 信 is also used as faith 信仰, trustworthy 守信, belief-vow 信願, but only one time for each connotation.

The above text, "Still Thought Lineage, Tzu Chi School," was a declaration of the establishment of Tzu Chi School (慈濟宗門); therefore, its implication is that it is an important organizational document. How is *xin* explicitly defined in the statement? Here are two examples:

> *Xin* is an inquiry into one's own heart and is very important. One must have self-confidence and let others trust in her/him. 信，是自己對內心的要求；「信」，非常重要，做人要有自信，也要能讓人相信.
>
> Only if the heart is like lapis lazuli, can it be "honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful" (誠正信實). If everything is done in good faith and there is no hypocrisy, then it is "honest" (*cheng*). If each step is virtuous and there is no deviation in direction, then it is "righteous" (*zheng*). If one devotes oneself without seeking favors in return and the dedication can earn people's trust, then it is "faithful" (*xin*). If one is down-to-earth and sure-footed in progress, then it is "truthful" (*shi*).

> 心淨如琉璃，方能「誠正信實」——一切付出發自真誠，沒有虛偽，是「誠」；步伐正確，方向沒有偏差，是「正」；付出無所求，做得讓人信任、肯定，是「信」；腳踏實地，穩步前進，是「實」。

13 Tzu Chi publication, http://news.tzuchi.net/FollowMaster.nsf/e75818ef87671c8c4825684800 3c5866/a076d79a14aea7b4482572890 02bcab9?OpenDocument (accessed 30 May 2018).

In one of Tzu Chi's key publications, *Three Universal Negations* (*Putian sanwu* 普天三無), a book series outlining the philosophy and the moral worldview of Master Cheng Yen, one of the mottos is, "there is no one whom I don't love in the world, there is no one whom I don't trust in the world, there is no one whom I don't forgive in the world" (普天之下無我不愛的人，普天之下無我不信任的人，普天之下無我不原諒的人).[14] In this saying, double negations are applied to highlight the absolute value of *ai* 愛 (love), *xinren* 信任 (trust), and *yuanliang* 原諒 (forgiveness). *Xinren* is trust in, belief in, or confidence in, and is here used as a verb.

The teaching is that "There is pure Tathagata nature in Human nature. In addition to believing in selflessness, we also believe that everyone has love. No matter how hard it is, we must inspire the love of everyone and bring together our strength, so as to put the Buddha's faith into practice" (人本具清淨如來本性，除了信己無私，也相信人人有愛；無論再艱辛，都要啟發大眾的愛心，匯集力量，將佛陀的信念在人間實踐). The implication of *xin* should be manifested in the form of action in this world, the action generated from the faith with a desire to change the outside environment. The suggestion of practice as a way of acting out one's belief (*xin* 信) is revealed in most of Tzu Chi's online and printed publications. The interpretation of the statement that "there is no one whom I don't trust in the world" is that if one is selfless, one can donate his/her remains for medical anatomy, give care to villagers who are infected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and perform other good works. The above teaching seeks to promote the institutional value of Great Love (*da ai* 大愛), that human beings can act beyond their old habits and achieve something bigger than their selfish desires if they deeply believe that they have faith in others. The visible action/practice (*xing* 行) is the exhibition and confirmation of invisible faith (*xin*). There are many publications related to the faith and practice of Tzu Chi, *xin-yuan-xing* 信願行 (faith, vow, and practice).

In many Tzu Chi publications, countless stories amplify Master Cheng Yen's motto of faith-vow-practice-attainment/verification (*xin yuan xing zheng* 信願行證). The focal teaching is that

> *Xin* is the source of morality and virtues. If there is no faith in the learning of Dharma, what are we here to learn? Therefore, we must learn from the Buddha and have faith in the law of Dharma. Only faith is not enough. We must also take a vow. We must take great vows and make great efforts. It is

14 Shih Cheng Yen 釋證嚴, *Jingsi famai ginxing dao, ciji zhongmen renjian lu* 靜思法脈勤行道　慈濟宗門人間路, http://www.tzuchi.org.tw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1939:2009-10-30-06-01-21&catid=81:tzuchi-about&Itemid=198&lang=en (accessed 30 August 2020).

> not enough just to take vows and make efforts. It is to practice physically and cultivate internally and externally. To cultivate inwardly, we must be honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful, and we must make four infinite vows: to save immeasurable beings, to end countless vexations, to learn immeasurable Buddhist teachings, and to achieve ultimate Buddhist practices.
>
> 信乃是道源功德母，學佛若沒有信心，我們是要學什麼呢？所以我們必定學佛，要對佛所說法，應該要有信心。信心還不夠，還要發願，要立大願、發大心。光是立願、發心，也還不夠，那就是要身體力行，內外兼修。向內要誠、正、信、實，我們要發「四弘誓願」：眾生無邊誓願度，煩惱無盡誓願斷，法門無量誓願學，佛道無上誓願成.[15]

On the Tzu Chi official website in China, the main pages that contain the catchphrases mentioned above, there are two tags related to the concept of *xin*. The first catchphrase is, "there is no one whom I don't trust in the world" (普天之下，無我不能相信的人). The second one is "honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful" (誠正信實). The meaning of *xin* is elaborated as "*xin* can nurture within us all that is good. Only with this firm belief (信念), one will not be influenced by surroundings" (信能常養一切諸善根，信念堅定才不會受外境影響).[16]

The first catchphrase of "there is no one whom I don't trust" was adopted in a conversation with one of my informants; however, he was critical about the idea that followers should really just simply trust everyone, saying that motto was not working well in his daily life. As for the second catchphrase, sister Mei quoted it directly when she expressed her concerns about the determination of newly converted members. She referred to the phrase to stress that ultimately it is belief that is the main driver that leads one's practice. I will elaborate on this idea in my analysis later on in this chapter.

15 http://www.jingsi.org/jingsi2/index.php/zh-tw/aphorisms/hotel/2-uncategorised/31-action; and http://web.tzuchiculture.org.tw/?mm=1184#.W4EUv-gzaM8 (accessed 5 June, 2018).

16 http://www.tzuchi.org.cn/%E8%AE%A4%E8%AF%86%E6%85%88%E6%B5%8E/%E6%85%88%E6%B5%8E%E8%AF%AD%E6%B1%87?start=6 (accessed 10 August, 2018).

## 4 Analysis of Practitioners' Narratives

By examining the conversion narratives from the interview data between the years 2010 and 2014, I found that

1. The conversion narratives were not strongly in line with the institutional core teachings. Most of the stories related to personal experiences and showed considerable variation; therefore, those narratives did not represent the institutional position.
2. The conversion narratives have little focus on the process of *xin*. Like many other religious stories on conversion, there was a "before" and "after" scenario to the conversion experience. But most of Tzu Chi interviewees believed in Buddhism, or at least had some spirituality, before they joined Tzu Chi as members or committed to Tzu Chi practices. The major turning point came with the physical involvement in benevolent work. Money donations are still important for entrepreneurs, but the devotion of time and efforts are the critical performance of belief.
3. After joining the Tzu Chi group, practitioners are required to actively volunteer for organizational missions. In order to engage in cultivation (*xiuxing* 修行), they need to methodologically work on their belief. The procedure is to take a vow of one's devotion after the conversion; then one must act on one's vow afterward.

As mentioned earlier, the bias in this sample is that the majority of interviewees are economic elites with modest educational backgrounds. Consequently, those entrepreneurs do not reiterate sophisticated Tzu Chi vocabularies in the conversation, particularly the ethnic Taiwanese. For the ethnic Chinese, the three interviewees tend to use cultivated vocabularies. Although the majority of interviewees are male, the wives of those male informants are all involved with Tzu Chi missions, except the only one who is under 40 years old and is single.

Although "honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful" (誠正信實) was an important teaching directly relating to *xin* in the organizational core teaching, the phrase was used only once and it was used by the interviewer in the dialogue.[17] This suggests that it was not considered as an important value in their conversion, immigration, and business experiences. Connotation refers to the variety of associations that a word carries. Here are the frequent usages of associations which practitioners employed during the interviews.

17 During the interview, the author used the phrase, "the intrinsic quality of being honest, righteous, faithful, and truthful in your …" (訪者: 你那個誠正信實的本的本質 …).

– To Trust 相信

Sister Chiu (邱師姐) was very eager to recruit new members not only in China but also wherever she traveled. She was the first person who introduced the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation to Taiwanese immigrants in New York. She remembered:

> In the 1990s when there was some business that I needed to attend to at Citibank, I ran into Kang in front of Citibank and continued to persuade her to join the Tzu Chi Foundation. I told her that I recruited the whole family of my sister as Tzu Chi members when I first joined the Tzu Chi Foundation. I was afraid that she would not believe me (我就怕她不相信), so I told her that I could show all of the member donation receipts to her (Kang) next time.
>
> 第二天我要去 Citibank, 剛好碰到康師姐，然後就在 Citibank 門前我又和康師姐講， 講一講我就說其實當時我加入慈濟就把我姐姐全家當做會員，然後我就怕他不相信，我就和他講，如果你不相信慈濟，我下次可以把我姐姐，我幫他們做會員 的那些收據都拿給你看.

Brother M11 (M11 師兄) said,

> For example, the master (Shangren) told us that we have to believe in (要相信) people. We must give him (them) freedom and must not have restrictive controls. That was because the master is a good-hearted person. But sometimes in the issues of management, I have tried … the master said that we have to administer with love. We have to apply love as a way of management, which is not possible in mainland China and may not be workable in Taiwan either.… … Well, yes, in terms of management it is the first priority to believe in someone and let her/him unleash [their potential] freely. But you still have to be flexible on how to do it.
>
> 比如說上人說要相信人家. 要讓他自由，不要管的這麼嚴. 因為上人是心腸很好的人，但有時侯在管理上我確實有去…. 上人說用愛去管制度. 以愛為管理. 在中國大陸真的是行不通. 台灣都行不太通 … 對呀. 管理上就第一個去相信你，讓你去自由發揮呀. 確實你還是要拿捏三四分起來.

– Confidence 信心
Sister Chiu (邱師姐) said,

> I feel that the physical body might be gone, but the dharma will always be there. I believe that we must have this confidence (信心) if we think that we are truly on the path of a Tzuchian Bodhisattva. Even for me as a pioneer, if I don't have this confidence (信心) and don't have this belief (信念), I cannot continue my path.
>
> 我覺得肉身雖然不在，法是永遠在的，我想這是我們真的走在慈濟菩薩道上的都要有這個信心，如果今天 連我走在這個拓荒的人都沒有這個信心，都沒有這個信念的話，我覺得根本走不下去.

Sister Chiu added,

> That is, no matter where the Tzuchians are, we are all pioneers. But I think that we belong to that kind of people who have marvelous perseverance. That is all because of what the master has said, "There is nothing that you cannot achieve if you have confidence (信心), perseverance, and courage" ...
>
> 就是不管任何一個地方的慈濟人，　我們都這樣在拓荒，　可是我覺得我們，　我還是屬於那種毅力　超強的，　那因為我們上人講過一句話，「信心，毅力，勇氣三個俱備，天下沒有做不成的事」...

– Trust 信賴 / 信任
Brother M1 (M1 師兄) said,

> Actually, I can tell you that when you focus on community service, you need to gain the trust from everyone in the community. You have to serve the community, not only work on environmental protection or four missions and eight tasks.[18] There are things that the residents are not able to solve. If you are able to help them and to relieve their pain, you can earn

18 Four missions are missions on charity, medicine, education, and culture. Eight tasks refer to charity, medicine, education, culture, international relief, Bone Marrow Donation, Environmental Protection, and Community Volunteerism.

> their trust (信任). This is the way to gain trust (信任) in a quick way. This is what I called speedy trust (信任). Being consistent to provide solutions earns you as a person the trust (信任) of others. You must help them solve all of their problems. You must keep finding solutions. This is what we have been doing.
>
> 其實我可以告訴你，就是在做這個社區的時侯，你要得到社區所有人的認同，你要為社區做事情，不單只是環保，不只是四步八法印，還有很多事情要去做，他以前解決不了的問題，幫他解決就好，他的痛苦幫他去解決了，這些東西才能搏得他們的信任，所以這樣快速的信任，這樣叫快速的信任，不斷的堅持在那邊，這是對你個人的信任，但是你要去解決所有人的一些問題的時侯，你必須要去想一些辦法，這個就是我們一直在做的事情.

Brother M11 (M11 師兄) said,

> The strictness of the management is necessary. But Tzu Chi focuses on believing in and trusting (信任) people. It is because of this teaching that I slowly let go. I let go of administrating my business. I also let my employees watch Great Love television programs. The programs were played in the canteen.
>
> 管的比較嚴是一定的. 那慈濟是講相信. 信任他，是這樣子我才有慢慢去放放放. 也讓我的員工看看慈濟大愛台. 我餐廳都有放.

– Faith-understanding-practice-attainment/testimony 信解行證

Brother M8 (M8 師兄) said,

> It is marvelous to experience 'faith-understanding-practice-attainment' (信解行證) through practicing Tzu Chi. What I try to say is as follows: I used to work very hard but had little money. Since I was in high school, I started saving some money. When I first started my business, I borrowed money from a self-help loan group (*biaohuia* 標會仔) and from agricultural associations. My father borrowed money from neighbors on my behalf. You would feel that you didn't see any money. Not that there was no money I made at all. But it was very little money … Once my friend told me that his firm went out of business while he was a Tzu Chi volunteer. I asked him, 'but you practiced so hard as a Tzu Chi volunteer?' My friend replied, 'The collapse of my firm had nothing to do with Tzu Chi practice. The loss of my business was my personal matter.' But

> when I started working hard as a Tzu Chi volunteer, my business was so great. I didn't know why. I used to feel that I was chasing money but failed, but nowadays business has been doing so great. This was how I felt, so I donated money to be an honorary board member.
>
> 從做慈濟當中體會到信解行證. 其實我覺得不可思議, 就是說. 以前我很努力很努力, 但也因為沒什麼錢, 但我高中夜間部, 我存了一點錢. 可是當我要創業的時侯, 還去標會仔, 去農會借錢呀. 我爸爸跑去找鄰居信用貸款, 你會覺得說沒有看到什麼錢. 不是沒錢. 很少呀, …我一個朋友告訴我, 他做慈濟的時侯, 他的公司倒了, 你慈濟做的這麼發心, 為什麼公司倒了, 他說公司倒了跟慈濟沒有關係, 那是我自己的事情, 那我覺得說當我很發心做慈濟的時侯生意一直來, 我不曉得為什麼生意一直來, 然後我覺得以前我追錢追不到現在怎麼公司很順這樣子. 我覺得啦. 像我就捐榮董啦.

– Confident 自信

Brother M2 (M2 師兄) said,

> Because we are confident (自信) that what we are doing is correct, the Chinese officials lately have been very supportive about our work. This kind of support is not shown on the media or any other public event. It is shown in the sense of not interfering with our missions.
>
> 因為我們自信我們做的事是沒有錯的, 大陸官方可以說是後來蠻支持的, 但是這種支持並不是說表現在媒體上面啦, 或公開的場合上, 而是說大陸官方完全沒有干涉.

Brother M8 (M8 師兄) said,

> I read the Great Mercy Mantra and I have become very sensitive. For example, I could predict that I rode a motorcycle today and crashed into someone. What should I do? Instead, there was nothing that happened [to me after I crashed into someone]. I actually crashed into someone, but nothing happened, I just fell down. Why would that happen? I have the ability to predict the future. Another example was the passing away of my grandmother. It was 4AM. I was very self-confident (自信) about my prediction and somehow I knew that my grandmother would pass away that day. I kept tossing and turning in the big bed; the bed was so large when we were small. And I kept moving toward my grandmother until I could hug her.

> 我讀大悲咒，就變的很敏感，比如說我今天出去，騎摩托車，我今天跟人家撞到，怎麼辦．也沒什麼事，可能今天真的和人家撞到．也沒什麼事，就跌倒．怎麼會這樣，有預知那個…．像我那個奶奶要過世的時侯，那一天清晨的時侯，四點半的時侯就告訴我，其實那時自信啦．奶奶今天會過世，我自己也不知道，就一直滾．小時侯那個床很大呀．滾到奶奶旁邊．抱著奶．

– Belief; principle 信念
Sister Mei (Mei 師姐) said,

> I have a belief. I remember that I participated in Tzu Chi activities when I first arrived in Shanghai. Once I ran into the vice president of the Taiwanese Merchant Association, and he told me not to take part of Tzu Chi events and said, 'something bad might happen to you.' I have a belief, if we are doing something good, what could people do to us? I always have this kind of belief.

> 我一個信念，我記得我剛來的時侯，參加慈濟，碰到一個台商的副總．他說你不要參加啦，你會被怎麼樣．我一個信念，我們都在做好事，人家會對我們怎麼樣嗎?我一直都有這樣的信念.

The lack of a close connection with the institutional teachings in the narratives of practitioners shows the agency of their individual belief and the process of "committing" oneself to the Tzu Chi group. The conversion narratives have little focus on the direct verbal employment of *xin*. Like many other religious accounts of conversion, converts are likely to frame their experience along the lines of "before" and "after" their conversions.

For Tzu Chi interviewees who believed in Buddhism before they joined as members and committed to Tzu Chi practices, the change of conversion was not about a new worldview, but a new method of cultivation. Social service is the central part of Tzu Chi's missions and converts are required to actively volunteer for organizational missions to demonstrate their learning and faith. They need to continue to learn and work on their belief by continuing to volunteer for charitable works. Faith-understanding-practice-attainment (信解行證) provides a methodology for cultivation.

## 5 Bringing the Institutional Guideline Back into the Discussion

As the above accounts suggest, the practitioners' narratives diverged from the organizational guidelines. In the summer of 2018, I revisited two female

high-profile Tzu Chi commissioners and interviewed them explicitly about their interpretation of *xin* 信 in their beliefs. Their accounts were very much aligned with institutional teachings.

When I revisited sister Mei on June 25th, 2018, we first talked about new developments in her life and the Tzu Chi community center in the Baoshan district. Sister Mei had just been appointed as the core senior leader (*hexin* 核心) at the top of the whole leadership of commissioners in the Shanghai region. It is a position with the power to appoint core members for Tzu Chi's operational leadership in Shanghai, which was granted to her by the master in Hualien, Taiwan. She recently closed down the construction company that she had run for twenty years. She was not interested in renewing the contract with the local partners and wanted to devote even more time to Tzu Chi missions.

When I asked the question, "What do you think of the word or concept of *xin* 信?" She first recited Tzu Chi's motto, "honest-righteous-faithful-truthful" (*cheng zheng xin shi* 誠正信實), to me, which means that to be a Tzuchian is to be an honest and trustworthy person. Then she switched the topic to "trust" (信任) and said,

> I think to trust in people is more important. 'There is no one that I don't trust.' That's what the master teaches us. When I first moved to this district in Shanghai, I believed that there is no one that I don't trust, including the party leader in the residential committee. We have to believe that other people also have love (*xin ren you ai* 信人有愛), so they have the power to take actions.
>
> 我認爲相信一個人是最重要的。'天下沒有我不信的人'是上人較我們的。我剛搬到上海這一區的時候。我相信沒有我不信任的人，包含小區領導。我們一定要信人有愛，所以他們會"行"。

Then she switched the topic again to her concerns about the recent converts. She said, "The good news is there were many new converts who were local Chinese. They were young and willing to accept the trials of two to three years of training to be Tzu Chi commissioners. But once they were promoted as commissioners, they stopped showing up as community volunteers." Mei's concern was, "if there is no true belief (*zhendexin* 真的信) in one, one cannot be persistent to be volunteers" (如果沒有真地信，義工做不久，不能堅持). Mei insists that "the belief" is extremely important; "the belief is the source of morality and virtues" (*xin wei daoyuan gongdemu* 信為道源功德母), she said.

Sister Chiu was the first Tzu Chi commissioner who brought the Tzu Chi practice to China in the early 1990s as an immigrant entrepreneur. The last time when we had met and discussed Tzu Chi growth in China was in 2014.

