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Christianity in China witnessed its most expansive period of growth in the twentieth century. While exact numbers are hard to come by, it is estimated that approximately 67 million people in China, roughly 5 percent of the total Chinese population, claim affiliation to Christianity.¹ The resurgence of religion in China is generating intense scholarly interest across various disciplines, and the revival of Christianity continues to be a fertile area of research for scholars interested in the status of religion in China. Research on Christianity in China has mostly been limited to historical studies, and few studies utilizing social-cultural approaches can be found. *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives* aims to fill that gap. This edited volume is the result of the 2011 Christianity in Contemporary China conference at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and reflects the growing interest among scholars in analyzing Chinese Christianity using social-cultural methodologies. The papers collected in this volume, which employ surveys, interviews, and participant-observation, provide a much-needed empirical analysis of Christianity in China. The book offers a unique and nuanced on-the-ground look at the burgeoning growth of Christianity in China and depicts a religion that is rapidly diversifying amid local and global processes.

The volume, which contains sixteen chapters written by scholars from Asia, Europe, and the United States, is divided into four sections, centered around the themes of “enchantment, nation and history, civil society, and negotiating boundaries” (7). The first section, consisting of two chapters written by Richard Madsen and Peter Tze Ming Ng, spells out the theoretical framework for the rest of the volume. Employing Charles Taylor’s discussion of secularization, Madsen argues that the key to understanding the development of Christianity in China is to heed the dynamism underlying the encounter between Western Christianity and a “dynamically transforming Chinese tradition” (19). In Madsen’s opinion, scholars must attend to the mutual interaction between a modernizing Christianity and the Chinese religious and cultural context in order to discern transformations that have occurred in both spheres. This dynamic interplay has resulted in a “Chinese” modernity where actors continue to perceive the world as governed by universal impersonal

1 Pew Forum Report, *Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population* (2011), <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf>, p. 58.

laws. The Chinese landscape is a hybrid of “enchanted and dis-enchanted forms” where elements from the West are fused with Chinese traditions in a mutually transforming process (21). For many, the Christian God is much like other gods who affect the everyday lives and welfare of people. According to Madsen, this process leads to an indigenous Chinese Christianity embedded in “an enchanted world, full of signs and wonders,” with the potential to change the contours of global Christianity (26). In the same way, Ng points out in his chapter that the reality of an indigenizing Christianity in China has prompted scholars to take a “China-centered” approach, since previous research was confined to a “uni-directional” understanding of Christianity solely as a Western enterprise (33). Ng notes that the recent interest in studying Christianity as the product of “interactive relations between its global, Christian, and its local, Chinese, ingredients” via a social-cultural perspective will provide a deeper understanding of the development of Christianity in China (*ibid.*).

With this theoretical framework in place, the volume then presents a number of case studies explicating the place of Christianity in Chinese society, specifically its configuration and relationship to the state and civil society. While the editor has explicitly structured the volume around these topics, the careful reader will discern two important threads throughout these chapters. Central to all of the case studies is the resource that Christianity offers to local actors who are constructing a distinct, bounded identity in relationship to others in a pluralizing Chinese society that is still controlled by a dominant state. This is evident in Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Christie Chui-Shan Chow’s study (chapter 3) of Seventh-Day Adventists who utilize Sabbath observance and biblical vocabulary to navigate between their religious convictions and social expectations. In doing so, these Chinese Adventists demarcate themselves not only from secular Chinese society but also from other Chinese Christians. Even within the churches of the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), as Carsten Vala (Chapter 4) demonstrates, not all members accept the state’s attempt to co-opt Christians into this Protestant organization for the sake of ensuring political loyalty. One way this co-optation is accomplished is through the promotion of civic consciousness by the TSPM. Christians are encouraged to be patriotic by obeying state laws that set the “standard of all behavior,” rather than biblical norms (63). In addition, Christians are to keep “the interests and benefits of the national-state” above themselves so that they may protect the “unity of the motherland” (*ibid.*). Many of the informants interviewed by Vala indicate that although observing the law of the land is necessary, laws can be broken if they violate one’s commitment to Christianity. These Christians employ Christian principles in interpreting their relationship to the state,

so that being a good citizen becomes a way of demonstrating a moral lifestyle to others. Through this act of interpretation, these Chinese Christians subvert the state's attempt to co-opt them. Similarly, Joy Kooi-Chin Tong (chapter 11) shows how the refusal of overseas Chinese Christian entrepreneurs to provide bribes to local officials has not hurt their commercial opportunities but instead has furthered their business reputation. These entrepreneurs intentionally instill Christian principles and values in their corporate culture and are increasingly assertive in their refusal to do business according to local customs. These examples illustrate how Christianity is employed in constructing identity and meaning in everyday life in China. These actors are not passive but possess the ability to "make do" through the deployment of Christian concepts and symbols.

The second thread linking these case studies is that they paint a picture of a growing Christianity that is diversifying and indigenizing throughout China. Various forms of Christianity currently exist in China—from the "official" sanctioned church of the TSPM to the "unofficial" church. Francis Khék Gee Lim's discussion (chapter 7) of how Christianity is engendering a nascent ethnic consciousness among China's ethnic minorities points to the existence of Lisu Protestants and Tibetan Catholics, whose religious practices are unique in their context. In the section on civil society, Katrin Fielder (chapter 9) shows how various Christian subcultures—"boss Christians," "healing Christians," "culture Christians"—are rapidly forming in urban and rural locales. Theology is another field in which Christianity is diversifying. Fredrik Fällman (chapter 10) notes that "new Calvinism," a brand of Protestant theology already popular in the United States, is gaining a foothold among Chinese Christian intellectuals. Fällman discusses how this theology is transforming the way Chinese Christians view issues of law and gender relations. While much of the volume is devoted to Protestant Christianity in China, Shun-Hing Chan provides a glimpse into the Chinese Catholic Church (chapter 8) and notes its potential for building a robust civil society as it navigates between its desire for religious freedom and the possibility of state intervention. Focusing on the countryside, Kristin Kupfer (chapter 12) discusses the rise of charismatic leaders who form "Christian-inspired" sects that are perceived as heterodox by the state. Ironically, Kupfer argues that the authority and organizational structures employed by these leaders mirror a paternalistic style similar to that of Mao. In her final analysis, Kupfer suggests that these sects are successful because they synthesize a form of Protestant Christianity with a renewed version of communism by employing autocratic power structures. According to Kupfer, the development of these sects reflects the indigenization of Christianity in the Chinese context.

While the breadth of issues examined in this volume provides an excellent picture of how Chinese Christianity is practiced and experienced on the ground, the volume still presents some frustrations for the reader. First, grammatical errors can be found in two of the chapters of the civil society section. One chapter contains at least two sentences that express an incomplete thought, and several awkward phrases appear in the other chapter. These are minor flaws but can detract from the readability of the volume. Second, while the introduction of the volume suggests that Chinese Christianity will surely be transformed as it interacts with overseas Christians, the volume contains no discussion (except for Joy Kooi-Chin Tong's chapter) of the relationship between Chinese Christianity and global Christianity. This omission is unfortunate since studies such as Nanlai Cao's *Constructing China's Jerusalem* (2011) demonstrate the importance of global networks and the impact they have on Chinese Christianity. This volume would certainly benefit from the inclusion of such an analysis given the ascendancy of China on the global stage. Despite these shortcomings, this volume is a timely addition to the social-cultural study of Chinese Christianity and offers an important contribution to the study of religion in China.

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