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- 1 *Chinese Religiosities* is a collective work edited by Mayfair Yang, aimed at analysing the impact of modernity on religious life and the secularising process in China. It contains essays by experts in various disciplines who have sought to present their contributions within the book's overall concern with relations between the modern Chinese State and the country's religious practices. This work also emphasises the problems of applying the category of "religion" to the Chinese context, and the misunderstandings and tensions to which it can give rise.
- 2 In the opening section, two writers address the relationship between religion and the secular order. Ya-pei Kuo analyses the transformations in the imperial cult prior to the secularisation of the Chinese state. She describes the development of the state cult of Confucius from the end of the Qing dynasty to the founding of the modern state, and concludes that its ritual innovations contributed towards the establishment of the nationalist lay state. For his part, Prasenjit Duara asks why the new Chinese nation state developed such rigorously anti-religious policies while, paradoxically, overseas Chinese had recourse to religion to reinforce their ethnic identity.
- 3 The second section contains essays from five contributors who explain how the discourse and the acts of the modern Chinese state have radically altered the structures of religious life. David Palmer and Benjamin Penny study the link between the contemporary conditions of religious life and the former religious traditions in the history of imperial China. They emphasise that the ambiguities in state discourses since imperial times with regard to controlling heterodox religious movements continue to play a major role in the reconfiguration of modern socialist ideology. Religion has even come to be seen as a possible support for the post-Maoist regime. Ryan Dunch examines

the dialogue since 1978 between Chinese Protestants and Communist Party theoreticians, while bringing out the mutual influences between the two sides. The question of Islam is dealt with by Dru Gladney, who explains how the Muslim communities have more or less successfully handled their integration into the secularised state. Finally, Rebecca Nedostup examines the hostility of the Kuomintang towards traditional religion in the 1930s. She shows how, in their hands, the rituals based on the lunar calendar and the temple festivities lost the structuring power they had possessed under the imperial system.

- 4 The third part is devoted to religious institutions and the changes they have undergone in modern China. Three organisations are dealt with: the monastic community in Tibet, Christianity, and so-called "Chinese" Buddhism.
- 5 José Cabezón points to the huge contrast between the anti-modernism of the Tibetan monastic community and the hyper-modernism of the Chinese State, which associates modernity with strict control over the social situation. Vincent Goossaert examines the creation of national religious associations that were distinguished from both lay society and the circles of "superstition" during the first years of the Republic. He draws the reader's attention to the extent to which the workings of the Christian churches had a decisive influence on the official religious structures in twentieth century China. This phenomenon also had an impact on the transformation of Buddhism in modern China. Yet Ji Zhe shows how this modernisation, modelled on Christianity in Western countries, is not adaptable to Buddhism. In fact, such supposedly universal terms as "separation of Church and State" or the "disestablishment and privatisation of religion" are still ill-suited to the religious models in modern China.
- 6 The volume closes with contributions from Richard Madsen and Mayfair Yang dealing with Taiwan. Richard Madsen queries the usefulness, in this context, of applying Max Weber's general thesis on the rationalisation of religion, while Mayfair Yang addresses the strange alliance between the capitalist media (satellite television reception in Taiwan) and popular religion. She shows how the celebrated Mazu cult has created a link between the mainland and the island, thanks to the information carried by satellite.
- 7 *Chinese Religiosities* stands out for the variety of historical approaches it offers, all of which throw considerable light on the current situation. It is a rich source for further reflection by specialists in the field, and also for anyone who takes an interest in the development of religious traditions in China.
- 8 Translated by Jonathan Hall