In my revisit over lunch with her in the summer of 2018,[19] she stared recollecting how she "believed" in Buddhism. "The reason that I participate in Tzu Chi group ("*zuo* Ciji 做慈濟") was influenced by the belief of my mother. Because we were Taiwanese, my mother also believed in Bodhisattva (*xin* Guanyin 信觀音菩薩) and also worshipped Bodhisattvas (*bai pusa* 拜菩薩)" (我會來做慈濟就是原來跟媽媽的信仰有關的。因為台灣人嘛，我媽媽也是信觀世音菩薩的，都是拜菩薩的). She added,

> The belief drove us to the Bodhisattva worship. When we worshipped in the temples, we used to worship for our well-being, such as for the prosperity of our business. When I first joined Tzu Chi, I also had a similar mindset (*xinnian* 心念) when I wished for a reward for my good deeds. I wished for a good return for my virtuous work and thought that the running of my business should have become smoother … It was not until I stayed in the Tzu Chi group for a while that I realized that "to benefit others is to benefit yourself" (*zili lita* 自利利他).
>
> 早期也是有這樣的，應該是剛進來的時候，還是會有這樣的心念，就是善有善報啊，希望做慈濟啊，生意順順利利。可是一直來做了就知道，慈濟其實不是，就說，你這份來做慈濟的心，你不是為自己，你應該是自利利他。

I asked her how she changed her mindset to focus on the benefit of others. Sister Chiu replied,

> The change is little by little. The change was caused by listening to the master's teaching and gradually understanding that benefiting others could bring liberation or awakening of oneself. From benefiting others we learn that we have contentment. In our Tzu Chi practice, we used to say, 'Learn about suffering by witnessing suffering.' One gained the awareness of being in contentment when one saw others suffering. When you pray for rewards, you don't have contentment. You will feel discontented even if you are rich … You will feel contented when you see others suffering. When you feel contented, you will not ask for rewards anymore.
>
> 但是如何轉變，我覺得那是從點點滴滴，從我們師父的開示裡面去轉的；從師父的開示。因為，就是從利他，你才能徹底的解脫，或者徹底的覺悟。從利他的行為裡面，譬如說我們慈濟常常講見

19 This part of the interview was recorded. The interview was conducted in 2018.

> 苦知福，當你見到別人的苦的時候，你可能就不會一直再求自己什麼都不夠。……因為看到別人都比你苦，那你就會知足嘛。那你知足之後，你就比較不會說還在求。

Sister Chiu then gave two examples of unforeseen cases of sorrow and bitterness among Tzu Chi wealthier families to demonstrate that practicing Tzu Chi does not mean that one would not face life's hardships.

> To practice Tzu Chi, you must "believe" (*xiangxin* 相信) [in Tzu Chi]. One can be awakened no matter whether by doing Tzu Chi, or by practicing the law of benefitting others. Perhaps one follows the words of Shangren 上人 and has been awakened because of it. One can face any challenge in life.
>
> 其實真正做慈濟你要相信。然後相信這個，不管是用慈濟，用利他來覺悟；或者用上人的話，聽了上人的話來覺悟，你才會能夠心底能夠面對你所碰到的任何的荊芥 ...[20]

Her company was under restructuring or downsizing in 2015, but she would continue to spend more time on Tzu Chi missions. Tzu Chi China has gone through an enormous expansion since the institution's legalization in 2008. Different locations have been established under the local leadership and they needed less supervision from the previous Shanghai leadership.

When I asked how she would interpret one of the most popular Tzu Chi axioms *xin-yuan-xing* 信願行 ("faith, vow, and practice"), she quickly emphasized that

> Tzu Chi Foundation is more of a cultivation group, not just a simple benevolent organization. It is Master Cheng Yen's hope that our practitioners are taught to cultivate through benevolent works. There are so many Buddhist Schools (*fojiao famen* 佛教法門) nowadays. But what [the founder of] Tzu Chi has established is a formal Buddhist Lineage called Tzu Chi School (*Cijizong* 慈濟宗).... The method of Tzu Chi School cultivation is Still Thought Lineage (*jingsi famai* 靜思法脈). In the Still Thought Lineage, we are concentrating on the teachings of the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings (*Wuliangyi jing* 無量義經) and Lotus Sutra (*Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經). And this is the path being a bodhisattva. So Tzu Chi people are learning and cultivating through a bodhisattva path; therefore, the true way to walk on a bodhisattva path is that we

20 Chiu refers to her master Cheng Yen. The interview was conducted in 2018.

> must walk toward people (or walk into society; *zouru renqun* 走入人群). We must practice what we claim. We cultivate among people, to help others and carry out benevolent works. Why do we repeatedly say *xin-yuan-xing* 信願行 (faith, vow, and practice)? First of all, you must believe (*xiangxin* 相信) in the method [of the Tzu Chi School]. The foundation of this school is that you must take a vow. You will cultivate among people, not by chanting sutra or sitting for meditation in a peaceful environment under a tree. *Xin* 信, first of all, means that you must believe in this school. *Yuan* 願 means that you must take a vow. *Xin*g 行 means that you must cultivate among people to walk on a bodhisattva path.
>
> 因為慈濟這個修行的團體，首先慈濟不是純慈善的團體，其實慈濟人，上人他希望他所有的弟子，只是藉著慈善這條路來修行。那麼現在佛教的法門很多，但是慈濟自己創的慈濟宗。… … 那慈濟宗的修行方式就是用靜思法脈，那靜思法脈我們是修無量義經跟妙法蓮華經，那這個是菩薩道，所以慈濟人使用菩薩道來修行的。那菩薩道真正的用意就是要走入人群，要身體力行，去幫助別人，去做善事。所以為什麼我們講了很多信願行，這個法門修行的基礎就是你要跨越，再苦你都要進入群眾去修行。你不是發願坐在樹林下，在哪裡打坐、念經，不是。所以為什麼信，第一個是要相信這個法門。願，就是跨越；行，你就是要進人群中行菩薩道。

Both Mei and Chiu have volunteered as high-ranking commissioners for Tzu Chi Shanghai branch for decades. They have been appointed as the top leaders for the organization in China; I, therefore, apply their discourse on *xin* 信 as the institutional position. Similar to Johanna Lüdde, who writes in the present volume that the role of confidence is of particular significance for the nuns in their cultivation to be masculine heroes, Sister Chiu also stresses the importance of having confidence (*xinxin* 信心) for the unique cultivation method of the Tzu Chi School, which is to engage with the secular society and to cultivate among secular people in both the 2010 and the 2018 interviews.

## 6 Conclusion

What are the contemporary meanings of being a Buddhist? In this chapter, I used the Tzu Chi Foundation in China to demonstrate a manifestation of reformed Mahayana Buddhism in the workplace in China and the development of modern Buddhism in a transnational sense. The Tzu Chi teaching has provided a new reference for modern Buddhism in contemporary China. The

entrepreneurs are able to incorporate their secular economic well-being into their spiritual missions.

By analyzing the conversion narratives from the interview data among Tzu Chi followers, multi-layered meanings of *xin* have been revealed: to believe (相信), religious belief (信仰), trust, to have faith in (信賴/信任), belief in Buddhism (信佛), belief (信念), confidence (信心), and righteous belief (正信). Two negatively connotated combinations in the usages are superstition (迷信) and ignorant belief (愚信). The analysis also detects that conversion narratives were not strongly in line with the institutional core teachings. Most of the stories related to personal experiences and showed considerable variation. The conversion narratives have little focus on the process of *xin*. As in many other religious conversion stories, there was a "before" and "after" scenario to the conversion experience. The major turning point came with the physical involvement in benevolent work. After joining the Tzu Chi group, practitioners are required to actively volunteer for organizational missions. In order to engage in cultivation (*xiuxing* 修行), they need to work methodically on their belief. The procedure is to take a vow of one's devotion after the conversion; then one must act on one's vow afterward. Money donations are still important for entrepreneurs, but the devotion of time and effort is the critical performance of belief.

With those new vocabularies and moralities, the modern monastery can establish a new relationship with corporate professionals who are actively pursuing earthly wealth; the entrepreneur who is seeking to reconcile the tension between their earthly professional ambition and the spiritual pursuit. Employers can create a not always consistent but amiable rapport with their employees. The new ethic, encompassing such values as honesty, diligence, frugality, punctuality, kindness, self-sacrifice, sobriety, generosity, gratitude, work, and social responsibilities, is shared by the emerging corporate class in China as well as by Tzuchians. Most of the entrepreneurs would recite the master's teaching encompassing the view that "if the enterprise has Tzuchian humanism, the bosses will organize people with love. The employees will be willing to play their roles in building authentic blissful enterprises" (企業家有慈濟人文，就會以愛管理。企業家會扮演建立真實幸福企業的種子).[21] The master's popular idea is that Taiwanese entrepreneurs need to be devoted to the locals in China if they want to stay in China. This is the practice of their faith in business.

In the same summer, I also heard from one rank-and-file informant that master Cheng Yen was not pleased with meeting a group of recent new converts

21 Citing from the interview conducted with sister Mei in 2018.

who traveled from China to Hualien earlier this year (2018). The new converts were about to take refuge (*guiyi* 皈依) under the master, but none of them knew how to make vows during the ceremony. In reality, how the rank-and-file members understand the institutional mottos is always a thought-provoking question. I hope this paper captures some aspects of Tzu Chi practitioners' own interpretations of *xin* and opens perspectives for further research.

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CHAPTER 22

# The Role of "Confidence" in the Gender Discourse of Buddhist Nuns* in Contemporary Mainland China: Learning *xinxin* 信心 to Become a Masculine Hero

*Johanna Lüdde*

## 1 Introductory Remarks

When living in a Buddhist nunnery in China, it is hard to ignore the hegemonic Buddhist gender discourse as reflected by the nuns*[1] and female lay practitioners themselves. Many leave traditional gender perceptions entirely unquestioned and consider them part of the natural order, the product of karmic conditions. For instance, laywomen often point to the suffering and karmic hindrances (*yezhang* 業障) of females (regarding the female disposition and inability to become a Buddha), while highly-educated nuns*[2] usually mention women's bad habits (*xiqi maobing* 習氣毛病), weaknesses of character that must be improved. Furthermore, many female lay believers refer to themselves as "being the earth" in contrast to their husbands "being heaven," which legitimizes their subordination to men. However, while the

1 The use of the asterisk, which derives from the trans*(gender) and inter* community, points to the openness, inclusiveness, and incompleteness of gender constructions and attempts to overcome binary understandings of men/women or trans men/trans women by allowing more fluid constructions of gender (Tompkins 2014, 26–27). In this paper, the asterisk is added to "nun" (and the corresponding pronouns "she" and "her") to indicate that Buddhist nuns* neither entirely identify themselves as women nor can completely transition to men within one lifespan. Therefore, their gender identities are multiple, fluid, and not fixed. The application of an asterisk is also justified by the fact that nuns* usually do not refer to each other as "she" (*ta* 她), but rather as "he" (*ta* 他), a difference that is only noticeable in written Chinese. In my study, however, it does not serve as a general and universal statement about gender fluidity for everyone, but only as an analytical instrument to signify a gender transition of Buddhist nuns* (and sometimes female* lay believers) in China.

2 I use the expressions "highly-educated nun*" or "scholar nun*" to refer to nuns* who were attending the Buddhist academy in the temple in which I conducted my research or those who had graduated from other Buddhist academies. Most of these nuns* have also acquired at least a Bachelor's degree from a state-run Chinese university.

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laywomen I talked with tended to accept their fate as women who cannot avoid suffering (as expressed in the pain of menstruation or family ties), nuns* regard themselves as having transcended the narrow restrictions of their female identity. This entails transforming into a *dazhangfu* 大丈夫, a masculine hero, as a means of self-empowerment.

In order to succeed on this path, one must first learn confidence (*xinxin* 信心), including confidence in one's own ability. Therefore, nuns* often understand *xinxin* from the perspective of modern Chinese, in which *xinxin* means "confidence" rather than the traditional Buddhist meaning of a faithful or believing mind. However, in other contexts within my study, *xinxin* is also associated with faith.

In this study I will focus on the gender-related aspects of *xinxin*, i.e., its relation to the topic of transitioning towards a masculine hero, since this is very distinctive of the discourse on confidence among nuns*. Of course, the goal of becoming a *dazhangfu* is by no means only a women's issue; it carries great weight for the monks as well. The Pure Land's path—with its emphasis on devout faith—thus also includes friaries, since it is the most widespread cultivation method within Buddhism in mainland China. For nuns*, however, *xinxin* has a very specific layer of meaning that endows it with great importance. Part of this importance is the nexus of the religious and everyday, mundane meanings of *xinxin*, ranging from devout Buddhist faith to self-confidence as a worldly concept.

In the present analysis I do not focus on the full range of linguistic understandings of the term *xinxin* as part of so-called "written Buddhist high culture." Instead, I am interested in discovering what *xinxin* means to present-day Buddhist nuns* in China as part of their lived realities. Which aspects of *xinxin* seem most meaningful to them on a personal level, and why? Consequently, I will not only concentrate on the terms that are directly mentioned, but also employ a grounded theory approach to compress the respective messages contained in the various statements into condensed concepts.

This analysis is based on ethnographic data I collected in a large Buddhist convent[3] in central China between 2014 and 2015. My study was part of a larger field research project that aimed to investigate how nuns* in contemporary China participate in the discourse on the future of mainland Chinese Buddhism. For this project I engaged in participant observation and conducted eight biographical interviews (of at least two hours each) with Buddhist nuns*, as well as two guideline-based interviews with the abbess* and with the second-most important (female) master within the temple hierarchy. I coded

3 To ensure data protection, I will not reveal any names of persons and places.

the interviews as well as my notes from observing the participants using a grounded theory approach as well as by means of variables I also used for the discourse analysis.

For this discourse analysis I take as my starting point the hegemonic discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. According to this theory, meaning becomes temporarily manifest in chains of signifiers that are equivalent to each other, and it is these chains of equivalent signifiers that determine an allegedly objective reality.[4] At the same time, antagonist concepts are juxtaposed in a row of negative equivalents.[5] For instance, within the hegemonic Chinese Buddhist gender discourse, one can filter out all kinds of positive character traits of men in a chain of equivalent concepts. This is juxtaposed by a contrasting line of terms describing the weaknesses of women, which could be understood as a process of othering.

The nunnery in which I conducted my research is one of China's largest. It maintains tight connections with the Pushou monastery on Mount Wutai, which is currently China's most eminent and influential convent. Functioning in some way as an elite temple similar to Pushou Temple, it stresses not only the importance of erudition but also the strict observance of monastic rules typical of the Vinaya school (*lüzong* 律宗).[6] The emphasis on monastic rules also includes maintaining a frugal lifestyle in poverty and preventing the monastery from becoming commercialized. Because of this, the nunnery enjoys a good reputation and therefore attracts numerous laypeople who leave generous donations. These donations are not spent on improving the living conditions of the nuns* or temple leaders, but are used instead to reconstruct the temple buildings, most of which were damaged during the Cultural Revolution. As for the methods of self-cultivation, the abbess* propagates Pure Land, Chan, and Tiantai Buddhism. The temple leaders also strongly value providing a higher education for nuns* in order to train outstanding Dharma teachers. They have established a Buddhist academy within the temple compound for this purpose. Overall, the temple leaders see their main tasks as (1) improving the nuns'* educational situation and (2) preserving Buddhist orthodoxy (*zhengfa* 正法) by strictly observing monastic discipline. This includes abiding by all of the 348 precepts for nuns* (nearly 100 more than those for monks) as well as implementing the morning and evening rites in full

4 Laclau & Mouffe 2001, xii; Mouffe 2013, 228–229.

5 Marchart 2013, 142–143.

6 I use the term "elite nuns*" to refer to nuns* who combine the principles of erudition with strict observance of monastic discipline. This is exemplified by Pushou Temple as the most important focal point for elite nuns* in contemporary China.

length and complying with the etiquette of monastic life. Preserving orthodoxy also means devoutly following the Gurudharma or Eight Principal Rules (*bajingfa* 八敬法), which subordinates the nuns* to the monks by formally putting them under their control. On a day-to-day basis, however, the nuns* have little to do with monks and run their nunnery independently. In line with Pushou Temple, what makes the convent very distinctive is the "self-confident" combination of erudition and devout faith. While this attitude may also apply to some monks' temples, it is nonetheless very remarkable considering the widespread notion that Pure Land's practice is most suited to uneducated female practitioners.

## 2 Traditional Buddhist Understandings of Femininity and Gender Transition

Traditional Han Buddhist images of women as well as the idea of becoming a masculine hero in order to transcend gender boundaries are very well explored within the research on Buddhist nuns* in Taiwan. For instance, Hillary Crane has provided important reflections on this topic, although many other authors could also be mentioned.[7] As for historical studies of mainland China, Beata Grant and Miriam Levering have made essential contributions to exploring the rhetoric on Buddhist nuns* who have become *dazhangfu*.[8] The situation in contemporary mainland China is less well documented. Qin Wenjie's PhD thesis from Harvard University is an exception; Qin conducted in-depth field research in a nunnery on Mount Emei in Sichuan in the late 1990s.[9] Other recent articles on Buddhist nuns* in mainland China do not focus explicitly on gender identities.

According to the research results of Buddhist gender discourse in Taiwan, women are considered to be essentially weak and are ascribed typically negative character traits; these include being emotional, narrow-minded, dependent, inconstant, petty, timid, vain, and greedy by nature. Moreover, traditional Buddhist ways of thinking dictate that women are impure, seductive, and threatening for the monks. Traditional Han gender ideologies imply that women tend to be jealous, chatty, and weak, ascriptions that still apply to current Han Buddhism.[10] Ancient Indian Buddhist tradition holds that the

7 Crane 2007, 2011.
8 Grant 2008; Levering 1992.
9 Qin 2000.
10 Choekyi 2003, 162, 175–176; Crane 2011, 185–188; Schak 2008, 149–150, 154–155.

feminine body is bound by the Five Hindrances (*wuzhang* 五障), and that a woman therefore cannot be reborn as a Brahmā god, an Indra god, a Māra god, a wise Cakravartin king, or a Buddha.[11] The imperfect and impure female body is contrasted with the 32 marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of a Buddha or wise king, which include a retractable penis.[12] Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, gives contradictory answers to the question of whether a woman can become a Buddha within her female body. Many Sūtras claim that a female must physically transition to a man before becoming a Buddha, while others affirm that she does not.[13]

Nuns* are not completely restricted to these negative perceptions of the female gender, however. Instead, they have the opportunity to become a "masculine hero with noble qualities" (*dazhangfu* 大丈夫), although this is considered to be more difficult for them than for monks. According to Levering[14] and Grant,[15] the term *dazhangfu*, which can be traced back to Mengzi, has always been highly gender-connoted, as it refers to the masculine virtues and talents:

> … be these heroic valor, extraordinary literary talent, or, in the case of Chan Buddhism [in the Song dynasty], a strong and immovable determination to overcome any obstacle to the attainment of realization.[16]

The term *dazhangfu* clearly has gender connotations in the Buddhist discourse of contemporary mainland China. Although both men and women can become a *dazhangfu*, the term is constructed as the very opposite of a typical woman, who is seen as limited by weakness, timidity, and narrow-mindedness. I will discuss the gender-specific attributes of the figure of the *dazhangfu* in more detail in the next section.

The highly-educated nuns* in the temple in which I conducted my research claim that, since the Buddha-nature is neither male nor female, enlightenment can certainly be attained within a female body (*nüshen* 女身). However, from my interviews it became apparent that, to become a Buddha, a nun* has to transition to a man-like form, a *dazhangfuxiang* 大丈夫相, in order to transcend the restrictions of her* female identity, an identity that comprises her* character, manner, habits, and appearance. It is important to note here that Buddhist

11 Sunmin 2000, 124, 129, 131; see also Grant 2008, 206; Schuster Barnes 1987, 117–118.
12 Schuster Barnes 1987, 116, 118; Sunmin 2000, 131.
13 Shi Yihui 2007, 263.
14 Levering 1992, 144.
15 Grant 2008, 181–182.
16 Grant 2008, 182.

discourse on gender transition in China contains a crucial difference of opinion. Some female* Buddhists believe that transitioning to a *dazhangfu* also impacts the body, which is in some cases manifested through bringing one's menstruation to a halt. Thus, a highly-educated nun* told me once that if women want to attain Buddhahood, they must first take on the form of a *dazhangfu*, which refers not only to the character but also to the body. She claimed that a woman has to adapt to the masculine body structure, and that she* has reached a higher grade of cultivation if she succeeds. If she* has entirely transformed into a man, she* can even leave the nuns*' order and enter the monks' order; however, such incidents have been very rare. Her* view is supported by the Buddhist understanding of the body as being driven by karma and therefore changeable. Furthermore, it draws on the traditional Buddhist discourse on sex transition contained in many Sūtras and embodied in the dragon princess of the Lotus Sūtra, who is the most prominent role model for contemporary Chinese Buddhist nuns*. Official Buddhist gender discourse, however, flatly denies the notion of a biological transition. For instance, the influential monk Minghai 明海 argues that the ideal of the female-to-male-transition (*zhuannü chengnan* 轉女成男) should not be understood as a physical process.[17] I also discussed this topic with a highly-educated nun* of another monastery, and it turned out that although she* was aware of the discourse on bodily transitions through self-cultivation, she* decisively preferred the interpretation that the adaption process towards a man only concerned one's bad habits (*xiqi maobing* 習氣毛病) and temperament (*qizhi* 氣質). Accordingly, she* vehemently rejected the idea of a substantial sex change. Since this view is in contrast to all of the Sūtras describing physical transitions, it might perhaps reflect the influence of Western modern discourses about the physical body. At the same time, the idea of physical transitions still exists in mainland China, being part of an unofficial, informal popular sub-discourse. In line with this, it is hard to deny that nuns'* practice of tying their breasts in order to make them invisible has a bodily dimension: it displays a self-demarcation away from the sexualization of the female body and towards androgyny.[18] From these difference conceptions it is clear that,

17 Shi Minghai 2015, 74.

18 One should also note that there was no conceptual difference between sex and gender in traditional Chinese thought. Instead, a correlative "gender" model prevailed, in which a woman was defined not as an independent entity but as standing in family relations to someone else, i.e., as wife, mother, daughter, etc. (Crane 2011, 193–195). According to this way of thinking, once a woman* left her* family to become a nun* she* gave up her* femininity and stopped leading her* life as a suffering woman.

firstly, gender transition is an ongoing, fluid process, and secondly, that gender identities are not one-sided, but multi-layered.

