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### Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank (eds), Making Religion, Making the, State. The Politics of Religion in Modern China

Stanford, Stanford Press, 2009, 294 pp.

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- 1 Making Religion, Making the State is an important contribution to the field of religious studies in that it constitutes a sophisticated attempt to escape what the editors consider a prevailing paradigm in today's research, namely the analysis of "state and religion in dichotomous frameworks of antagonism and conflict" (p. 3). Instead, the volume emphasises the complexity of a religious field in which actors are plentiful (government agencies, the clergy, religious associations, overseas Chinese, etc.), engage in strategies that, beyond conflict or competition, also include cooperation and adaptation, and ultimately all attempt to implement the modern category of religion. The institutionalisation of religions therefore takes place in a context in which state and religion are mutually constitutive (pp. 5-6).
- 2 To some extent, the book's inspiration comes from the work of Talal Asad and the idea that "the processes by which situations are adapted to the modern definition of religion are political" (p. 7). Four types of political processes are identified in Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank's stimulating introductory essay and are exemplified by the various articles (pp. 12-17): Politics within the state (i.e., debates within the state apparatus about how to institutionalise religion); state imposition of "religion" (as a category) on religion and its outcomes; accommodation of state institutions by religions (i.e., strategies of the different religions to adapt to the category of religion, for example by suppressing activities that might be considered superstitious); and popular institution and the politics of religion (i.e., how popular religious undertakings may contribute to shape the politics of religion).

- 3 The contributions included in the volume cover the five main religions (Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam) plus a case-study of popular religion and an article on qigong. In addition, a study by Timothy Brook provides some insight into the late-imperial origins of the regulatory state, and highlights elements of continuity between Confucian and Republican/ Communist hostilities to religion. With examples drawn mainly from Buddhism, Yoshiko Ashiwa discusses two periods (the Republican period and the era beginning with reform and opening) and shows how state and religion “have aggressively moved to create their systems and position themselves vis-à-vis the other (...)” (p. 70). Richard Madsen and Lizhu Fan study the case of the Catholic pilgrimage to Sheshan, on the outskirts of Shanghai, and explain the various layers of meaning it has had across history up to the present, as a result of which no one is able to fully control the cult. Carsten T. Valla explores the training of China’s Protestant leadership and shows the totally counterproductive nature of state attempts to shape “compliant pastors” (and impose state views on religion). David L. Wank’s article builds on fieldwork conducted in Xiamen (Nanputuo monastery) to introduce the diverse phases of a local Buddhist revival and the evolving strategies of the different actors to accommodate the religious discourse of the state and strengthen their position. An interesting insight is also provided into the way that philanthropy “enables Buddhism to move out of the delimitations that it faces as ‘religion’” (p. 146). The overall situation of Islam in China is introduced by Dru C. Gladney, who highlights the diversity of “ethnoreligious identities” of China’s Muslim minorities (p. 174) as well as the spectrum of their adaptation to the policies of the Chinese state. It is interesting to note that the state also encourages relations between Chinese Muslims and their co-religionists in the Middle East, as exemplified by the increasing number of Muslims going on the hajj to Mecca (p. 165). (One might just wonder to which extent the recent events in Xinjiang have affected the travel opportunities offered to the Uyghur community.) The last article on religions officially recognised as such in China is a dense contribution from Kenneth Dean about the state and Daoist ritual tradition. Dean delves back into history to contextualise the current revitalisation of Daoist ritual traditions, their embedding in local communities, and the multiple paths they take nowadays. He also points to the limited influence of the state and its religious policies in the popular institutions of Daoism.
- 4 The last two contributions bring us to the margins of official religion with two case studies by Adam Chau and Utiratuto Otehode. Chau presents the situation of the revival of popular religion in Shaanbei through the example of the Black Dragon King Temple. Studying the interactions between temple activism and local government, he provides a fascinating insight into the temple’s legitimisation strategy based on an expansion of the scope of its activities far beyond the religious realm. Utiratuto Otehode delves into the history of the qigong movement in the PRC, distinguishing between the different phases of its development and relationship with the state. Whereas in the 1950s so-called “qigong therapy” was institutionalised within the state’s medical system, its revival in the late 1970s took place in a context in which it benefited from growing attention paid by the authorities to the development of a specifically Chinese science (p. 251), and in which it was able to reclaim its Buddhist and Daoist origins (p. 257).
- 5 The volume is dense and encompasses a number of very well-informed contributions based on solid fieldwork. The articles echo each other nicely, thus reflecting the fact that the theoretical framework was thoughtfully defined from the outset. Moreover,

the introductory essay puts both the whole volume and each individual contribution convincingly in perspective. In brief, there is not much to criticise in the book. One could mention that there would have been room for broader analysis of recent developments in the way religious authorities at the central level are now reconsidering the category of *minjian xinyang*. And since the editors made the relevant choice of not limiting themselves to established religions, some new trends such as the so-called “Confucian revival” or the development of some “new religions” could also have been added to the overall picture. But these are only minor points. *Making Religion, Making the State* is a great collective work that will be helpful to all scholars interested in the evolving relations between religion and the state.