As Levering has pointed out, Mahayana Buddhism (and in the past particularly Chan Buddhism) has rhetorically always more or less stressed equality between men and women.[19] However, as the abbess* of the nunnery explained to me, one should consider that two different realms exist for Buddhists. One is the *prajñā* (*bore* 般若) realm, in which there is no difference between men and women, enlightenment and delusion, and so on. In this realm there seems to be no difference between a nun* becoming a Buddha within her* female* body or transitioning entirely to become a man. According to the abbess*, the other realm is the present world (*suopo shijie* 娑婆世界), in which differences between men and women still exist. In this realm, nuns* (who are born into a female body) must observe all 348 precepts in order to overcome their karmic hindrances.

## 3 Becoming a "Masculine Hero" through *xinxin* 信心 (Confidence)

As mentioned above, *xinxin* 信心 has many connotations within contemporary mainland Chinese Buddhist discourse, and these connotations are exactly the same for both monks and nuns*. However, when analyzing the transcripts of my interviews with the nuns*, I noticed that *xinxin* is sometimes linked with the concept of a *dazhangfu*, a masculine hero, which indicates a gender-related perspective. For instance, when I asked the novice "Af" what *dazhangfu* means for her*, she* replied:

> Af: *Dazhangfu* has many meanings. For instance, it is a form of address for a male. But another meaning refers to, um, for example, men who are very resolute, have strong willpower, high ambitions, and a strong sense of social responsibility. And strong willpower. And strong confidence (*you hen qiang de xinxin* 有很強的信心). When they are faced with difficulties, they don't back down. […] To become a monastic means to be a *dazhangfu*. […] It is actually very powerful and very difficult to let go (*fangxia* 放下) of everything. But monastics can manage what is difficult to manage; they can bear what is hard to bear. It's not only that we no longer cling to the material environment, that we eat very poorly, that our living conditions are very hard; well, it is hard, but what is difficult to bear,

19 Levering 1992, 137–138.

we should bear. But we should also change our bad habits. What is difficult to change, we should change. [...] Anyway, I'm actually just a little girl, I'm just a little girl.

I: You're very modest.

Af: Yes. (laughing) I'm a little girl. I haven't faced any great storms of life yet. Our abbess* and our other master, they have experienced a lot. But on the surface they are always very peaceful. No matter how much hardship they have gone through, when they face other people, they always have a smile on their lips, gently and tranquilly.

Af: 丈夫的話，就是有很多種含義。它就是說(吸氣)，嗯，一種是對於男性的一種稱呼叫丈夫。但是另外一種嗯，含義的話就是因為比如說有很多男性他很有堅堅(sic!)，他意志力很强。然後有高遠的志向。然後有很强的社會責任感。然後有很强的意志力。有很強的信心。可以遇到困難之後不退縮。[...] 那說出家是大丈夫。[...] 放下這個力量，其實很强大但是很難。那出家人就是難行能行，難忍能忍。不光是說對外界的這個物質條件上我們淡泊，吃得很差，生活的環境很差。呃這個是很難的。難忍的要忍。還有是對於自己的毛病習氣，難改的要改。[...] (吸氣) 但是現在其實(own name)還只是一個小娃娃。還是個小娃娃.

I: 太謙虛.

Af: 是。(笑)還是個小娃娃。真正的還沒經歷過什麼大風大浪。像真正像和[尚啊，像(name of the abbess*)，像我们和尚呃，(name of another female* master)啊。那會經歷很多很多。但是你從表面上看的話一直很平靜，不管他們經歷過多少的苦難，但是當面對人的時候永遠是面帶微笑的，是祥和寧靜的. (Af 2, 07:16–10:41)

Here, the term *xinxin* is linked with having strong willpower, determination, persistence, high ambitions, and a wide-ranging social responsibility as well as with being resolute and indifferent when facing hardship; it is linked with the masculine character traits of a *dazhangfu* and therefore highly gender-connoted. In contrast to this image of a *dazhangfu*, the novice refers to herself* as a "little girl." In the context of the interview, I think she* intended to express her* humbleness in relation to the abbess* as a demonstration of modesty in my presence. At the same time, the nun* highlighted that all monastics (both monks and nuns*) must take the path of a *dazhangfu*. According to her*, it is very difficult and challenging to become a monk or nun*. However, a *dazhangfu* is willing and able to cope with any hardship.

The nun* and I also talked about the difficulties women face in asserting themselves within the Buddhist community or even at university. For instance,

the nun* (who had obtained a PhD from an elite university in China and had worked as a lecturer) advised me to never give up when pursuing a goal, no matter how difficult it was going to be:

> Af: You know, Johanna, you need very firm (*jianding* 坚定) confidence (*xinxin* 信心) and a goal to pursue! Actually, very often we should not blame the external environment when we cannot accomplish something, but we should see the reason as being a lack of confidence (*xinxin* 信心) and willpower (*yizhili* 意志力) within ourselves. Confidence and willpower (*xinxin gen yizhili* 信心跟意志力). When we are confronted with difficulties, when we get nowhere and virtually no longer proceed, when we simply have no idea how to overcome a problem—that is when most people actually decide to give up, give up and say, well, that's the way things are. I can't achieve my objective anyway, so let's do something else. Many people are like that, but actually it's a weakness of women, yeah, women would easily give up and say, never mind, let's do something else, I don't care. That's how they console themselves. But a Buddha or Bodhisattva with the power of vowing (*yuanli* 願力) … let's talk about the power of vowing, in order to be able to become a Buddha or Bodhisattva … he would tell his followers, no matter what you're doing, what really matters is your strong power of mind. With his willpower he can accomplish anything, accomplish anything. No matter what kind of hardship he faces, he will—even if there's only one person left [who has not become a Buddha yet]—he will persist until the very end [i.e., until everyone has become a Buddha].

> Af: 嗯其實對約涵老師，也是可以要有這個堅定的這個信心跟目標了(sic!)，其實嗯，有時候了，更多的說這個事情能不能做成不在外界。就在於說自己的信心跟這個意志力。信心跟意志力。當我們遇到困難，走不動的時候，沒辦法前行，不知道怎麼解決的時候，其實更多的人選擇的是放弃，放弃覺得哎呀，就這樣吧，我達不到了那我就做別的去吧，因為很多的人是這樣放棄，這其實也是女性的一個弱點，對，她就會放弃說哎算了，我做我做其他的吧，做啥都一樣。就自我安慰。但嗯真正的一個就是說願力了，我們講願力，佛菩薩，他之所以能够成為佛菩薩，他跟他的眾生來說，其實做的事情都是一樣的，不一樣的就是在於他們有這個大的心力，有這個意志力能够走到底，能够走到底。不管遇到多少困難，我們講說，乃-乃至，哪怕說只剩下最後一個人了，他還要堅持. (Af 2, 49:42–51:05)

In this passage it is clear that the nun* is struggling with a perceived gender-related inequality of opportunities, one that she* does not interpret as being socially constructed but as stemming from karmic conditions. The solution is to cultivate *xinxin* 信心, namely confidence, which is linked with *yizhili* 意志力, i.e., willpower. However, she* also points to the importance of staying persistent and resolute when pursuing an objective, something a Bodhisattva (in contrast to most women) is very skilled at.

The term *yizhili* 意志力 (willpower) derives from modern discourses and is closely connected with the policy and ideology of Mao Zedong.[20] On the one hand, drawing on and incorporating concepts from other discourses (e.g., Confucianism) is nothing new in Chinese Buddhism. On the other hand, there were probably equivalent expressions in traditional Chinese. For instance, Soothill and Hodous explain the expression *zhangfuzhigan* 丈夫志幹 as a "firm-willed man, especially used of a bodhisattva who dauntlessly presses forward."[21] According to Pi Chaogang, Song-dynasty Chan patriarch Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163) referred to a "determined will" (*juedingzhi* 决定志) that is closely connected with faith (*xin* 信).[22] Even more enlightening is another story about Dahui Zonggao, who said to one of his female disciples: "Even though you are a woman, you have the will of a *ta-chang-fu* [*dazhangfu*]."[23] In line with this, Levering repeatedly connects the notion of *dazhangfu* with a burning or strong will, which stands in opposition to typical femaleness.[24] The *Yuanwu foguo chanshi yulu*, Levering's most important primary source, includes expressions that can be read as being equivalent to *yizhili* 意志力 (willpower), such as *yongmeng fenzhi* 勇猛奮志 ("a fierce, violent, and striving will") and *juelie zhiqi* 決烈志氣 ("a determined and fiery will").[25] Whereas it is beyond the scope of this chapter to validate this research result from a historical perspective, I nevertheless refer to these references to suggest that the idea of a strong-willed *dazhangfu* embedded in a gender context is anything but new.

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20 See for instance Liu Yu 2010, 351, 353. The mingling of Socialist and Buddhist discourses was tracked in a survey by Gareth Fisher (2012, 346–347), who investigated how Buddhist laypeople in a Beijing temple form cultural repertoires. Different elements of these repertoires are activated according to the respective life situations of the lay practitioners; for instance, one person praised Mao Zedong as being a model of the true Bodhisattva. However, Fisher did not mention the term "willpower" (*yizhili* 意志力) in this context, probably because he focused on laypeople, but not on nuns*.

21 Soothill and Hodous 2003, 54.

22 Pi Chaogang 1995.

23 Levering 1992, 151.

24 Levering 1992, 142–143, 145.

25 *Yuanwu Foguo chanshi yulu* 1997, 54, 109.

In line with this, combining willpower with *xinxin* and *dazhangfu* takes on a distinctly important meaning for nuns* in contemporary China who are concerned with transitioning their gender. This is all the more so because the ideal of willpower and confidence is contrasted with the "weak nature" of women who "easily give up." From the viewpoint of Chinese Buddhists, this is not due to outer social circumstances, but has inner reasons connected with one's nature. Therefore, learning *xinxin* and demonstrating willpower is regarded as the only way of changing one's situation in life.

The notion of "vowing" is also worth mentioning. In the discussion above, the novice refers to a Bodhisattva with the power of vowing and persistence who works hard and tirelessly to bring all living beings on the path to Buddhahood. Here, "vowing" (*yuan* 願) stems from a Pure Land background, i.e., "believing, vowing, and practicing" (*xin yuan xing* 信願行). *Xinxin* is closely linked with these three concepts, with one layer of meaning slipping into the others, as can be seen in the following interview with another (fully ordained) nun*:

> Ef: But if you keep on practicing continuously, then everything will be all right. Continuously, you know. Staying confident and steadfast in yourself (*xinxin jianding ziji* 信心堅定自己), then you will overcome, overcome all troubles and straits and finally reach the other shore. You need firm confidence (*jianding de xinxin* 堅定的信心). Only if you have faith (*xin* 信) will you finally come to an end one day. If your confidence is not strong enough, then you should goad yourself day by day. Um, I believe, firm confidence is very important. "Believing, vowing, practicing" (*xin yuan xing* 信願行). When you have faith (*xin* 信), you will make a vow and finally start to practice. "Believing, vowing, practicing" is a good guidance for your, um, self-cultivation.

> Ef: 但是如果是橫(sic!)的這樣下去，那就好，橫(sic!)的就是，信心堅定自己，一定會會過去。會過去那些溝溝坎坎，直達彼岸，要有堅定的信心，有信才會有-有-有到頭的這一天，如果信心都不足的話，每天給自己要加油。嗯，信心堅定這是我覺得是很重要的。信願行嘛。有信嘛然後再發願然後再去實行。信願行來-來指導自己，嗯，去修行. (Ef 1:24:31–1:25:09)

For this nun*, faith is the very foundation of vowing and practicing; it is always the starting point. However, what she* particularly stresses here is the combination of *xinxin* with "steadfastness" (*jianding* 堅定) in a row of equivalent signifiers, notably with being steadfast in oneself. One can therefore conclude

that "steadfastness," like willpower, carries a special significance for her*, as it indicates gender transition and is therefore important for her* life.

Also remarkable here is the implicit connection of *xinxin* with "self-confidence," i.e., being confident that one is able to attain enlightenment one day, something which is essential for the nuns*' self-identity as *dazhangfu*. However, the term *zixin* 自信 (self-confidence) is not explicitly used, perhaps because it is closely linked with the Western understanding of being confident in one's individual self, whereas Buddhism denies the existence of an individual essence of personality. Instead, what is emphasized here is confidence in oneself being able to become a Buddha, because everyone possesses the one true nature (*zixing* 自性) irrespective of their individual personality and characteristics.

The expression *zixin*, however, is by no means only used in a modern Western sense, as Meisterernst has quoted for early Buddhist texts within this volume ("... *zixin zuofo* 自信作佛"). In regard to the chapter on Yiguandao within this book, Broy mentions the emphasis on "believing in one's own true self" (*zixin* 自信) as an essential attribute of *xinxin*, a concept which refers to Buddhist traditions. Huang Weishan, another contributor of this volume, highlights that the term "self-confidence" (*zixin* 自信) plays a certain role within the current movement in mainland China of the Taiwanese Ciji foundation, a Buddhist welfare organization led by the nun* Zhengyan but grounded in the voluntary work of Buddhist laypeople. According to Huang, the nun* Zhengyan even explicitly highlighted the importance of self-confidence in relation to faith in one of her* historical statements. In line with this, one of Huang's interlocutors said that Zhengyan had stated that everything could be achieved with the help of confidence (*xinxin* 信心), perseverance (*yili* 毅力), and courage (*yongqi* 勇氣). In Zhengyan's statement in particular, one can clearly make out the interconnection between religious and everyday meanings of the concept of "confidence."

While the emphasis on *xinxin* (confidence) and *zixin* (self-confidence) is a particular life-theme of nuns*, it is by no means irrelevant for monks. For instance, when I asked a friend (who is a highly-educated Chinese monk) via WeChat what *xinxin* meant to him in order to verify my research results, he replied that *xinxin* was extraordinarily important in Buddhism. Everybody was concerned with how to develop one's confidence (*xinxin* 信心) in the Dharma (*fofa* 佛法); "faith" (*xin* 信) originally meant believing that the Dharma was true. Within the "Five Roots/Predispositions" (*wugen* 五根) of Buddhism, the "Root of Faith" (*xin'gen* 信根) was the most important. When I asked him if he would translate the term *xinxin* into "faith" or "confidence," and whether it also

included a sense of self-confidence (*dui ziji de xinxin* 對自己的信心), i.e., that somebody is confident that they are able to attain Buddhahood by consistently and steadfastly practicing without giving up, no matter how difficult that was going to be, he replied:

> As you said, *xin* 信 actually contains two parts. One is confidence (*xinxin* 信心) in the outward "Dharma" (*fa* 法), in the Three Jewels, the Four Noble Truths, and the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bodhi-pākṣita-dharmāh*) and so on that Buddha taught, having deep and firm faith (*shenxinbuyi* 深信不疑) in them as methods of cultivation. Another part is deep and firm faith (*shenxinbuyi* 深信不疑) in oneself being able to become a Buddha by practicing these methods of cultivation. It is difficult to translate it into English, since it involves both of these meanings.
>
> 如您所說，信實際上包含了兩個部分，一部分是對外在"法"的信心，佛陀所說的三寶四諦三十七道品等一起法門(sic!)深信不疑，一部分是對自己能通過這些法門修行成佛深信不疑。英語比較難以翻譯，因為兩種含義都存在. (WeChat protocol, 01.07.2017)

One should note that the monk did not distinguish between *xin* 信 (faith) and *xinxin* 信心 (confidence). When I asked him whether *xin* and *xinxin* originally had different meanings, he answered in the affirmative, citing some original sources. This indicates that, in some contexts, the interpretation of these terms differs from traditional discourses.

A further passage of the interview with the nun* Ef also confirms the view that *xinxin* also connotes being confident that one will attain enlightenment:

> Ef: What is most important is that your confidence (*xinxin* 信心) must be steadfast (*jianding* 堅定) (laughing), [...] your confidence must be steadfast.
> I: Steadfast ...
> Ef: Exactly, steadfast without wavering. You mustn't back down. If [your confidence] declines, [the lack of confidence] will increase until it diminishes, I mean vanishes, vanishes until it's almost wiped out. But if you increase it slowly, your confidence will increase day by day, increase day by day. If you persist, if you always strive, always strive, you will slowly, um, if you make every effort, you will finally succeed. Um, but take your time, just go step by step; three feet of ice does not form in a single day! (laughing) Be patient.

Ef: 最重要的是信心要堅定(笑)[...] 就是信心要堅定.
I: 堅定.
Ef: 嗯，堅定不移動，不要打退堂鼓。如果退失的話，它就會慢慢蔓延就會退失，就是消失，消失殆盡了，但是如果慢慢增上的話，一天增一點信心，一天增一點信心，一直都是堅定的，一直都是加油加油就是滿滿的，嗯就充足了馬力，就到達了那個目的。嗯，要慢慢來，日子是一天一天過的，冰凍三尺，非一日之寒(笑)。慢慢來. (Ef 1:21:35–1:22:29)

For this nun*, *xinxin* is something that one is able to learn, that can be accumulated day by day with persistence and great effort, something that gradually increases. What makes *xinxin* so important is that it is impossible to attain Buddhahood without it. It functions as self-encouragement not to give up one's way of cultivation, not to give up the hope of being able to become a Buddha, even though this seems very hard and difficult, particularly for women. This process is comparable with climbing Mount Everest. At the beginning it appears impossible to succeed, but one has to be determined to reach the peak one day. In sum, *xinxin* means having the strength, willpower, steadfastness, determination, and persistence of a *dazhangfu*, while at the same time *xinxin* is a prerequisite of becoming a *dazhangfu*.

## 4 The Self-Confidence of Elite Nuns* within the Discourse about the Future of Buddhism in Mainland China

Self-confidence is also shown in the practice of the leaders of the elite nunnery in which I conducted my research. These leaders position themselves against scholar monks from the Buddhist academies, who they say behave "too freely," i.e., not according to the monastic rules. For instance, when I asked about the role nuns* play within today's Buddhist community in China, the abbess* answered:

Kf: Well, we ... from our perspective, we just want to do our own business well, and that's it. (laughing) We do well what we should do, and that's it. If all nuns* managed to act according to the monastic rules, then monks might also ... act according to the monastic rules more. (laughing, pause) What I'm trying to say is that if we nuns* demand of ourselves that we behave according to the monastic rules, then monks will also spur themselves on to behave more according to the monastic rules.

Kf: 呃，我們從自身來講，我們想把我們的事情做好，就好了(笑)。把我們的該做的事情做好就好了。那如果比丘尼都能夠如法而行的話，那比丘師父他們，呃，也會更如法如行吧(笑，停頓)。 就是比丘尼我們自身要求我們 都如法而行， 那比丘師父，他們也會更策勵自己，更如法而行. (Kf 1:00:12–1:00:40)

The maxim of "concentrating on doing our own business well" is obviously very important for the abbess*, since she* mentioned it three times during our conversation. Although she* did not directly criticize the monks for not respecting monastic discipline, one can nevertheless pick out a mild dissatisfaction with the monks' behavior, a sense of responsibility for the future development of Buddhism, and confidence in herself* that she* is taking the right approach. One can imagine that strictly observing all of the 348 rules for nuns* must be a challenge. If the nuns* do well, it might be something that they can be proud of, putting the monks (who have difficulties keeping even their 250 precepts) on the spot. Therefore, the elite nuns* from my study act as a kind of role model for the (male) Buddhist community in general, which has the function of guarding Buddhism's orthodoxy (*zhengfa* 正法). They do not succeed by challenging the existing gender order of Buddhism as represented by the Eight Principal Rules (i.e., the Gurudharma) and the monastic discipline (Vinaya), but rather by embracing it and bringing it to exceptional perfection.

In line with this, when I asked the second master within the temple hierarchy what she* sees as the main responsibilities of nuns* in mainland China, she* replied:

Gf: Actually, during the Dharma Ending Age (*mofa* 末法), you will find now that nuns* gradually take up more space and do things more and more steadfastly. As for the tower of strength, nuns* obviously fulfill quite an important function. Because what you can see now in Buddhism overall is the difference in the performance of monks and nuns*. Men behave quite a bit too freely; they just do what they want without any restrictions. Aside from that, there are many monks from the Buddhist academies who are rather, I mean, those monk students are very hard to control. If you police them today, they won't attend classes anymore …

I: (laughing)

Gf: (laughing) … they will run away and go to other schools. (laughing)

I: (laughing)

(laughing) As you see, in the worst case, they'll not attend classes anymore but leave. So they're very hard to control. They're somehow very free and unrestrained. By contrast, nuns* are more

Gf: conscientious. Normally, in the academies for nuns*, the coming and going and this kind of restlessness, or all kind of being disobedient and leaving the classroom, all that happens very rarely. Nuns* are relatively conscientious and law-abiding. They spend all their energy on practice, on studying, on spreading the Dharma. They do it very steadfastly, and they keep on doing it patiently.

Gf: 其實末法年代的話呢，慢慢現在其實會發現比丘尼的這個佔領(sic!)的這種做事更踏實一些。這個中流砥柱型的話呢，好像比丘尼起到的作用也蠻大的。因為現在的這個這種整個佛教能看到，男眾，呃，男眾相對來講跟女眾的表現的這種差异了。男生相對稍微就會比較，嗯，自由化，我想怎麼樣不受拘束啊。然後那個像很多男眾佛學院就比較，就說，這男眾是我們很難管，你今天管他他不上了，

I: (笑)

Gf: (笑)跑到别的学校去上(笑).

I: (笑)

Gf: (笑)你說他嚴重點的就不上了，就走了。然後就很難管。就是 ... 比較自由，然後他也比較(吸氣)，嗯，就是(咂嘴)不受約束化。相對女眾呢就是比較本分。嗯，一般像女眾佛學院的裡邊它像這種互相的來回這樣的走動性啊，或者說這種這種，呃，不聽話就出去啊怎麼樣，這種這種很少，相對比較本分比較安分一些。呃，致力於自己修行啊，呃，教學呀，弘法呀，踏踏實實做這一件事情，然後呢，比較耐煩(sic!)的做下去. (Gf 1:05:34–1:06:57)

Although the term *zixin* (self-confidence) is not explicitly mentioned within the paragraph, one can nonetheless condense the text towards this message. It is easy to notice the abbess's* high appraisal of the role of nuns* within the Buddhist community. She values self-discipline, persistence, and conscientiousness as these scholar nuns'* strengths. It is these strengths that help ensure Buddhism's survival.

It is remarkable that the nun* leaders of the temple have created an alternative model of Buddhism that disengages from the dominant scholarly style of the monks' academies. Indeed, it is nuns* who are all in all proportionally less educated than monks in contemporary China and who are therefore latently expected to maintain a strong confidence and follow the Pure Land path in compensation. Their heavy karmic burden as women legitimizes the idea that nuns* should strictly adhere to the Gurudharma and monastic rules in order to overcome all female weaknesses. The nuns* from my study actively adopt these role ascriptions as toolkits to build their own identity. They do

so by combining erudition (as opposed to a lack of education) with devout faith and the strict observance of monastic discipline, and thereby preserve the orthodoxy and purity of Buddhism. Thus, what is covertly considered to be contradictory—namely scholarship and devout discipline—is deliberately and creatively combined. It is this combination that provides the basis for the identity and also the self-confidence of these scholar nuns*.

Furthermore, these nuns'* approach is in line with official Buddhist religious policy. Zhao Puchu 趙樸初 (1907–2000), president of the Chinese Buddhist Association from 1980 to 2000, propagated the unity between study and cultivation practice in the academies (*xuexiu yitihua, xueseng shenghuo conglinhua* 學修一體化，學僧生活叢林化), the preservation of orthodox faith and practice (*zhengxin zhengxing* 正信正行), and the strict observance of monastic rules.[26] Of course, the monks in the academies officially promote these guidelines as well. In addition, there are quite a few different understandings of how to preserve Buddhism's orthodoxy. From the perspective of the scholar nuns* I interviewed, however, they consider it their responsibility to put Zhao Puchu's principles into practice.

## 5 Conclusion

For many Buddhist nuns* in mainland China, *xinxin* (confidence) is essential for becoming a *dazhangfu*, a masculine hero with noble qualities. It is likely that the connection between confidence/faith and the characteristics of a *dazhangfu* is nothing new. For instance, Grant mentions Dharma heir Yunfu Daozhi 雲復道智 (dates unknown), who told one of his female* disciples, Lady Xia 夏, that as long as she* had forbearance and deep faith (*ju yao dang ren shen xin* 具要當忍深信), she* should not regret being born as a woman, since she* had the insight of a man (*you nanzi zhi jian* 有男子之見).[27] However, unlike studies based on the written sources from the past (which have been compiled by monks), this study proceeds from the perspective of present-day nuns* on an oral basis.

In this context, according to my research results, the interpretation of *xinxin* as also implying self-confidence marks the perspective of Buddhist nuns* themselves, who are confronted with the ascribed difficulties and weaknesses of women, which can lead to self-doubt. Nuns* regard *xinxin* as something which is particularly needed by women, who are at risk of abandoning their

26 Wang Xin 1993, 14–15; Wang Zhongyao 2004, 86.

27 Grant 2008, 9.

objective due to a lack of (self-)confidence. Thus, confidence serves to "masculinize" and strengthen one's character. One cannot ignore the overlap with the modern Chinese national self-strengthening movement. As Wielander describes in this volume, the current political discourse led by Xi Jinping also highlights the importance of *xinyang* 信仰 (faith) and *xinxin* 信心 (confidence) for overcoming weakness. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, within the early modernizing period at the beginning of the twentieth century in China, femininity was equated with weakness, backward traditions, and ethnic minorities, whereas masculinity stood for strength, modernity, and the Han population.[28] Therefore, as Kang Xiaofei puts it, "modernization was first and foremost a project to 'masculinize the nation' so that it could become strong enough to compete with the Western and Japanese imperialist powers (…)."[29] Consequently, there was consensus that China's weakness had to be overcome by liberating and strengthening its female subjects.[30] Well might one ask whether Chinese Buddhist nuns* have inherited some of these thoughts.

The connection between *xinxin* and *dazhangfu* involves the endeavors, concerns, experiences of self-cultivation, living conditions, identities, and gender constructions of nuns*. The same applies to the *dazhangfu*'s combination of willpower, steadfastness, resolution, and determination—aptitudes which are considered to be naturally masculine within hegemonic Buddhist gender discourse. Again, nuns* need *xinxin* to transition to being a masculine hero in order to attain Buddhahood. Although monks also need to learn *xinxin* and act like a *dazhangfu*, there is nonetheless a distinct gender transition when regarding *xinxin* in the discourse of Buddhist nuns* in China.

In addition to the level of personal cultivation, there is also a broader context concerning the temple leadership and their role in the discourse about the future of Buddhism in mainland China. From the perspective of these elite nuns*, erudition must be combined with orthodox faith and strict observance of the monastic rules. These concepts are traditionally understood as contradictory and, from the leading nuns'* perspective, insufficiently implemented within the main hubs of Buddhist activity in China, i.e., the Buddhist academies for monks. Although the principle of unifying study with orthodox faith and self-cultivation has been part of the official religious policy since Zhao Puchu, the scholar nuns* of my study regard themselves as the true preservers of this postulate by strictly putting it into practice. To that end, they embrace traditional gender role expectations, for instance by observing the

28 Bryson 2017, 100; Kang Xiaofei 2017, 5, 15–16; Yuan Yuan 2009, 377.

29 Kang Xiaofei 2017, 15.

30 Yuan Yuan 2009, 377.

Gurudharma and Vinaya as an answer to women's negative character traits and by having strong confidence, which is considered to be appropriate for women. At the same time, however, they broaden their scope by serving as role models for the whole Buddhist community. Their strategy consists of dedicating themselves to higher education while simultaneously preserving Buddhism's orthodoxy via devout faith and self-disciplined practice. By ensuring the survival of Buddhism as a self-set goal, they clearly demonstrate self-confidence.

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CHAPTER 23

# Giving Credit Where It's Due: Thanksgiving as Performance of Belief in Chinese Popular Religion

*Adam Yuet Chau*

In this article I examine aspects of "believing" in popular religion in rural China based on fieldwork observations in Shaanbei 陕北 (northern Shaanxi Province) in north-central China.[1] Even though most contributions to this edited volume look at the explicit uses of the word *xin* 信 (to trust, to believe) and related words (e.g., *xinyang* 信仰) in religious-discursive practices, I argue that there are still many more religious practices that are motivated by the psychological state that we might recognize as "belief" but do not necessarily or explicitly invoke this word. The article will be divided into four sections. First, I will discuss if the concept of "belief" is relevant in Chinese popular religious practices and in our studies on these practices. Second, I will look at the link between the construction of divine efficacy and the act of giving thanks. I use "giving credit where it's due," a common English expression, to capture the public expressions of indebtedness and divine blessedness devotees perform through certain practices and acts; it is not a translation of any existing Chinese expression or phrase, though the expressions that come close to it are "to repay divine favor" (*baoda shen'en* 報答神恩).[2] In the third section, I show how temple festivals are occasions for the worshipers to perform their gratitude to the deities. In the fourth and last section, I will show how communities enforce a collective, "credible" religious milieu by punishing blasphemers.

1 Fieldwork primarily conducted between 1995 and 1998, with a short trip in the summer of 2016. I would like to thank in particular Dr. Liu Jianshu for his crucial assistance during the 2016 brief period of fieldwork. I have incorporated some passages from my earlier ethnographic monograph (Chau 2006a) but have re-worked them considerably. See Chau 2019a for an overview of religious practices in contemporary China. All Chinese characters in this article are given in the non-simplified form.

2 It might not be a mere coincidence that in English, the word "credit" (in the sense of "giving credit," "attributing agency for having caused something positive to happen") is closely linked to "belief" (creed) and "trust" (credentials, credibility, credible, credulous). Here is not the place for a study of comparative etymology, but see Beneviste's (2016) chapters on "credence and belief," "the vow," and "prayer and supplication."

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## 1 Is "Belief" Relevant in Chinese Popular Religion?

During the Maoist era, popular religious practices (temple cults, pilgrimages, spirit mediumism, etc.) were considered "feudal superstitions" (*fengjian mixin* 封建迷信) and were suppressed. During the reform era (since the late 1970s), however, a lot of these traditional popular-religious practices have been revived. Nowadays, when a Shaanbei peasant says that he or she "'believes in' [i.e., practices] superstition" (*jiang mixin* 講迷信 or even *xin mixin* 信迷信) there is often no sense of fear or embarrassment as there would have been during the Maoist era; the term "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信) has apparently been purged of its negative and derogatory connotations and become as normal as the word "customs" (*fengsu* 風俗).

Looking at the rate at which temples and religious practices have been revived in Shaanbei during the reform era (late 1970s to the present day), the impression one gets is that Shaanbei people are very religious. But what is the nature of Shaanbei people's religious beliefs? Perhaps we should question the very concept of "belief" in the Chinese popular religious context, as the concept carries with it enormous Judeo-Christian, credo-centric theological baggage. It is always extremely difficult to determine people's beliefs. Inference from behavior ignores possible discrepancy between belief and practice (even if this is unavoidable in all studies on religious practices). Direct interrogation may elicit falsehood. Concurring with R.F. Johnston's skepticism about Chinese religiosity, Arthur P. Wolf warned that it "should never be thought that people believe everything they tell the visiting anthropologist. Some do; others do not."[3] How do we "fill in" the discrepancy between, on the one hand, *actually experienced* beliefs, and, on the other hand, beliefs *constructed* by the anthropologist from *statements solicited from the informants about their beliefs*? Even more radically, Rodney Needham has famously asserted that unless a culture has a set of vocabulary to express and talk about religious belief we cannot assume that this culture has such thing as belief or the people actually "experience belief."[4] To these skepticisms I would add that even if the natives have a language for belief and really believe what they say they believe, we might still have the problem of explicating the nature of that belief.

It is not difficult to imagine that the tenor of belief in a monotheistic God would be qualitatively different from a religiosity based on a variety of deities and spirits, as is the case in Chinese popular religion. But that is still assuming a phenomenological equivalence between "*believing in* God" and

3 Wolf 1974, vii.

4 Needham 1972.

"*believing in* gods, goddesses, and spirits," premised on more or less analogous psychological states. This is the kind of functionalist fallacy the early anthropologist Franz Boas fought against when he opposed the tendency in ethnological museums to display the "same category" of artifacts from different cultures side by side because of their functional equivalence and evolutionary progression.[5] For Boas, it would not do to put a New Guinea stick hoe next to a Chinese flat-blade hoe just because both are agricultural instruments. He argued that the significance and meaning of one category of artifacts cannot be understood without putting them within the total context of the culture from which they come, so he advocated displaying all of each particular culture's artifacts together organically and in relation to one another. Therefore in his view, Kwakiutl religious beliefs and practices could only be understood in the context of the whole repertoire of Kwakiutl culture and not when mechanically juxtaposed and compared with religious beliefs and practices of other cultures. While comparative studies (e.g., comparative religion) have tremendous value when done properly and judiciously, I think we should take Boas' advice seriously and not extract facile "categories" of seemingly similar phenomena out of context from very different cultural settings. In our case I suggest that we investigate the nature of belief in the context of Shaanbei society and culture. In an important sense this article is about how embedded religious ideas and practices are in their cultural and sociopolitical milieu.

But first let us look at the concept of belief in a classic Biblical passage: "Go out all over the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. *He who believes* and is baptized will be saved; *he who refuses belief* will be condemned."[6] As is evident in this key passage in the New Testament, one's belief in the gospel (there is God and Jesus Christ is the savior, etc.) is central to Christian religiosity and to one's ontological status, i.e., saved or condemned. During the course of my fieldwork in Shaanbei, however, I seldom encountered any explicit talk of "belief in deities." Shaanbei people do have the word for the verb "believe" (*xiangxin* 相信) as used in "I believe what you are saying," but they do not say "I believe in the Black Dragon King" or "I believe in gods and goddesses." Most important, they do not have the noun "belief" (as in "you have the right to hold your religious beliefs") or "faith" to refer to the totality of their "beliefs." In contemporary elite discourse in China there is the word "belief" or "conviction" (*xinyang* 信仰), but I have never heard Shaanbei people use it. So was Rodney Needham right, that because Shaanbei people do not have a language for religious belief they therefore do not think it is important and

5 Boas 1974, 61–67.

6 Mark 16:15–16; quoted in the *Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* 1951, 187; emphasis added.

they do not experience belief as a psychological state? Needham might have given too much weight to linguistic representations as signs or proof of mental states, for there are many things in life that are too elusive to be captured by linguistic conventions (especially affective states such as those that might be involved in interactions with spirits). But we should heed his skepticism regarding an overly facile identification of a familiar psychological state (i.e., "belief") in otherwise unfamiliar places (a lesson similar to the one we draw from Boas). It goes without saying that when I use words in this article such as "believe," "believer," "worship," "worshiper," or "pray" the reader needs to be aware of the considerable linguistic compromise necessary in describing Chinese popular religious practices in the English language; these are merely linguistic shorthand.

## 2 Magical Efficacy and Thanksgiving

Even though Shaanbei people do not say that they "believe" in their deities, they act as if they do. For example, they visit the deities (sometimes through the deities' spirit mediums)[7] and pray for divine intervention when they have serious problems (e.g., a serious drought, an illness that the doctors cannot cure); they spread stories of the deities' divine powers; they express gratitude to the deities by staging temple festivals and donating money to the temple. Most Shaanbei people maintain some kind of relationship with a number of deities, and these relationships often last a lifetime and across generations.

The single most important concept in understanding the Shaanbei deity-worshiper relationship is *ling* 靈 (magical efficacy).[8] It refers to the ability of the deity to respond (*ying* 應) to the worshipers' problems by, for example, curing an ill family member, pointing to the right direction for conducting business, enlightening one on a knotty personal dilemma, bringing down ample rain after a bad drought, and so forth. Therefore, we can characterize Shaanbei popular religion as essentially *a religion of efficacious response* (*lingying* 靈應). If we reject the possibility of real divine power, we have to examine how *ling* is socioculturally constructed. [In fact, even when we accept the possibility of real divine power we will still need to explain how this power is understood and acted upon by social actors, the latter again being a sociocultural construct.] Even though *ling* is constructed by people, people's experience of *ling*

7 See Chau and Liu 2021 and forthcoming for detailed studies on spirit mediumism in Shaanbei.

8 For a fuller treatment of magical efficacy as the focus of the "immediate-practical modality of doing religion," see Chau 2019b.

is real and is a social fact. A deity is *ling* because people experience its power and therefore say that it is *ling*. One deity is more popular and "powerful" than another because more people say the first one is more *ling*. This does not mean the first deity is more powerful or higher in rank than the second one in the locally-significant pantheon; it just means that the first deity responds more readily to people's requests for divine intervention. In fact, higher-ranking deities are often considered too distant and "haughty" to be responding to humble mortals' calls for help.

The more people experience a deity's *ling*, the more *ling* is attributed to the deity, which in turn contributes to the intensity of people's experience of the deity's *ling*, and so on. One deity's decline in popularity is usually caused by the rise in people's *ling* claims for another deity and the subsequent defection of incense money to the other deity. On the one hand, *ling* is a deity's power in the abstract. On the other hand, *ling* inheres in concrete relationships, between the deity and an individual worshiper or between the deity and a community. It is meaningful to worshipers mostly in the second sense, because *ling* in the abstract is only latent power, not manifest power, and the only meaningful way a deity manifests his or her power is through aiding a worshiper who is in trouble or who needs the blessing to weather life's many trials and tribulations. An allegedly powerful deity whom a person has nonetheless never consulted is without significance to this particular person. Like social relationships, the relationships people have with deities also need maintenance and frequent renewal, hence the obligatory visits to the temple in the first lunar month of the Chinese New Year and on the deity's birthday. Shaanbei people refer to these visits to the deity as "paying respect to the deity" (*jingshen* 敬神).

Despite the great variety of deities worshiped in Shaanbei, there seem to be some very basic principles or postulates that inform Shaanbei people's religious beliefs and practices and form the core of their religiosity. These basic postulates are:

1. That there are gods (or that it does not hurt to assume that there are gods);
2. That people should respect the gods and do whatever pleases the gods (e.g., building them beautiful temples, celebrating their birthdays) and should not do anything that displeases the gods (e.g., blasphemy);
3. That the gods can bless people and help them solve their problems;
4. That people should show their gratitude for the gods' blessing and divine assistance by donating incense money, burning spirit paper, presenting laudatory thanksgiving plaques or flags, spreading the gods' names, and so forth;

5. That some gods possess more efficacy than others (or have specialized areas of efficacious expertise); and
6. That one is allowed or even encouraged to seek help from a number of different gods provided that one does not forget to give thanks to all of them once the problem is solved.

These six basic postulates underlie most of Shaanbei people's religious beliefs and practices, even though they are not systematically laid out as I have done here. For example, all temple festivals are expressly to celebrate the gods' birthdays, to show gratitude for a year's peace and prosperity or a good harvest, or simply to make the gods happy.

Even though the popular religious landscape in Shaanbei consists of a large number of deities, sacred sites, and religious specialists, each Shaanbei person's set of meaningful deities, sacred sites, and religious specialists is a limited one. The makeup of each person's "religious habitus"[9]—that is, his attitudes toward, and behavior concerning deities, sacred sites, religious specialists, religious rituals, and supernatural forces in general—is determined by whether or not, in what way, and to what degree the events in his personal life have brought him, in a meaningful way, to which of the deities, sacred sites, and religious specialists. It also goes without saying that each person's religious habitus changes over time. Because of their lack of life's many responsibilities and experience with deities' assistance, children and young people tend to treat deities with less respect, and they also know much less about different deities' legends and magical exploits.

In his study of individual variations of religious belief and unbelief among Taiwanese villagers, the anthropologist Stevan Harrell also provided a useful, person-centered perspective on Chinese religiosity.[10] Among the villagers he interviewed, Harrell found four basic types of believers (or what I would call believers with four basic kinds of "religious habitus"): intellectual believers, true believers, nonbelievers, and practical believers. Intellectual believers base their beliefs on intellectual coherence and systematic relatedness of religious ideas and practices and are extremely rare; true believers are characterized by their total credulity toward all religious ideas and are rare; nonbelievers are those who completely disregard or ignore the possible truth or usefulness of any religious tenets and are rare as well; and practical believers base their belief on the principle of practical utility and constitute the great majority of Harrell's interviewees. The religious attitude of the practical believers is one of "half trust and half doubt"[11] (in Mandarin *banxin banyi* 半信半疑) or "better

9 Concept inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "habitus"; see Bourdieu 1977.
10 Harrell 1974.
11 Harrell 1974, 86.

believe than not." Even though I did not conduct a similar, systematic study of individual variations of Shaanbei people's degree of belief and unbelief, my impression is that in Shaanbei, too, a great proportion of people are practical believers and far fewer are true believers or nonbelievers. Some Shaanbei urbanites I talked to also expressed the sentiment of practical and selective belief, as some of them told me that insofar as supernatural powers and stories of efficacious responses are concerned, "one should not *not* believe [what others say about the power of deities and other supernatural occurrences], nor should one believe everything [they say]" (*buke buxin, buke quanxin* 不可不信, 不可全信). Another saying also testifies to the flexible attitude Shaanbei people hold toward deities and worship: "If you worship (literally, "honor" or "respect") him, the deity will be there [to help you]; if you don't worship him, he won't mind" (*jingshen shenzai, bujing buguai* 敬神神在, 不敬不怪). Shaanbei people are aware that the supernatural landscape is filled with numerous deities and spirits and it is both unnecessary and impossible to worship them all.[12] But deities specific to a particular community (i.e., a village) are more demanding of the attention and respect from the members of the said community.

One of the most visible material manifestations of people's gratitude for the deities' divine interventions is the thanksgiving dedicatory banner/flag (*jinqi* 錦旗) or plaque (*bian* 匾) that a grateful worshiper gives to the temple after the deity has responded favorably to his or her requests (e.g., a son, a speedy recovery, a good exam result, etc.). There is a set format to the inscriptions on these banners and plaques (see Figures 23.1 to 23.5).[13] The first line is to name the deity to which this thanksgiving banner or plaque is addressed, often specifying

12 Here is a partial list of some of the most commonly worshiped deities in Shaanbei: the Perfected Warrior Ancestral Master (Zhenwu zushi 真武祖師), who is the presiding deity of the White Cloud Mountain Daoist shrines and a score of other shrines all over Shaanbei; Guandi (Guanlaoye 關老爺 or simply Laoye 老爺); the Buddha (Laofoye 老佛爺); the Emperor of the Eastern Peak (Dongyue dadi 東嶽大帝); the Jade Emperor (Yuhuang dadi 玉皇大帝); the Three Pure Ones (Sanqing 三清); the Three Divine Officials (*Sanguan* 三官); Guanyin 觀音; the Monkey King (Qitian dasheng 齊天大聖 or simply Dasheng 大聖); the City God (Chenghuang 城隍); the Horse King (Mawang 馬王); the Three Heavenly Goddesses (Sanxiao niangniang 三霄娘娘); Sage Ancestor Lü (Lüzu 呂祖 or Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓); various dragon kings (*longwang* 龍王); various fertility and child-related goddesses (*niangniang* 娘娘); the God of Medicine (Yaowang 藥王); the God of Wealth (Caishen 財神); the God of Letters and Examinations (Wenchang 文昌); the God of Insects (Bazha 八蜡); the Mountain God (Shanshen 山神); fox spirits (*huxian* 狐仙); and various efficacious officials (*lingguan* 靈官) and immortals (*daxian* 大仙). The above-mentioned deities are all worshiped in temples, but there is a separate category of deities that are worshiped only inside the home or in the courtyard. They include the stove god (*zaojun* 灶君), Heaven and Earth (*tiandi* 天地, which is strictly speaking not a deity), and the earth god (*tushen* 土神).

13 See Chau (forthcoming) for a more detailed study on "temple inscriptions as text acts."

the name of the temple or the temple site (since many deities in Shaanbei share the same name but are actually different deities). The middle line in much bigger characters is the thanksgiving phrase, often one of the following stock expressions (there is clearly no need to be innovative): *youqiu biying* 有求必應 (whatever you beg for, there will be a response), *shenling xianying* 神靈顯應 (the divine efficacy has been manifested), and *baoda shen'en* or *dabao shen'en* 報答神恩/答報神恩 (in gratitude for divine benevolence).[14] The last line indicates the name of the worshiper and the date and year of the dedication. Below is one example of a dedicatory plaque (transcribed from the text shown in Figure 23.4):

敬供: 東陽山水神娘娘

**酬神還願**

食道癌

榆陽區紅石橋鄉雙紅村 邊武山

二零一二年正月二十六日

Below is my translation:

Respectfully presented to: The Water Goddess of the East Sun Mount

**Fulfilling My Vow in Thanking the Deity**

Esophageal cancer

Bian Wushan of Double Red Village, Red Stone Bridge Township, Yuyang District

Twenty-sixth of the first lunar month, year 2012

14 The reviewer of this article manuscript raised the question on the difference between being indebted to deities and being indebted to one's parents since the expression "repaying for kindness/favor received" (*baoda* 報答) is used in both contexts. The main difference lies in the understanding that one can never repay the debt to one's parents whereas one *can* reciprocate appropriately (even if perhaps inadequately) the blessings and divine help one has received from the deities. The same reviewer also suggested that repaying one's debt to one's parents does not have "monetary connotations." I think on this point the reviewer is mistaken. "Filial children" not only give actual money to their parents (ranging from the more symbolic as money in red packets on special occasions to much more substantial sums—in fact the act of giving this money to one's parents is called "filial piety," *xiaojing* 孝敬!) but continue to do so after the parents pass away (in the form of papier-mâché silver ingots and trillion-dollar hell-bank notes)!




FIGURE 23.1 Thanksgiving dedicatory banners/flags hanging next to the deity statue in a temple
ALL PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT OTHERWISE NOTED

The cost of these dedicatory banners and plaques can vary enormously, ranging from a few dozen *yuan* to a few tens of thousands (e.g., a large wooden plaque penned by a well-known calligrapher and inscribed by a master carpenter). These dedicatory banners and plaques are always given to the temple together with monetary donations as *ex-voto* donations (*huanyuan bushi* 還願布施) or in the form of *ex-voto* opera performances (*yuanxi* 願戲) (as short as one episode or as long as a whole hours-long piece) or *ex-voto* story-telling performances (*yuanshu* 願書) (ranging from shorter episodes to multi-day serials)[15] In fact, one can say that these *ex-voto* donations are more of the "substance" of the thanks-giving whereas the dedicatory banners and plaques are there to announce and highlight these donations, with the added benefit of being visible for all to see for a period of time (more substantial and beautiful banners

15 The cost of sponsoring a story-telling (*shuoshu* 説書, literally, "speak book") episode is much lower than that of an opera episode (*zhezixi* 折子戲). Story-tellers in Shaanbei typically operate alone, playing a three-stringed plucked lute (*sanxian* 三弦) accompanied by a pair of clappers tied to one shin.




FIGURE 23.2 A large thanksgiving dedicatory banner. 2016




FIGURE 23.3 Three stylish dedicatory plaques hung outside a temple hall




FIGURE 23.4 A dedicatory plaque thanking the Water Goddess of Dongyangshan for having cured this worshiper's esophageal cancer. This temple is the only place in Shaanbei in my experience that has dedicatory plaques detailing the medical problem in question.

and plaques and those from dignitaries are prominently displayed whereas small and more ordinary ones are quickly covered over by newer ones).

Most worshipers will choose to bring the thanksgiving dedicatory banners and plaques to the temple during the annual temple festival in order to demonstrate to the largest audience possible their gratitude to the deity. In order to further attract the attention of other festival-goers so as to maximize the "performance" of this thanksgiving (and the divine efficacy of the deity), the temple association has a shawm band of four or five members (one on small, *suona* 唢呐 shawm, one on big shawm, one on cymbals, one or two on drum(s)) at the ready to ostentatiously accompany the donor from some distance outside the temple hall (e.g., twenty meters) all the way to the temple hall (see Figures 23.5–23.6). The donor would hold a tray lined with a yellow sheet of paper stating his name and the amount of donation, on top of which is the donation in cash.



FIGURE 23.5 A shawm band playing a piece accompanying the donation of thanksgiving incense money by a worshiper, who is carrying the money in cash as well as a dedicatory banner into the temple hall




FIGURE 23.6 A worshiper registering his donation to the temple (200 *yuan*) during the annual temple festival

## 3 Temple Festivals as Thanksgiving and Collective Testimonies

As tradition dictates, Shaanbei people stage temple festivals at least twice a year, one during the Lunar New Year and the other for the deity's birthday. These temple festivals are organized by temple associations (*hui*), which comprise a small group of responsible and generally respectable adult men who are approved by the deity through divination. On the First Month Fifteenth the association oversees the communal festival at the temple. The temple festival on the deity's birthday is a much larger event, lasting typically for three days, and thus requires much more organizational effort. Depending on the level of prosperity of the temple community, different folk performing arts are staged for the deity as well as for the community. If the temple commands a large sum of donations, the temple association will invite an opera troupe to perform folk opera, the culturally ideal choice for temple festivals in honor of deities' birthdays. But if the temple endowment is modest, the temple association will then only invite a folk music band or a storyteller to enliven the atmosphere. Lots of firecrackers are also a must. The goal of every temple festival, like that of other festive occasions such as weddings and funerals, is to produce "excitement and fun" (*honghuo* 紅火), which I have characterized as "red-hot sociality." Red-hot sociality produced at a temple festival is an exterior sign of the success of the temple cult and the general prosperity of the community supporting the cult (see Figures 23.7 to 23.9).

When visiting a deity or consulting a deity through a spirit medium, Shaanbei people normally donate some incense money and make a vow to contribute more incense money, bring gifts, or sponsor folk opera or story-telling performances at the temple festival if the deity (sometimes through possessing the medium) helps the patient recover. Of course, illness is far from being the only problem Shaanbei people bring to the deities. Other problems include marriage prospects, changing jobs, promotion, travel or business plans, lawsuits, interpersonal problems, missing persons or goods, or any other troubles. Many Shaanbei people attend temple festivals specifically to honor their vows by bringing the promised amount of incense money donation. Occasionally personal troubles are diagnosed by mediums or deities to be caused by a former dishonored vow, sometimes even from past generations.

When Shaanbei people are not troubled by any specific problems, they go to the deities to give thanks and to pray for their continual blessing. The most commonly used phrases in the prayers are "[We or I] implore Your Venerability to bless/protect us so that we will have good fortune, every endeavor will go smoothly, and we will be free from trouble (*qiu ni laorenjia baoyou zanmen dajidali pingpinganan* 求你老人家保佑咱們大吉大利平平安安). The "we"



FIGURE 23.7 Crowds of worshipers and visitors at the annual Black Dragon King Temple festival. 2016

(*zanmen* 咱們) in this prayer generally refers to the immediate family of the person praying, and that is why the expression "our whole family/household" (*zanmen quanjia* 咱們全家) is often used instead. This "we" almost never refers to the larger descent group, the village, let alone even large collectivities such as province or nation. Even when the prayer (as in a rain prayer) refers specifically to "the myriad masses" (*wanmin* 萬民), the implied objects of blessing are still the numerous families and their members.[16]

Shaanbei people usually make the above-mentioned generalized requests on two different occasions: during the first lunar month and on a particular deity's birthday. The first thing many Shaanbei villagers do in the morning of the first day of the first lunar month is to pay respect to the local deity (usually at the village temple). On the fifteenth of the First Month *yangge* 秧歌 troupes[17] of different villages and towns (and nowadays also schools) visit the

16 See Chau 2006b and 2015 for an explication of the importance of the household idiom in Chinese religious engagements.

17 Yangge (literally, "spring-sprouts songs") is a common form of traditional folk dance in North China that usually consists of troupes of dozens of dancers with accompanying musicians playing shawms, cymbals and drums. Traditionally, every year in the first half of the first lunar month the temple association organizes a temple *yangge* troupe to "visit



FIGURE 23.8 Worshipers at the Black Dragon King Temple festival bring offerings to the temple halls. 2016



FIGURE 23.9 A folk opera performance at the Black Dragon King Temple festival. 2016

temples and pray for blessing for the year, but this particular celebration is generally considered part of the New Year's festivities. And then there are the temple festivals celebrating the deities' birthdays. Shaanbei people say they go to a temple to "pay respect to the deity" (*jingshen* 敬神) instead of "worship" (*bai* 拜, the term more commonly employed in coastal southeastern China, including Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, and Hong Kong).

All temple festivals entail some kind of pilgrimage, when people from outside of the regular temple community come to pay homage to the deity, meet old friends and relatives, and enjoy the excitement and fun. Daughters who have married out come back to their natal villages, and parents visit their daughters when their in-laws' villages are having temple festivals. When long-distance pilgrimage is involved and the number of outside visitors is high, the temple associations have to arrange accommodation for them. Large temples often have dormitories or build temporary structures for pilgrims. Sometimes when a large number of pilgrims come from one particular locale they will organize into groups to take care of themselves. A famous example of a locale-based pilgrimage organization is the "eight big congregations" (*badahui* 八大會) for going to Baiyunshan 白雲山 (the White Cloud Mountain) in Jia 佳 County. Because the temple festival at Baiyunshan is so crowded, different congregations in different areas have to arrive on different days to be accommodated, fed, and received properly.

## 4 Blasphemy and Communal Hegemony

Insofar as the village temple belongs to the village community, the village as a whole worships the village deities as a *community of believers*. Membership in this community is assumed but also reaffirmed through personal worship, donation of incense money, participation in temple festivals, the sharing of the sacrifice, and other activities related to the deities. When it seems that everyone in the village is a member of the community of believers (disregarding the level of commitment and involvement), the worship of the village deities has achieved what can be called *communal hegemony*.

A community of believers does not prohibit its members from seeking help from deities outside or participating in other such communities, but it would

door by door" (*yanmenzi* 沿門子) around the villages in the vicinity of the temple to greet the villagers and to collect donations for the temple.



FIGURE 23.10 A sculpture in a temple hall showing the punishment for any would-be blasphemer (the eyes of the blasphemer being gouged out by the eagle). 2016

sanction against the absence of its members from its own communal worship. Conflicts between Christian converts and other villagers over temple festival fees are a good example of such sanctions. When there are explicit nonbelievers or blasphemers who challenge the power or even the existence of the deities and the validity of others' beliefs, the community of believers often employs coercive measures to attempt to bring these people back in line. They will recount stories of divine retribution and warn of bad death and suffering for the nonbelievers and their families. This kind of communal coercion is a very common practice among believers of Chinese popular religion and seems to be effective in at least subduing dissenting voices within the community if not actually stamping out unbelief.

As in many other Shaanbei temple revivals in the early 1980s, the initial period of the rebuilding and reviving of the Black Dragon King (Heilong dawang 黑龍大王) Temple also relied on the power of communal coercion. Here I give only one story relating to what had happened to a man who played an active role in destroying the Black Dragon King Temple during the Cultural Revolution.

Before Liberation, the Heilongdawang Temple (at that time a much more modest building compared to today's splendid temple complex) was run by three neighboring villages. During collectivization these three villages became three brigades, and when the directive to "destroy the four olds" (*po sijiu* 破四舊) came from the commune in 1966, the brigades decided to take down the temple and use the much-needed building materials for civic purposes. They divided up the job; one brigade was to take down the main temple building, the other the entrance hallway, and the third the opera stage. A young man from one of the brigades, a small-team leader, was in charge of the operation on the main building, where the Heilongdawang statue stood. In a flare of revolutionary zeal, he led the charge on Heilongdawang by hitting the large clay statue on the neck with his hoe, knocking off the statue's head. The operation on the whole was very smooth; there was no drama of Red Guards storming the temple, clashing with protective peasants, as had happened in some parts of Shaanbei. No one sensed any ominous happenings looming ahead and indeed nothing bad happened after the temple was taken down, until quite a few years later.

Sometime in the mid-70s villagers were called to help build the runway of the nearby military airport. The same man, now in his late thirties and still a small-team leader, was in charge of leading a group of men to blast rocks on the riverbank. Three holes full of dynamite were ignited but only two went off. They waited for a long while for the third to explode, but it didn't. The women came with lunch so the men stopped working. Lunch in hand, the team leader was finally overcome by curiosity and went over to the third hole to check what had gone wrong—only to have his head blasted off.

Sometime after this tragedy, people began to comment on the causal link between this man's rash attack on Heilongdawang and his subsequent bloody and sudden death. The story of divine retribution quickly became a household tale in the area. Some even added the details: the head was blown from the neck at exactly the spot where he had struck Heilongdawang's neck with his hoe. Today, the man's three sons and their families still live in the shadow of this incident and the village's communal discourse of divine retribution. The villagers all think that it was because of the father's bad deeds that the third son is a half-witted village idiot and the other two married sons have only daughters but no sons. The blasphemer's descendants have essentially become semi-outcasts in their own village.

The principle of correspondence (homology) is very common in these divine retribution stories (e.g., a head for a head). Another story related to me was about a Party secretary in another community who said, during the temple-destruction campaign of the Cultural Revolution, that he "didn't

piss" (*buniao* 不尿, Shaanbei dialect expression for "not being afraid of") the local god. He died of urine poisoning soon afterwards because he couldn't urinate.

And here is a third anecdote. Temple boss Lao Wang's mother, who was in her seventies, was attending the fireworks night at the annual Black Dragon King Temple festival in 1998. That night was when the whole Dragon King Valley was most packed with worshipers and spectators. Those attending must have numbered tens of thousands. The fireworks went as spectacularly as had been expected, and as soon as it ended the crowd began to pour down the narrow valley towards the main road below, people on foot mixing with those riding motorcycles and tractor-trucks carrying passengers. The valley path was narrow, rugged, dark, and completely packed. A motorcycle hit Lao Wang's mother; she fell; the motorcycle took off without stopping. One of her legs was injured badly and she was hospitalized for many days. Lao Wang was furious at the careless and irresponsible hit-and-run motorcyclist, and he was also furious with the Black Dragon King. For a long time after this incident Lao Wang would, during gatherings of temple officers, rant about how despite the fact that he had been working so hard and for so long as the head of the temple association the Black Dragon King would allow his mother to be injured in such an ignominious and scandalizing way. Lao Wang always had a sharp tongue, and on these ranting occasions he got so emotional that he was often close to cursing the Black Dragon King. The younger temple officers were too scared to say anything. A few older temple officers would try to comfort Lao Wang, especially to rein in his "blasphemous" tirades. It was clear that they were afraid that Lao Wang's rants would displease the Black Dragon King, which might in turn bring disaster to Lao Wang or the whole community. The belief in deities is as much a personal psychological state as a public discourse. When the majority of a close-knit village community believe in the village deity, it is extremely difficult to publicly present dissenting views, much less knocking down the deity's statue (the small-team leader was a blasphemer in act rather than in words). Members of the community who believe in the deity thus form a discourse community as well, enforcing a more or less uniform view on the efficacy of the deity, even if allowing different, individualized experience with the deity. If a person states that he doesn't believe in the deity and something terrible happens to him or his family, the believers will say that the person suffers because the deity is punishing him for his blasphemy and impropriety. Normally, very few people have the nerve or resolve to counter such a strong communal hegemonic force. No one dares to say in public that a particular deity is "not efficacious" (*buling* 不靈) (though he or she is mostly free to not go to this deity any longer).

This communal coercion dimension of popular religion also partially explains the reluctance of local cadres to crack down on temples and temple activities. Theoretically, because all cadres are Communist Party members and presumably atheists, they should not be afraid of gods and divine retribution. In reality, however, as members of local communities and under the influence of the communal hegemony of believers (who are more often than not their close kin), local cadres are often believers themselves, which makes them unwilling to interfere with popular religious activities. In fact, many village temple bosses are current or ex-village Party secretaries, some devout servants of the village deities making up for having wronged the deities during the Maoist era. It is widely known that the Communist government resorted to physical violence during campaigns against "feudal superstitions"; but too often scholars overlook the element of communal coercion inherent in the maintenance of popular religious communities. People in such closely-knit communities do not care much about private thoughts of disbelief; but any *public expressions* of such disbelief will surely be punished. Not believing is to not render credit where it's due and thus threatens the welfare of the entire community.

## 5 Conclusions

"Belief" as a notion is of course central to all creed-based, confessional religious traditions (most notably Christianity and Islam). But even in these religious traditions "belief" is far from being only a personal psychological state and accompanying religious practices (e.g., private prayers). There is always a *community of believers* to enact, through their words and actions, the various dimensions of belief as a *public* performance. In both Christianity and Islam, most prayers are said in groups: with family members at home around the dining table, with other congregants in the church or mosque, with a world-wide imagined community of co-religionists. Similarly, praising God or Allah is a public performance, conforming to historically contingent and socio-culturally specific norms and forms.

The range of practices in Chinese popular-religious life that suggest the existence of some kind of belief (but never to be presumed to be analogous to what might be posited as any "typical" Christian belief) include: burning incense and spirit money; consulting and beseeching deities for divine intervention (sometimes through spirit mediums, divination sets, or a divination chair); organizing and participating in temple festivals celebrating the deities' birthdays (often involving going on pilgrimages and sponsoring opera performances); spreading stories of the deities' miraculous responses; etc. All of

these activities are *public* manifestations of the Chinese "giving credit to where it's due."

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CHAPTER 24

# What China Is Missing—Faith in Political Discourse

*Gerda Wielander*

## 1 Introduction

The first major policy declaration by Xi Jinping 习近平 (1953–) in 2013 started with the word faith (*xinyang* 信仰).[1] "Faith, belief, confidence, and real action are the guarantee for the success of our undertakings" (*Xinyang, xinnian, xinxin he shigan shi women shiye chenggong de baozheng* 信仰，信念，信心和实干是我们事业成功的保证).[2] This emphasis on faith came with corresponding eight commandments (*bage bixu* 八个必须) which reflected some of the points written into the preamble of the Chinese constitution and now read like a precursor of the socialist core values.[3] Since then *xinyang* has become a key term in Xi's rhetoric and is seen as a core quality of the Chinese people. The phrase "If people have faith, the country has strength" (*Renmin you xinyang, guojia you liliang* 人民有信仰，国家有力量)[4] has become a key slogan, plastered across billboards in China's major cities, and even got its own song, composed in time for the 19th party congress in 2017.

This chapter focuses on this appearance of the word *xinyang* (faith) in mainland Chinese politics discourse in recent years. It analyzes the party's attempts to create a belief system around socialist core values and a hagiography around the history of the Communist party and its saints (heroes). The main focus of this study is the use of a certain terminology (i.e., the use of the term *xinyang*) rather than the object of faith (e.g. Communism, or a Christian God). While the use of the term faith in party discourse is not new, I argue that the emphasis placed on it since Xi Jinping's leadership needs to be explained by contemporary developments rather than as a continuation of previous practices. It places the party's emphasis of *xinyang* in the context of the resurgence of religion in

1 The chapter consistently uses the English word faith to render the Chinese *xinyang*. However, some quoted sources use the word belief to render *xinyang*, in which case I have kept the original choice of the author.

2 China Copyright and Media 2013.

3 Zhao 2012.

4 Xinhuawang 2015.

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twenty-first-century China, on the one hand, and the emergence of a credible moral alternative to the party in the form of Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波 (1955–2017) and Xu Zhiyong 许志永 (1973–) on the other—two individuals representative of a wider movement built on faith and courage of conviction, which gained traction and support until the party's crackdown from 2015 onwards. The chapter points out common points in this discourse and the ways this discourse ties in with earlier discourse on faith and values since the early twentieth century. It considers the term *xinyang* a "floating signifier" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]) whose precise definition is contested, but which is connected to questions over China's future "salvation" by all those invoking it. Faith is what is required for China to achieve its aims, seems to be the consensus.

As Klein points out in this volume, in Republican texts the term *xinyang* operated in conjunction with other religious terms like *shengjing* 圣经 (bible) and *fuyin* 福音 (gospel), all of which suggested a Christian context. A hundred years later, these terms still carry this connotation, but to a degree they have also entered secular and common parlance.

We need to point out that the use of *xinyang* is not the only manifestation of spiritual language in Chinese political discourse. Under the Hu-Wen government, love was an important term in the context of building a "harmonious society."[5] Apart from faith, which is the focus of this article, *jiingshen* 精神 or spirit is another key term in political discourse. Not only does the achievement of various goals and objectives require the "correct spirit," but there is also a Chinese national spirit (*Zhongguo minzu jingshen* 中国民族精神), a Beijing spirit (*Beijing jingshen* 北京精神), and spiritual hygiene (*jingshen weisheng* 精神卫生), not to mention the spirit of Lei Feng 雷锋 (1940–1962) and other model heroes, and the spirit of the 19th party congress (*shijiuda jingshen* 十九大精神). "Innovation is the soul of a nation's progress" (*Chuangxin shi yige minzu jinbu de linghun* 创新是一个民族进步的灵魂), a big banner proclaimed on Shanghai's Nanjing Road in April 2017, and, of course, the party has soul (*dang de linghun* 党的灵魂). For Andrew Kipnis, the "party propagandists mirror the poetics of the English language using *linghun*'s sacred/religious connotations to imply that there is something permanent and powerful about the interiority that animates the party."[6]

To Kipnis, the "soul" is a bridge between the pre-modern and the modern, echoing Habermas[7] who argues that religious communities owe their persistent influence to an obstinate survival of pre-modern thought. He further

5 Wielander 2013, 46–64.

6 Kipnis 2017, 221.

7 Habermas 2008.

argues that "one may discover, even in religious utterances, semantic contents and covert personal intuitions that can be translated and introduced into secular discourse."[8] In the case of China, the meaning of secular in itself is debatable, but in the contemporary Chinese context secular discourse is characterized by a focus on the philosophical rather than the numinous,[9] morality rather than faith in divinity, and an understanding of transcendence that is not dependent on a force outside oneself,[10] as will be shown in what follows.

## 2 Faith, Values, and the Party

"The Chinese people have faith" (*Zhongguo renmin you xinyang* 中国人民有信仰), released in the autumn of 2017, is a catchy pop tune. The lyrics are a simple ode to Chinese core socialist values in fourteen short lines, which the seven-minute song will imprint ineradicably on one's mind. "Core values are our faith, core values are our new practice, core values we commit to our heart, core values we sing out loud! If people have faith, the country has strength; extraordinary among the ordinary, our common ancestors are Yan 炎 and Huang 黄; if people have faith, the Chinese dream has hope, with shared prosperity we speed towards *xiaokang* 小康!"[11] These words are followed by a recital of each of the core values, which at one point in the rather lengthy song are being rapped. If the invocation of faith and hope has a faint ring of St Paul about it, the third element in the gospel according to Xi is strength (*liliang* 力量), not love, and references Sun Yat-sen 孙逸仙 (1866–1925), as shown in Klein's chapter in this volume.

The meaning and importance of faith has been a topic of keen discussion since about the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. At that point, the resurgence of religion, and in particular the rapid growth of Christianity, had informed much soul searching and sociological and ethnographic research on religion in China. While one of the main conceptual models to talk about the growth of religion in China used is the "market," as proposed by Tamney and Yang,[12] by 2009 Chinese academics were talking

8 Ibid. This is an online source that, as far as I can tell, only exists online and has no page number.

9 Nedostup 2009, 3.

10 See Goossaert's chapter in this volume.

11 The tune is available here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7esCE7w13g (accessed 7 February 2018). The lyrics are available here http://ent.cnr.cn/ylzt/gqzj/gqsp/20171001/t20171001_523973654.shtml (accessed 7 February 2018).

12 Tamney and Yang 2005.

about "religious ecology," and more specifically, about an imbalance in China's religious ecology. This imbalance was considered to have been caused by previous attempts to stamp out all polytheistic beliefs (in the form of folk religion or "popular religion") which allegedly removed all obstacles to hinder the growth of Christianity. Mou Zhongjian 牟钟鉴 (1939–) of China's Minzu University felt compelled to argue that, "one important strategic task for the future social and cultural building-up of China is to re-establish, under the guidance of the system of core socialist values, the equilibrium of a diverse and harmonious ecology of religious culture."[13] This renewed emphasis on indigenous religion as a response to the popularity of Christianity can be compared to the rivalry between Buddhism and Taoism, described by Mollier, which led to a significant change in Taoist scriptures in an urgently felt need on the part of Taoists to reinforce the prestige of their own tradition.[14] Today party ideology seeks reinforcement through invocation of Chinese traditional religions against the "challenge" of Christianity.

In 2013, Zhuo Xinping 卓新平 (1955–), Director of the Institute for the Study of World Religions within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a scholar of Christianity, and a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, argued that the members of the Communist Party and the Chinese nation needed faith; without faith, there was no future for the country or the party; without faith, social morality became "like a river without a source, a tree without roots."[15] In order to realize the Chinese Dream, Zhuo argues that the entire Chinese people must be united by means of cultural faith. A year earlier, Gao Zhanxiang 高占祥 (1935–), Chairman of the Association for the Promotion of Chinese Culture, already warned that, "Belief is the soul of a nation. A firm belief is […] a spur for a state, a political party, or an individual to proceed on his or its way forward. It is a determining factor […] as regards the flourishing or the decline, the success or the failure […] of states, parties, and individuals."[16]

Such thoughts are not new. Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929) already wondered in 1902 whether China would have any kind of future without faith,[17] and an article in *xin qingnian* 新青年 entitled "On Faith" (Lun xinyang 论信仰) by Yun Daiying 恽代英 (1895–1931), an early leader of the CCP, argued that, "Faith leads people forward, that's for sure. It has a special function; it makes

13 Mou 2009, as quoted in Gänßbauer 2015, 88. On religious ecology, also see Clart 2013.
14 Mollier 2008, 7.
15 Zhuo 2013, quoted in Gänßbauer 2015, 49, see also Fröhlich's chapter in this volume.
16 Gao 2012, as quoted in Gänßbauer 2015, 49. The gendered expression is part of the original translation by Gänßbauer, which I have retained, but do not endorse.
17 Zhong 2016, 384. Cf. also Fröhlich's chapter in this volume.

the meek brave, the weak strong, the lethargic spirited [...] only faith has this function."[18]

While *xinyang* as a compound (noun or verb) has been used since the Tang dynasty, there is debate, as evident in the contributions to this volume, as to when the concept of faith started to be discussed and defined.[19] One of the most interesting modern definitions of faith, including political faith, was provided by He Lin 贺麟 (1902–1992) who, in 1947, speaks of faith in the following terms.

> Faith is a form of knowledge, it is also a motivation for action; one can say that faith is a form of knowledge which is able to prompt action. Furthermore, it can be said that faith is a form of knowledge that makes the individual strong, enduring, sincere, focused [...] On the day a nation's or a country's faith is broken, the nation or the country will fall into tragic disaster [...] Traditional faith holds together systems of customs and forms the core of rituals [...] pragmatic faith (*shiyong xinyang* 实用信仰) makes life more convenient as it regulates activities [...] all faith in politics or military matter falls into the realm of pragmatic faith [...] Political faith includes three different aspects: a) faith in a political doctrine, b) faith in the plans or policies of the government or a party, c) faith in the character of the political leader.[20]

He Lin himself wrote in response to his own context and has no direct link to the CCP, but we can find all three aspects of political faith as identified by He reflected in the party's endeavors. Works like *Daguo xinyang* 大国信仰 (A Great Nation's Faith)—a reader in socialist ideological faith—try to re-establish socialism as China's political doctrine; delivery on economic targets and "speeding towards '*xiaokang*' with shared prosperity," as the new song puts it, is designed to instil faith in the plans and policies of the government; and the emerging personality cult around Xi Jinping himself is perhaps less of an adulation of the man than his supposed incarnation of party values and spirit.[21]

*Xinyang*, as propagated by the party, is closely linked to socialist core values (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhiguan* 社会主义核心价值观) which, to some degree,

18 Yun 1917 as quoted in Zhong 2016, 387.

19 See also Fröhlich and Krämer, this volume.

20 He Lin 1947, as quoted in Zhong 2016, 402, translation by author.

21 Kerry Brown 2018 proposes that the party's power lies in the dominance of the political narrative and that individual leaders like Xi Jinping do not really matter.

have become synonymous with Chinese values (*Zhongguo jiazhiguan* 中国价值观, also *Zhongguo de jiazhiguan* 中国的价值观).[22] Unlike *xinyang*, the term *jiazhiguan* is a neologism; it is a modern compound made up of *jiazhi* 价值 and *guannian* 观念. Zhong Shaohua 钟少华 states that the term did not exist in classical Chinese at all. The term *jiazhi* on its own, on the other hand, does appear in post-Han texts, mostly in Buddhist classics, but is reserved to express value in a monetary or economic sense. It is only in modern times, from the late nineteenth century onwards, that virtues like *ren* 仁 or concepts like *ziran* 自然 started to be referred to as values using *jiazhi*. It was in the Chinese translation of the Bible where the term *jiazhi* was introduced as a term to speak of things like wisdom, fate, and other spiritual values.[23] From the twentieth century onwards, the term *jiazhi* started to be used for a whole variety of different non-monetary values, all of which were considered to be "objective" or "universal." *Jiazhi* in non-monetary or economic terms appeared in the writings of Liang Qichao and Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), among others. Through these writings, *jiazhi* slowly became something aspirational, something one was aiming to reach. In writings by Jiang Jingsan 蒋径三 on idealism, for example, value/*jiazhi* started to be associated with subjectivity and an emotional judgment; as what should be rather than what is, something associated with *liangxin* 良心 (conscience, rendered in German in Zhong's text).[24]

Zhong identifies Zhang Dongsun 张东荪 (1886–1973) as key source for the introduction of the term *jiazhiguan*. Chapter 6 of Zhang's essay "Knowledge and Culture" (*Zhishi yu wenhua* 知识与文化) is entitled "Knowledge is Value" (*Zhishi ji jiazhi* 知识即价值) and speaks of a distinction between Western and Asian values, referring to "*dongfangren dui jiazhi de guannian*" 东方人对价值的观念.[25] The term *jiazhiguan* is therefore a rather new term, which emphasizes the relativity and subjectivity of values depending on one's view point, one's culture, and one's politics. This is a very important point given the centrality of values, and in particular the socialist core values, in contemporary discussions on *xinyang*. Faith, in the way the term is used in Chinese political discourse today, implies adherence to a particular set of values that is distinct to China and Chinese socialist culture; not universally shared—but increasingly globally transmitted—the anchoring of *xinyang* around a specific

22 For an elaborate exposition on the relation between the two concepts see Jiang and Cai 2017, http://www.zhongdaonet.com/NewsInfo.aspx?id=14933 (accessed 31 January 2018).

23 Zhong 2016, 238–239.

24 Zhong 2016, 252.

25 Zhang 1946, quoted in Zhong 2016, 270.

understanding of values is an important aspect of the attempts to fix the meaning of the floating signifier *xinyang* in the wider debates.

## 3 Worshipping the Party

First signs of recent attempts to link the party, faith and the state in Chinese people's minds came at New Year in 2010, when the national education department launched a comprehensive campaign to encourage people to "wish the motherland a Happy New Year," which lasted from 10 January to 19 February 2010. Chinese people were encouraged to offer sacrifice (*jibai* 祭拜, lit. "to offer sacrifice to one's ancestors") to China's magnificent territory, the common ancestors Yan and Huang, outstanding historical figures, revolutionary martyrs, model heroes, and the millions of common people. According to Li Xiangping 李向平[26] this was the first incident in the Chinese people's history where the state interfered with New Year. While there were some attempts after 1911 to link the nation to faith (as Klein points out in this volume), these were quickly diluted and certainly in the first three decades of the People's Republic all kind of worship was considered "individualistic" and hence forbidden. In the 1990s, even fireworks and crackers were forbidden. However, recent economic development has brought about a liberalization of faith related customs, and, lo and behold, the state suddenly wants to be the object of worship, says Li. Despite economic development and a relaxation of rules on popular religion, Li argues, there is no actual religious freedom; the crisis of religion has not gone away. While people have faith, they are not able to identify with this faith or to freely express it. What is happening instead, in particular in the context of this exhortation to worship the state, is that the Chinese people are being "made to believe" (*bei xinyang le* 被信仰了). Li quotes Zhu Xueqin 朱学勤 (1952–), who stated that China's reforms could be divided into two periods, characterized by different types of cooperation. In the 1980s, China saw the cooperation between enlightened officials and progressive students; the following phase saw cooperation between the government and capital, which resulted in the formation of bigwig capitalism, to use Li's words. Li now sees a third phase characterized by the cooperation between public authority and traditional faith, for the purpose of sanctification of bigwig capitalism as the deliverer of economic development. This, the state may hope, will counter the crises of faith in Marxism, in the party, and in socialism.[27] Indeed

26 Li Xiangping 2010.

27 Ibid.

Brown[28] argues that the party's main strength lies in its redemptive power—or at least a narrative based on redemptive power—and the promise to deliver on modernization and national rejuvenation.

The party has certainly been working hard at its creation myth. In 2012 CCTV1 broadcast a three-part documentary film with the title "Xinyang." It is a three-hour lesson in CCP history and its heroes, dedicating part one to the period of 1921–1949, part two to the 1950s, and part three to the contemporary (leaving out a rather large chunk of time in between). The film establishes the orthodoxy of the CCP's version of historical events, whether factual or not. The three parts enshrine CCP history with its holy places, and its saints, evoking a history and spirit of sacrifice and dedication, with frequent repetitions of the word *xinyang* itself throughout the three parts. The closing frame of part three concludes with the following voice over:

> In order to believe (*weile xinyang* 为了信仰) that there is an even longer road ahead of us; that by the time the CCP will have been established for 100 years we will have built a moderately prosperous society for our several billion Chinese people; that come the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the New China we will have built a rich and strong, democratic, civilized, harmonious socialist country through socialist modernization, let us be guided by faith. Let even more legendary, groundbreaking stories [of communist heroes] be the spiritual motivation for our ceaselessly forward marching CCP members.[29]

The commemoration of revolutionary martyrs and other communist heroes is an important aspect of political faith around the party. Like saints, they represent the soul of the political movement which extends into their afterlife. Cemeteries in China today are important sites of political education. Students—whose faith is of particular concern to the party—are taken to important cemeteries like Baobaoshan 八宝山 in Beijing to reinforce their learning of the stories of the martyrs. The information on the actual gravesites is supplemented by signage and TV screens. On some cemeteries tombstones will have matrix codes etched into them, which people can scan to download information on the buried hero onto their smartphones.[30] Cemeteries where revolutionary heroes and political leaders are buried have a higher real estate

28 Brown 2018.

29 CCTV 2012; translation by author.

30 Kipnis 2017, 227.

value and prestige than others.[31] Some cemeteries even have small museums to CCP history built on them, almost taking the role of "chapels."

According to Jürgen Habermas (1929–),[32] living in a secular society used to be bound up with the certainty that cultural and social modernization can only advance at the cost of the influence and relevance of religion, but that this is now no longer the case in the West today. We can observe a similar change in the party's consciousness. Even the staunchest CCP member no longer considers the foreseeable disappearance of religion a certainty, not even a probability. While the party has returned to its stance that all party members at least must be atheists, the reality betrays a very different picture. In the face of the continuing need for religion—seemingly recognized by the current regime—the party now seems to present itself and all that it stands for as an object of faith, expecting people to redirect their religious desires to the party and its heroes, as propagated in the film *Xinyang*. It will also adopt quasi-religious practices. It is trying to do so by directing religious feelings towards the party, but also in an increasing personality cult around Xi Jinping himself. In Southeast China Christians have been told to get rid of pictures by Jesus and replace them with portraits of Xi Jinping. There have been accounts of reverent gatherings around a tree Xi planted in 2009 in Henan province,[33] and in Shenyang the party installed red "confession boxes" in the streets (somewhat reminiscent of red telephone boxes in Britain) where people are encouraged to speak their innermost thoughts to the party.[34]

Andrew Kipnis has also observed a subtle shift in the way visitors pay their respects at Mao Zedong's mausoleum in Tian'anmen Square. Firstly, he notices that the entire square has been redesigned to accommodate masses of rural Chinese tourists. Inside the mausoleum, Mao is presented slightly more God-like than in the past. Visitors now must take off their hats and must remain silent during their visit. Many will also bow three times and place flowers in the cauldron in front of Mao's statue. Finally, upon emerging from the mausoleum Mao memorabilia including badges depicting him as a "god of prosperity" are being sold, like outside temples.[35] The use of flowers instead of burning paper goods and incense is now encouraged on all cemeteries as a fire prevention measure. This also applies at the Mao temple in Hunan, where visitors are

31 Ibid., 225.

32 Habermas 2008.

33 Phillips 2017a and 2017b.

34 See for example http://www.ntdtv.com/xtr/gb/2017/09/26/a1343878.html (accessed 29 June 2018).

35 Kipnis 2017, 229–230.

not allowed to burn incense, but are allowed to light a cigarette and stick it vertically into the sand of the cauldron to let it burn down.[36]

## 4 A National Faith for China

Neither *xinyang* nor *jiazhiguan* are confined to rhetoric and spiritual aspects alone; core socialist values also include practice and ritual. *Xinyang* is considered the spiritual motivation to inspire heroic and selfless deeds by communist party cadres, and a nation's shared belief is considered vital for the success of the country, as we have seen from Liang Qichao to Zhuo Xinping. In his book *Xunzhao shidai de xinyang* 寻找时代的信仰 (Seeking a Faith for Our Times),[37] Yuan Youjun 袁友军 (1967–), professor at the Guangdong party school and Guangdong's College of Administration, goes so far as advocating the establishment of a Chinese national faith fit for the age of globalization, which reflects the "cultural genes running in the blood of the Chinese," China's current economic situation, and its external environment. He envisages a Chinese national faith not solely around the party, but one which emerges from a mix of various faiths including the following ingredients: Confucian ethics; ancestor worship including the worship of the Yellow Emperor and Zhougong 周公; sinified Christianity; socialized Taoism; globalized Buddhism; and Mao Zedong worship. Among these, Confucian ethics are supposed to take the leading role, perhaps not unlike the vanguard role of the urban proletariat in relation to other revolutionary classes. In Yuan's view, China's history of multiple faiths provides the perfect starting point for such an amalgamated faith, and potentially he sees this model not confined to China, but as a suitable example of cultural globalization in times of economic globalization.[38]

Yuan's historical reference points are the Virtuous Hall of Five Religions (*wujiao daode tang* 五教道德堂) of 1923, which was established by Chen Fuling 陈福龄 (1844–1929) and others in Qiqihar advocating a harmonization of the five great faiths into one, and also a meeting in Lushan in 2011 by the leaders of China's five officially recognized faiths called the "Five Religion Prayer Culture Garden."[39] While these previous initiatives included Islam in the melting

36 This practice was reported by Ian Johnson, author of *The Souls of China* (2017) during a closed discussion held at the Reform Club in London on 18 January 2018 at which the author was present.

37 Yuan 2014.

38 Ibid., 4–5.

39 For a report on this meeting, see http://875647.7225.30la.com.cn/Article/lsnews/201105/20110506151554_1185.html (accessed 1 February 2018).

pot, Islam is notably absent in Yuan's detailed proposals for China's national faith. It is, however, noteworthy that he includes Christianity (or rather sinified Protestantism) in the components to make up the new national faith. In his analysis, China was crucial in the reversal of fortunes of Christianity as a faith, which is on decline in the rest of the world, but on the rise in China. This is one of the most optimistic and positive spins on the rise of Christianity in China from the perspective of the CCP. While individuals like Zhao Xiao 赵晓 (1967–), another party member, spoke about the importance of the rise of Chinese Christianity for world Christianity, such voices have become rather quieter since Xi Jinping's leadership. Therefore, this official endorsement of Christianity by Yuan is rather noteworthy.

The bottom line for Yuan is that whatever an individual's belief, the country and the nation need a national faith suited to the contemporary economic circumstances, which exerts spiritual guidance for the ordinary person. He fears that China's economy and society will not be able to continue to develop in a harmonious and stable way without such a faith, and that the Chinese nation would not easily withstand the challenges from other powerful civilizations without it,[40] echoing fears voiced by Liang Qichao and, more recently, Zhuo Xinping. For Yuan, China's socialist core values are intended to play an important part in this national faith. However, according to Yuan, they need to be lifted from the level of theory to the level of faith. After all, values are the substance and core content of any faith. Yuan cautions that socialist core values are scientific and progressive, but that they are at present only an abstract theory. Faith, he argues, must go beyond theory and science and include practical worship. Therefore, in order for the core socialist values to become internalized and turn into a national faith, they need to be lifted from an abstract concept to a faith that is alive and takes shape in rituals performed in front of the masses and which transport the values into every aspect of life, argues Yuan. Through education, practical cultivation, and institutional safeguards, socialist core values need to be internalized as spiritual pursuit, and externalized through people's conscious action. It also needs to be disseminated effectively. After all, every faith needs missionaries to spread its gospel, says Yuan.

Instead of churches or temples, he considers businesses the ideal places of ritual and worship of this new faith as well as the best organizational units to promote faith in the context of a globalized market economy—an idea quite possibly inspired by the practices of Yiguandao 一贯道,[41] and directly tuned into party discussions about how to best promote Chinese culture abroad

40 Yuan 2014, 5.

41 See also the chapter by Broy in this volume.

which consider selling rather than sending culture abroad the most efficient method.[42] Yuan suggests that not only should companies have their own figures of saints and little shrines or places of worship (modelled on the relation between Shinto and Japanese firms), tying the employees' faith to that of the organization, but he also sees companies as the ideal vehicle for the dissemination of this faith. A company's activities in the globalized market economy make it the ideal missionary through the products they sell (which stand for values), the service they provide, the conduct of their staff, as well as their philanthropic activities. Ultimately, he envisages a global business association based on this common faith built on the model of Freemasonry. This would have the advantage of bringing together the financial means required to disseminate the faith, leading not only to the promotion of the new faith, but also to China's national rejuvenation at the same time.[43]

## 5 Was den Chinesen abgeht—What the Chinese Are Lacking

Zhou Guoping 周国平 (1945–), philosopher at CASS and scholar of Nietzsche, also considers faith vital; it is one of the core messages of his book *Zhongguo ren queshao shenme?* 中国人缺少什么?[44] The title of the book takes inspiration from a chapter in Nietzsche's *Götzendämmerung* entitled "Was den Deutschen abgeht" (1888).[45] While Nietzsche bemoaned the German people's lack of thinking as reason for its sorry state, according to Zhou Guoping the Chinese are lacking faith and the rule of law, a point he had already made in a speech in the 1990s when Liu Xiaobo, too, first reflected on faith.

The bulk of Zhou's book focuses on an analysis of Yan Fu 严复 (1854–1921) and Wang Guowei 王国维 (1877–1927), in Zhou's view two Chinese intellectuals who tried to introduce the idea of both faith and the rule of law to the Chinese; Yan Fu through his translations of British liberals, and Wang Guowei through his engagement with German philosophy. Both ultimately failed in their task, he says: Yan Fu, because he was unable to transcend the limitations of his own culture by using existing Confucian terms to express the ideas of

42 See for example http://yunnan.mofcom.gov.cn/article/sjzhongyaozt/201611/20161101587621.shtml (accessed 29 June 2018). The reference to "selling" comes in section three of the article.

43 Yuan 2014, 250–300.

44 Zhou 2017.

45 A German version is available here http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/-6185/10 (accessed 1 February 2018).

liberalism, and Wang Guowei because he himself lost faith in philosophy and turned to history and philology instead.

Zhou sees the excellence of Western philosophy in two areas: metaphysics and its concern with ultimate truth and ultimate value, based on ancient Greek philosophy as further developed in German philosophy; and individualism, that is respect for the value and freedom of the individual, based on Roman philosophy and further developed by English philosophy. Thanks to metaphysics the West formed a cultural tradition of conscientious treatment of knowledge and faith, he says. Thanks to individualism, it established a society ruled by law based on the highest principles to protect individual liberty. Zhou suggests that if one takes the West as frame of reference and universal values as yardstick when analyzing Chinese culture (something many Chinese would of course object to), then faith and the rule of law are what China lacks. Zhou further contends that it is the profound lack of both which will mean that economic transformation may ultimately fail.[46]

The book also includes a copy of Zhou's 1999 speech with the same title, as well as a 2008 post-script to the republication of the 1999 speech, in which Zhou expressed his own views rather more clearly. In Zhou's view the main weakness of Chinese cultural tradition lies in its emphasis on practical values and its neglect of spiritual values. He contends that China's modernizers have always focused on the lack of material culture—riches and strength—and tried to think of political systems and ideological weapons that may be required to bring about this material self-strengthening. Spiritual culture has either been low on the agenda, or not of concern at all. Indeed many, he says, believe that Chinese culture is already one of the most spiritual in the world, providing a counterpart—and potential savior—to the West's materialist culture,[47] possibly a little stab at people like Yuan Youjun.

To Zhou, Yan Fu's main shortcoming was his failure to grasp the core tenet of liberalism, which is the value of the individual. In Yan Fu's translation individual freedom became a mere method to ensure progress through the free development and competition of individual power in order for a nation to become rich and strong. This obsession with the practical applicability of theory is the reason why Chinese philosophers and thinkers have been unable to grasp the core of Western philosophy which touches on metaphysical or spiritual concerns, Zhou argues. The spiritual quality of individuals only tends to receive attention because it is an ingredient in the quality of the nation and its people. Even men like Liang Qichao and Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881–1936) focused on

46 Zhou 2017, 348.

47 Ibid., 338–339.

morality and ethics rather than true spirituality, driven by the need to change society as they perceived it. Individual spirituality, Zhou argues, was never considered a value in itself, as it should be.[48]

While there is great interest in the reverence of the dead in Chinese culture, and although dead ancestors and dead revolutionaries play an important role in folk religion and in political faith, Chinese philosophy is not overly concerned with questions as to the meaning or ultimate cause of life, nor does it talk much about death. To Zhou this lack of engagement with questions of a transcendental nature is a great shortcoming in Chinese culture and part of the reason why China lacks a sense of awe; not only does Chinese culture not believe in God, but there is also no belief in the holy, he says. Consequently, somebody, who is apathetic to their own meaning of life cannot feel real empathy towards others, cannot feel true social responsibility.[49]

## 6 Faith and Resistance

A feeling of social responsibility is what motivated Xu Zhiyong and other lawyers commonly referred to as *weiquan* 维权 lawyers, or rights defenders, who came to prominence in the first decade of the twenty-first century. They took over the mantle of writers and intellectuals as the most politicized professionals in the new millennium. Their actions formed a marked departure from previous behaviour of Chinese intellectuals, whom Liu Xiaobo acerbically and relentlessly criticized as lacking both a moral stance and courage of conscience. In one of his essays from 2002, Liu laments that their conscience either makes intellectuals depressed or go into exile; that it seems that they have not yet come up with any alternative behavior.[50] Conscience, and the courage to act on one's conscience and conviction, is a key thread in his writings and one that gained currency in the first decade of the millennium. Concurrent to the time when Charter 08 was being thought up and drafted, a new group of intellectuals started to make an impact in Chinese society. Liberal thought started to develop further through the emergence of Christian voices in political counter discourse. Core principles of Christian liberalism can be summarized as the emphasis on a transcendental source of democratic and societal values and the notion of conscience (*liangzhi* 良知 or *liangxin*), which started to have an impact on all groups of liberals in the 2000s. At the same time, the

48 Zhou 2017, 335.
49 Ibid., 344.
50 Liu 2010 [2002], 385.

disillusionment created by corruption and the effects of distribution of wealth linked to existing power structures meant that a wide sector of society was starting to develop a strong sense of justice. As such conscience started to simply stand for knowing and standing up for what's right, or protesting against what is not right. This is the context and spirit in which *weiquan* lawyering emerged.[51]

Xu Zhiyong and his colleagues clearly have come up with an alternative behavior to depression or exile: Xu's approach to making a difference was based on a very simple concept: to take one's rights and duties as citizen seriously. From this simple and sincere premise, backed up with countless politically motivated, concrete and far-reaching examples of "model" behavior, Xu built the "New Citizen Movement," a platform from which he advocated "a community of citizens committed to freedom and democracy,"[52] which begins with individual, small acts of civic engagement. As Xu writes, the New Citizen Movement was

> … a political movement through which the people of this ancient nation can bid farewell to autocracy once and for all and make the transition to constitutional government. It's also a social movement that will break with corrupt privilege, abuse of power for personal gain, and the huge gap between rich and poor and instead build a new order of equality and justice. And it's a cultural movement to create a new national spirit that can replace the authoritarian culture of subjects. Finally, it's a movement for peaceful progress, one that will advance the level of the entire human civilization.[53]

Xu Zhiyong—very much a man of action rather than an armchair philosopher—uses a striking amount of spiritual language in his reflections on the work he and his colleagues have been doing as lawyers and political activists. While not a Christian himself, Xu has clearly been influenced and impressed by Christian friends; to use his own words he "dabbled in Christianity." Xu was detained in August 2013 and was sentenced to four years in prison in January 2014. His arrest was followed, in June 2015, by the start of a systematic crackdown on *weiquan* lawyers, which has affected more than 300 individuals

51 See Wielander 2013, 130–150.

52 Xu 2017, vii.

53 Ibid., 211.

and includes criminal detention, house arrest, and residential surveillance.[54] In his rousing and deeply moving closing statement to court following his trial, Xu made repeated reference to faith.

> [...] I believe in the power of faith, and in the power of the truth, compassion, and beauty that exists in the depths of the human soul, just as I believe human civilization is advancing mightily like a tide.[...] I urge everyone to maintain their faith in freedom, justice, and love [...] Remain steadfast in your faith in justice, always stay true to your heart, and never compromise your principles in pursuit of your goal [...] Adhere to faith in love, because this nation has too many dark, bitter, and poisoned souls in need of redemption [...] Our faith in the idea of building a better China, one of democracy, rule of law, freedom, justice and love, is unwavering.[55]

The type of socially and politically engaged work by intellectuals (as which lawyers most certainly count) was a new departure in the twenty-first century from what Liu Xiaobo had decried as the "utilitarianized" (*gonglihua* 功利化) character of Chinese intellectuals.[56] In 1990, Liu wrote that due to the utilitarianized nature their thinking rarely develops towards pure science or theory; that it has no transcendental character. As a result, it does not develop any religious spirit which points towards transcendental, ultimate values, nor does it establish any metaphysical tradition or theory or hypothesis that transcends the empirical, let alone foster an authentic spirit facing up to reality that transcends a rational political approach. All they know is to blindly follow behind the mantra of "cultivate one's character, manage one's household, rule

54 For a detailed chronology on the crackdown, see http://www.hrichina.org/en/mass-crackdown-chinese-lawyers-and-defenders (accessed 17 July 2017).

55 Xu 2017, 281–282.

56 I use the rather awkward English term "utilitarianized" in order to stay close to Liu's Chinese term and to mark the difference Liu sees between Chinese "pragmatism" and Western pragmatic spirit. In his view, Chinese "pragmatic reason" has nothing in common with Western pragmatic spirit. As he says, "Western philosophy developed a positivist spirit [...] at its heart lies a respect for experienced reality and scepticism towards a priori truths and reason [...] in the realm of ethics, the authentic spirit of western culture manifests itself in utilitarian ethics [...] whose biggest characteristic is its clear individualistic nature. Its highest standard is individual happiness and rights, which trump society's political benefit and moral standards. And public norms must serve the realization of individual happiness and rights." Liu 2010 [1990], 128–129. In Liu's critique, Chinese "pragmatic theory" stipulates the opposite, i.e. the subordination of the individual to society and the state.

the state, pacify the country,"[57] a charge that could be laid squarely at the door of Zhuo Xinping et al. who, in the service of the state, now promote a national faith for China's salvation.

Liu Xiaobo speaks of faith as early as 1990, in the aftermath of the crackdown in Tian'anmen Square and at a moment when economic reforms were not yet considered successful. He calls for a collective awakening of intellectuals, urging them to make resistance their "Bible" (*Fankang shi dangdai zhishi fenzi de "Shengjing"* 反抗是当代中国知识分子的《圣经》).[58] Here, too, faith is linked to transcendental values.

> Among wo/men's[59] rights and liberties, spiritual liberties (*xinling de ziyou* 心灵的自由) are the most important—freedom of thought, expression, and faith. These liberties not only allow one to think what one wants, believe what one wants, and say what one wants. Even more importantly, in terms of faith they allow one to pursue transcendental values; in terms of knowledge they allow one to uphold scientific truths that transcend the political and the ethical; in the realm of thought, they train a kind of prophetical spirit built on hypotheses ahead of our time. It is a freedom that transcends utility. This is what Chinese intellectuals are missing. The result of this is not just material poverty of the nation, but an even starker national spiritual withering. This in turn manifests itself in submissive, unenlightened, subordinate thinking as well as numbness towards all things mystical or unknowable, and an absence of wonder or desire to explore.[60]

And in a devastating critique, which has lost little of its relevance more than thirty years after it was voiced, he adds that

> Chinese intellectuals today pursue the transformation of faith into power, and the use of power to sustain faith [...] If it weren't for the heartless nature of those sanctified dictators, intellectuals would to this day be oblivious to the dangers of worshipping power [...] If it weren't for the wholesale destruction (caused by) the Cultural Revolution and the failure of current "reforms," Chinese intellectuals' illusions about the power of the dictator would still not be shattered.[61]

57 Liu 2010 [1990], 114.
58 Ibid., 113.
59 I choose wo/men to avoid gendered language in rendering the Chinese word *ren* 人.
60 Ibid., 107, translation by author.
61 Ibid., 115, translation by author.

## 7 Conclusion—the Contested Discursive Field of Faith

According to Laclau and Mouffe, discourse is an attempt to fix a web of meaning within a particular domain; the constitution of discourse involves the structuring of signifiers into certain meanings to the exclusion of other meanings. "Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre."[62] Despite attempts to stabilize the meaning of a "floating signifier" into one unambiguous set of meaning, no discourse is capable of completely hegemonizing a field of discursivity. The domination of a particular discourse is never complete, but continuously subject to challenges by counter-hegemonic practices, which, in turn, prompt hegemonic interventions. Tracing the appearance of the term faith in contemporary Chinese discourse—together with associated signifiers like values and conscience—has shown that it is a hugely important "floating signifier" in China today, one that is invested with different meaning in different discourses. We have traced its emergence to politically reform minded discourse of the Republican period, which is today referenced by both the party and liberal intellectuals. These discourses share some common points on faith. There is general agreement that faith is a good thing and profoundly lacking in China today. All agree that faith is built on shared values and an important motivational force that can lead to social and political transformation. Faith can be a moral and spiritual unifier, whether this is for smaller groups or the nation at large. There is general agreement that faith cannot fulfil these transformative functions, if it remains at a discursive level only. Faith needs ritual and action. Perhaps most interestingly, all discourses, including the party's discourse, emphasize the importance of the spiritual; science (and a scientific mind set) and faith are not seen as contradictory.

There are of course also key differences in the understanding of faith. The most fundamental difference lies in the kinds of values that should lie at the heart of faith. There is little agreement between socialist core values as promoted by the party's apologists and liberal values as promoted by Liu Xiaobo, Xu Zhiyong, and Zhou Guoping, not least in relation to the universality of such values. There is little agreement over which religious values if any should inform faith. Crucially, there is a marked difference in why faith is considered a good thing, which revolves around the question of whether faith is a mere tool for self-strengthening or a value in and of itself. This leads to core questions of transcendence and the importance of metaphysics, which remain entirely unanswered in the party's adoption of spiritual language, but which are fundamental to many of those concerned with China's political transformation.

62 Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985], 112.

It is here where the necessity of making a distinction between political faith and religious faith seems to impose itself, in particular when we consider Christianity as reference point and source of the concept. However, if one takes pre-twentieth-century understandings of *xin* as reference point for the current regime's use of *xinyang*, then this distinction seems less obvious. As Vincent Goossaert's chapter in this volume points out, by the early Qing period one of the meanings of *xin* was belief or trust as evident in the corpus of morality books and concerned ideas and words rather than gods; *xin* characterized one who maintained relations of mutual trust with both humans and general moral principles. Furthermore, the twelve socialist core values propagated today bear traces of a framework of eight virtues that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century and continued to exert influence until a hundred years later. Indeed, six of the eight virtues included in the *Yuding jinke jiyao* 玉定金科辑要 Goossaert mentions are also propagated as part of the Chinese dream campaign, if not directly included in the socialist core values. In the context of such moral rather than religious discourse, *xin* is considered the root of transcendence where transcendence is considered the transcending of personal limitations rather than a divine being outside the human realm and perfectly compatible with contemporary spiritual-political discourse on faith/*xinyang*.

Such semantic ambiguity due to multiple cultural understandings and layering of *xin/xinyang*[63] allows for a broad spectrum of interpretations and identification with the term from the wider population (not unlike love/*ai* 爱, a key term under the previous leadership)[64] and—in the hope of the party who now strategically employs the term—an understanding that all these meanings can be subsumed under and merged into faith built on Chinese core values as propagated by the party. Faith as propagated by the party thus becomes the vanguard of all faiths; the party wants to signal that all the faithful (with certain qualifications, as we have seen in Yuan Youjun's proposal) have a place within the party. In the 1990s, the party under Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (1926–2022) opened its doors to big businesses by signaling that it represents all the most progressive elements in society; twenty years later, it is trying to convince the people that not just capitalist, but spiritual matters, too, are within the purview of the party.

In the context of an authoritarian regime, focusing one's analysis on one particular word comes with its pitfalls, of course. Mostly, we can show, as I have tried, how hegemonic discourses are formed and contested; how terms bubble up, gain significance, and are then appropriated by those in power,

63 For a detailed treatment of the semantic transition from *xin* to *xinyang* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see the chapter by Starr in this volume.

64 Wielander 2011.

who try to "arrest the flow of difference" and determine a final meaning. But we must remember that the choice of certain words can often simply be a pragmatic attempt to stay away from sensitive terms. Li Xiangping says that he used to talk about *zongjiao* 宗教, in particular *minjian zongjiao* 民间宗教, to describe aspects of Chinese spiritual life until this term became problematic. He then switched to *xinyang*, and now that this term is also fixed in its ideological meaning, he has started to use *shensheng* 神圣 ("holy") to describe the same phenomena.[65] This appropriation by the authoritarian state of terms that have gained significance in the intellectual or popular sphere is a common hegemonic strategy. What would be most important and novel, according to Michael Hardt (1960–), would be attempts at the opposite—a wrestling away of concepts with seemingly fixed meaning from the grip of official discourse.[66] In the context of an authoritarian state like China, this is wrought with risk and difficulty.

One way is to talk about the present by referencing the past. Zhou Guoping's study of Yan Fu and Wang Guowei presented the opportunity to republish, hidden away in the appendix, a strongly political message which essentially reiterates points made by Liu Xiaobo decades earlier. In his study of etymology of concepts in the social sciences and humanities, Zhong Shaohua, writing about the term values, concedes that values depend on one's ethical, religious, or aesthetic framework, but that they can most certainly be shared, and that the denial of the existence of universal values is the age-old feudal practice of emperors and their excuse to suppress other people's values and make them follow their own instead.[67] Zhong's quote of He Lin on the meaning of political faith cited earlier in this chapter also has an important second part, which quietly invokes both Liu Xiaobo and Xu Zhiyong.

> [...] to have political faith and to be an official are two completely different things, however. To be an official without political faith is shameful. To sell out one's political faith, to go past one's conscience to pander to political power is even more shameful. To have political faith, but not to become an official, yet instead to adopt the position of scholar expert from which to assist the government, to watch the government, and to express the will of the people, that is what is most valuable for China today, and what it is the duty of every educated young citizen today.[68]

65 Personal conversation, April 2017.

66 These comments were made in a personal conversation with Hardt in London on 12 October 2017.

67 Zhong 2016, 272.

68 He 1947, as quoted in Zhong 2016, 402–403, translation by author.

On Thursday 13 July 2017, Liu Xiaobo died of liver cancer, only weeks after his "release" from prison on "medical parole." Although his closing statement "I Have No Enemies" has become a seminal text and the empty chair at the Nobel Prize ceremony has become an iconic image, Liu's frail figure days before his death will forever remain the most poignant and lasting impression on most. Following Liu's death, the cover of The Economist referred to Liu as "China's Conscience."[69] It is precisely the image of the dying man in the hospital bed which symbolizes this. "The party knows that grief is a powerful emotion and that the memorialization of souls can easily give rise to a politicised spirit," Andrew Kipnis points out.[70] There is no grave for Liu Xiaobo, no tombstone from which visitors can download important background information; his life will not feature in Chinese university students' political education on faith. However, without Liu Xiaobo and many others, who through faith, whether secular or religious, have shown courage of conviction, the party would not have felt the need to enlist scores of intellectuals and artists to create a discourse and corresponding education campaign on faith, complete with films, songs, posters, and cemetery tours in order to fix this "floating signifier" within the realm of party discourse.

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69 Print edition 15 July 2017.

70 Kipnis 2017, 233.

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CHAPTER 25

# Epilogue: Reflections and Theses on the Semantic History of *xin* 信 and Faith

*Christian Meyer*

In this epilogue—as a kind of summary of observations from this volume—we will attempt two things in a very tentative way: In a first step I will sketch out some common structures of the semantic field of *xin* as well as the relatable field of faith/belief. We will collect here observations on both the Western genealogy (drawing among others on the chapter by Jiang) and, in particular, its Chinese counterpart that has been the main focus of this volume.

In a second step I would like to provide a comprehensive picture of the genealogy of *xin* in China and eventually summarize its results in four theses. These theses will shed light on its history of semantics from antiquity to present times as a complex history of linguistic interactions taking into account different traditions, fields, and milieus that have shaped its modern usages.

## 1 General Structures of the Semantic Field: Possible Dimensions for Mapping *xin* and Trust/Belief in China and the West

### 1.1 *Basic or Everyday Meanings of xin* 信 (*and* pistis/credo/fides) *in Contrast to Conceptual Uses*

While the project has taken its main starting point from the idea of a global genealogy of religion and accordingly is focusing on religious language, Chinese or Western terminologies of *xin*, trust or belief/believe originally occur in everyday language. Their conceptual use is in fact derived from it (see esp. the chapters by Jiang, Gentz, and Meisterernst). It is therefore important to differentiate between more general everyday (and non-religious) uses of the term in contrast to more abstract and complex conceptual uses (see nos. 1.2–1.5). *Xin* (as much as the Greek term *pisteuein*) often simply means putting trust in somebody as a person, in his/her actions, his/her words or deeds. Often it can be simply understood as: "trusting or believing somebody about something," or in a more abstract wording: "putting trust in a truth claim of another person." It correlates with the importance of trust and trustworthiness as the very basis of sociality and humans as communicative beings. In this everyday

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use, trusting and believing appear as almost interchangeable though believing might point more to that which is believed (e.g., a truth claim), while trusting puts a stronger emphasis on human relations and the person who is trusted. This basic meaning also occurs in many religious texts.

### 1.2 *Conceptual Uses I: Ascribed Trustworthiness as Value and Virtue*

This leads to a second aspect when trustworthiness is ascribed to a person as a virtue or prescribed as a desirable human quality: Anthropologically speaking, this aspect of meaning expresses a universal value reflecting the relevance of trust and trustworthiness in human relations as a basic necessity in any functioning human society in contrast to distrusting outsiders. It denotes an important value that is of high importance in social co-operation, including customs, institutions, legal contracts[1] (often "by handshake"), etc. In common language context, trusting a person, or regarding him/her as trustworthy, and believing the truth value of a person's claim are often closely interrelated. It is therefore no surprise that trustworthiness—similar to specific trust-related virtues like sincerity, loyalty, or devotion to somebody (as found in component terms like *chengxin* 誠信 or *zhongxin* 忠信)—appears as a virtue in general socio-ethical canons, including the Chinese (see Joachim Gentz's contribution) or the ancient Greek or Latin (see Jiang's chapter). The notion of trustworthiness as value or virtue can be regarded as a simple conceptualized use. It may also become embedded in more comprehensive conceptual (e.g., ethical or religious) frameworks.

### 1.3 *Conceptual Uses II: "Religious" Uses or Believing in Invisible Entities and Their Power*

Furthermore, religious vs. secular uses can be differentiated cautiously (although the concept of the "religious" has to be problematized as soon as we leave the relatively firm ground of the modern Western linguistic world). From a genealogical view such uses that explicitly relate to "religion" semantically or to a certain tradition that we nowadays call "religious" can be included here. However, at this point we would like to highlight another approach emphasizing usages that apply the human act of trusting from tangible or visible to invisible objects of trust. In a functional perspective trust in, say, an invisible source of the foundations of life or of superhuman support fulfills important functions as a coping strategy in overcoming or reducing the feeling

1 For a quasi-legal use in religious contracts see here Assandri's chapter.

of uncertainty in human life generally, and in times of change and crises in particular.[2] Sharing belief (or trust) in the same invisible, symbolically charged and superhuman authority of trust may not only create strong *conviction* (as a feeling of certainty) for the individual, but also strengthen a group in mutual trust and confidence to each other.

In emic language the mode as well as object of trust, belief, or *xin* can be characterized in specific ways. In particular it can be contrasted to seeing or knowing (rationality). The motif of believing as being certain of "what we do not see" is expressed explicitly not only in the bible,[3] but appears also in modern Chinese debates.[4] The issue of faith (*fides*) as trusting in invisible truths in contrast to rationality had been a major topic of debate already in medieval western scholasticism.[5] Putting both in clear contrast has been, however, a rather modern phenomenon.[6]

Often the trust in an invisible entity will be mediated through visible or tangible entities or through living persons. To trust in the trustworthy guidance of a spiritual (or even political) leader, in what a priest in the authority of his position speaks, or what tradition (or a written scripture) reveals as trustworthy truth are examples for this. In the Greek New Testament, *pisteúein* was originally understood as putting trust in the living (tangible) Jesus as an authoritative person who possesses powers of healing and forgiving (given by the transcendent God), and believing in his words and deeds, and above all in his distinctive role (Messiah or Christ).[7] After his death and supposed resurrection (followed by his ascension to heaven that made him ultimately intangible), believing implies trusting the words of the witnesses about his epiphanies after resurrection (handed down in a "chain of trust" of trustworthy witnesses, the apostles).

In Buddhism, trust or belief in the Buddha (*śraddhā*) and his teachings is an important prerequisite.[8] In the dissemination of Buddhism it was mediated through images, sutras, and the saṅgha as representing the Three Jewels. In

2 For the role of religion in coping strategies see for example Lamine 2014, Lechner and Silbereisen 2017, or Zwingmann and Murken 2000.

3 Hebrews 11.1: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

4 See Travagnin's quote of Cihang 慈航 on *mixin* (superstition).

5 For example, the famous "fides quaerens intellectus" in Anselm of Canterbury's *Proslogion*, 11cent AD, see also Jiang's chapter. For the relevance in Jesuit debates in China, see Standaert's chapter.

6 See the chapters dealing with the confrontation of Chinese traditions with Western modernity and scientism (Fröhlich, Meyer, Travagnin).

7 See for this the chapter by Jiang.

8 See the chapters by Tam, Deeg, and Kleine.

some early medieval Daoist scriptures even *dao* (the Way) became a possible object of *xin*, as Assandri's chapter attests.

Thus, trustworthiness as reliability in *human* matters is here applied to spiritual (or invisible) and superhuman entities.

### 1.4 *Conceptual Uses III: from Trusting or Believing as Simple Action to Dogmatic Belief or Faith*

The conceptualization gains more complexity when faith or belief as a noun does not only denote the simple act of believing (*fides qua creditur*, in scholastic terms), but shifts semantically to its content, or "what is believed" (i.e., the belief in God [his existence], or any "dogmatic" truth claim) (*fides quae creditur*). Such a use for the object of believing surely reflects the significant role of dogmatic truth claims and creeds in the Christian tradition. Only if the abovementioned aspects are taken together, "faith" (*fides*) can be understood as the summarizing *epitome* of the Christian message that includes both aspects, believing as an act as well as what is believed.

It is very obvious that in Chinese this linguistic ambiguity and complexity is originally not present. Accordingly, the adoption of such semantics marks a major change in the Chinese genealogy. In modern Chinese, linguistic differentiations were made when individual doctrinal teachings had to be translated as *xintiao* 信條, or the complex concept of "faith" by the neologism *xinyang* 信仰, which leads us to our last aspect.

### 1.5 *Conceptual Uses IV: Faith or Belief as a Universalist Concept: Religious and Secular*

The highest degree of conceptualization (and abstraction) is obtained when the term no longer denotes a human capacity of believing as an act (*fides qua creditur*) or single objects of "what is believed" (*fides quae creditur*), but an abstract and complex idea of a "belief system." As a general and comparative term, the idea of "faiths"/"beliefs" (or "belief systems") beyond the Christian faith only developed rather late (in the nineteenth century). In this case, "faith" or "belief" (as a noun!) is not only an element that can be located somewhere, fulfilling a (minor or major) function within a tradition, but it becomes a signifier for the *totality of a* (religious or even secular) *tradition*. Also, the idea of "secular beliefs" developed only in the nineteenth century when the idea of "faiths" or "beliefs" as summarizing generic terms for basic systems of thought ("belief systems") developed. This kind of non-quotidian belief (as belief in any kind of Weltanschauung) appeared now as a typical "universalist concept" and was hypostasized as a basic anthropological capacity (similar to Rudolf Otto's idea of the Holy as a human *a priori*).

It therefore could be used almost synonymously to "religion" and play a role in the new concept of a "universal history of religion" (and of "comparative religion"). In the newly written textbooks for the emerging discipline of "History of Religions" or "Comparative Religion," belief could further denote specific comparative aspects. Aside from the use as synonym for a specific religion or tradition, it could imply belief in contrast to ritual, i.e., cognitive aspects in contrast to religious action. It could also be related to different forms of theism (polytheism, monotheism). In evolutionary models of religion, belief could mark a higher plane than that of magic (associated with primitive ritual), and if a religion had a distinct and reflective doctrinal system of belief(s), it could be ranked as high as Christianity. This is also reflected in China when the academic field of religious studies was introduced and the new term was applied to its traditional "teachings."[9]

Aside from religious beliefs, however, it became popular to apply the term to new secular teachings as "new belief" (David Friedrich Strauß, 1808–1874) that saw themselves not only in intellectual competition with Christian or generally religious teachings ("old faith"), but that also combined collectively shared and propagated "faith convictions" with practical application (such as revolutionary activities like in Marxism). Positivism (Comte) or scientism could be understood as such secular beliefs and would hereby be distanced from "blind believing," instead claiming a rational basis for their beliefs. It is striking that the term belief was still used with a new "positive" content while any kind of religion became denunciated as irrational or blind beliefs and therefore superstition (German Aber-glaube, Chinese *mi-xin*). This use of "(new or) secular belief" was imported to China in the early twentieth century by Republican intellectuals[10] and is still relevant in Chinese Marxism. The element of a strong (individual and collective) conviction in the semantics of belief may have been one reason for maintaining the term. Especially in ideological groups such as the Guomindang or the CCP this aspect appears as part of their rhetorics.[11]

9 See Meyer's chapter in this volume.

10 Cf. the use of *xin xinyang* by Wu Zhihui 1998 [1923]. See also Meyer's chapter in this volume.

11 Cf. the chapter by Klein on the Guomindang in the Republican period and Wielander on recent rhetorics of Xi Jinping's speeches.

## 2 A Comprehensive Semantic History of *xin* 信: Global Genealogies and the Issue of Interaction

Building on the observations above, I will now attempt to draw a brief but comprehensive picture of the genealogy of *xin*. This volume has made clear how the semantics of *xin* 信 has been—and still is—of high importance for the field of religions and beyond. Not only have Chinese observers nowadays stated a "triple crisis of *xin*," i.e., of confidence (*xinxin* 信心), trust (*xinren* 信任), and belief (*xinyang* 信仰) (*san xin weiji* 三信危機)[12] within society in the PRC. *Xin* has also played an eminent role in the field of different religious traditions in China since antiquity. Our contributors have shown in particular how interactions between different fields have regularly played an important role in shaping its multi-layered semantics.

This is true already for the pre-modern period. Gentz has shown in his chapter that while *xin* has been applied in the meanings of "believe," "trust," or "trusting" already in ancient everyday use, it was never used in this time as a qualified concept of its own. Conversely, whenever it was used as a concept—typically forming a component term together with other terms such as a "trustworthy companion"—it had always the meaning of trustworthiness, never that of belief. The first major change occurs already in late antiquity and early medieval time when Buddhism and its new semantics enter the stage and interact with local Chinese semantics. As Meisterernst's chapter shows, in Early Middle Chinese, particularly in the Buddhist literature, *xin* adopts more and more the meaning of "believing" in non-human entities and abstract concepts, taking up early colloquial use. Assandri adds to this perspective by showing how this is true at least in some degree also for Daoist texts where in some cases even *dao* ("Way") can become the object of *xin*. The major shift can therefore be reconstructed as result of the confluence of semantic histories of Chinese and Indian (Buddhist) origin.

It is therefore not by accident that a large portion of this volume—altogether eight chapters—deals with Buddhism in pre-modern or modern China and Japan. As several chapters (Meisterernst, Tam, Kleine, cf. Deeg) make clear, the new concept of trust or confidence in the Buddha and his teachings, translated from Sanskrit *śraddhā*, was understood as a prerequisite for the following steps in the Buddhist path of enlightenment. As Kleine presents in his chapter, in the Jōdo-Shinshū (True Pure Land Sect) in Japan the emphasis on faith in the Buddha Amitābha and his grace, in order to become reborn in the Western Paradise, would go so far that Jesuit missionaries reported home that

12 See above (Introduction), cf. He Guanghu 2003, 43; Fällman 2010a, 21.

the Lutheran heresy obviously had reached already the Far East. In this context, the semantic leap from traditional Chinese to Western influenced meanings of *xin* appear as much smaller. Accordingly, the ostensible mis-translation by Christian missionaries who translated *credo* or *fides* with *xin* appears as less distorted or "wrong."

The early genealogy of *xin* already shows us how earlier meanings were not erased or completely replaced by new meanings but how these semantic shifts rather added to its complexity. The actual meaning depended much on its use in specific contexts such as public or inner-religious use. This is, for example, evidenced by Dror's chapter on Chinese Islamic uses from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. *Xin* could here not only denote faith in the monotheistic God, but simultaneously refer to Confucian values of loyalty or even relate to authenticity in Chinese Islamic textual scholarship (similar to contemporary evidential scholarship or *kaozhengxue* 考證學). The example shows how different meanings could exist side by side. Moreover, some usages were very specifically Islamic, while others are shared semantics found also in other traditions (in this case of Confucian origin as the knowledge of the Confucian canon constituted the hegemonic order of its time).

It is furthermore striking how early in time *xin* was used as translation of monotheistic faith as Deeg demonstrates already for the *Jingjiao* ("Nestorian") use. As we have seen, this specific conceptual use was prepared not only by colloquial, but also Buddhist and early medieval conceptual usages. Later, in the Jesuit mission, faith was translated in the same way as *xin*, though there is no evidence for a direct link to those early Christian instances. Standaert points us also to the fact that the Jesuits did not put so much emphasis on the concept of faith or *xin*. Moreover, *xin* was related strongly to the semantics of *li* 理 in the framework of the hegemonic Neo-Confucian discourse. This may surprise us only if we expect one unified Western concept of faith in the way as it has been shaped by Protestant (esp. Lutheran) theologies of faith. It encourages to look in much more detail how exactly global histories of semantics entangle. The Jesuits' own concepts were influenced by medieval scholastic, in particular Thomistic, thought and did in fact envision no contradiction of faith and reason, and so for them Western and Chinese semantics could permeate each other in their translations.[13] Other interactions occur over the time between the major religious traditions including Buddhist, Daoist, and popular religious ones (as found in morality books) as the contributions by Guggenmos, Assandri, and Goossaert expose.

13 Their perceptions of China as a land of reason conversely even influenced European enlightenment thinkers (see for example Davis 1983 or Parker 1978, 25).

The next major shift occurs in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the balance of power was changing and leading to the hegemony of Western global orders of knowledge—and thereby of semantics. To understand the modern changes of *xin* we have to understand first some changes in the long Western genealogy of faith (or *pistis*/*fides*) (see esp. the sections on the modern history in Jiang's chapter). Most important was the detachment of the concept of faith or belief from its original historical semantic relations in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where it was linguistically bound to the ideas of (the monotheistic) God, Jesus as Messiah, the resurrection, etc. This development was based on the long process of hypostatization of the concept of faith already mentioned above. While in the New Testament the verb *pisteúein* (πιστεύειν) was still used most concretely related to the direct object of trusting or believing, already in early Christianity we find a nominalization (*pístis*, πίστις) that fostered a detachment of its semantics from specific objects and a pooling of all contents of belief in so-called creeds; in the developing field of Christian dogmatics this led to a systematization of all contents that ought to be believed (*fides quae creditur*), evoking the idea of a "belief system." The term faith hereby developed into a highly abstract and comprehensive conceptual term. Based on this it was ready to become a comparative term, that also denoted other religious teachings—so that finally since the nineteenth century we understand Buddhism, Daoism, Hinduism etc. as "faiths" and parts of a universal history of religions (see Meyer's chapter). This universalized and historicized idea of faith was supposed to be found in each and every person and was related to the concept of religious experience. The idea of faith thereby developed into a broadened sense of "worldview." Accordingly, since the nineteenth century and in competition with Christianity one started to speak even of atheist forms of "new faith," referring to different kind of atheist -isms, including Marxism. Therefore, since the nineteenth century faith—in religion *or* in atheist ideologies (secular liberalism, Marxism, agnosticism, etc.)—appeared as a basic function of human life and the notion could rise to become a powerful generic term in the field of religion and beyond.

In China, also, this *universalist* concept of faith became powerful—not only through Christian mission (chapters by Jansen, Starr), but even more through secular channels of transfer—in its translation as *xin* or *xinyang*, thereby adding another radically new aspect of meaning. Meyer's chapter highlights the role of academia, focusing on the central example of religious studies for introducing faith as a universalism (as in the idea of a universal history of religion and the related idea of religious experience). However, this broadened concept of faith is also found in writings of secular thinkers such as Liang Qichao or Hu Shi (Fröhlich's chapter) or in the new ideologies such as those of the

National Party (Guomindang, see Klein's chapter) or even in most recent political speeches of Communist leaders such as Xi Jinping (as Wielander shows in her chapter).

In the framework of a global history of semantics the question arises now how these newer Western-influenced semantics relate to older ones and if they replaced older local nuances of meaning completely. The chapters on various religious traditions that reacted to modernity from the late nineteenth century and the Republican period (Starr, Krämer, Travagnin, Broy) until today (Chau, Huang, Lüdde) make clear that the picture is much more diverse and depends on strategies of reacting, but also contexts of speaking and speakers. In some cases we find a high affinity to Western-influenced and modern semantics, especially when groups reacted to external official or public discourses (Starr, Krämer, partly Travagnin), while some results show significant resilience to new semantic influences (Broy, Chau). The latter seems to be more the case in inner-group discourses or practitioners' use in the field. Within single religious traditions, discourses on reform or preservation of tradition could shape very different discursive patterns. They also depended on the speaker's positions, as Huang and Lüdde show with their field work among Taiwanese and Chinese Buddhists (laypeople and clerics, respectively).

This volume makes clear that the picture is much more complicated and global genealogies have to be analyzed in much more detail to understand the intermingling of the global and the local on the level of semantics. In relation to this I suggest here four summarizing theses that should be further tested, but that I regard as evidenced by the contributions in this volume:

1) Modern Western vocabulary has deeply added to and transformed the Chinese modern lexicon of religion; however, it did not completely replace it.
2) Different sets of vocabulary do not only exist side by side, but have in many ways been used to interpret, and thereby mutually permeate, each other.
3) While the modern vocabulary on religion has become dominant in public secular contexts (such as political, juridical, and societal debates, though traditional structures also survive here), traditional religious language has proven to be quite persistent within religious discursive milieus, while even there it had to adapt to modern language when positioning itself to the outside world.
4) Finally, Chinese academia has played (and still plays) a crucial role of translating and mediating between public and internal religious milieus and languages as well as between local traditional and Western, or global, contexts.

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RELIGION IN CHINESE SOCIETIES

Since the end of the late twentieth century, religion in all its varied forms has come to play an increasingly visible and dynamic role in the transformation of Chinese societies. This vitality of religious practice challenges the secularization theories that are at the heart of modern social science and it directs renewed attention to the role of religion throughout Chinese history. This series features monographs and edited volumes investigating the full range of religious practices in all Chinese societies, including Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia and elsewhere. It includes research from all disciplines in the social sciences and humanities that describes, documents, and interprets religious practices, beliefs, and the many forms of religious community in Chinese societies.

What does the Chinese term *xin* 信 mean? How does it relate to the concept of faith in a Western sense? How far does it still denote "being trustworthy" in its ancient Confucian sense? When did major shifts occur in its long history of semantics that allowed later Christian missionaries to use the term regularly as a translation for the concept of believing in gods or God?

This volume offers a broad picture of the semantic history of this Chinese term, throwing light on its semantic multi-layeredness shaped by changing discursive contexts, interactions between various ideological milieus, and transcultural encounters.

CHRISTIAN MEYER, Dr. phil. (2003), Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, is Professor of Chinese Culture and History with a focus on religions at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. He has published on modern debates on religion and the history of religious studies in China.

PHILIP CLART, Ph.D. (1997), University of British Columbia, is Professor of Chinese Culture and History at Leipzig University, Germany, and editor of the *Journal of Chinese Religions*.

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