RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THEOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper provides responses to questions that concerns religious practices in China. The first question is the differences that Kang and Zhang have on the role of Confucianism in the Qing Empire. The two lived in the 19th century and were instrumental in the political, religious, and cultural shaping of the Chinese society during their time. The second question is concerned with the meaning of ritual competition as used in the text and whether it contributed to the events at Nanjing. The third question concerns the transformative stages of Mazu deity and her role in modern politics. The last question is about the most significant chapter in Six Stars with a Crooked Neck, the autobiography by Pema Bhum

Keywords: Kang, Zhang, Confucianism, ritual competition, Mazu, chairman Mao
INTRODUCTION

This paper is a response to four questions. The questions concern the differences between Kang and Zhang views on the role of Confucianism in Qing empire, the meaning of ritual competition and it contribution to the Nanjing events, the transformative stages of Mazu deity, and the most significant chapter in Six Stars with a Crooked Neck, the autobiography by Pema Bhum

QUESTION 1

While Kang appreciated the role of Confucianism in the Chinese society as a driver of change, Zhang viewed Confucianism as the driver of change. As a liberal, he saw Confucianism as the driver of substance to which the Chinese society could be developed. His political and economic development of China could not be left to rely on the Western technology and education which he termed as functional. On the other hand, Kang followed the Confucian philosophy of meeting change with the change. Thus, he argued that since Confucius had noted that change was coming to China, such a change could be delivered by adopting the Western way of life as opposed to the China’s Way of life. Kang believed that the Confucius was a reformer and, therefore, would have loved to see a reformed and progressive China that embraces the new way of living. Zhang, on the other hand, wanted to preserve the legacy of Confucius by locking out the teachings and technology from the West (De bary & Lufrano, 2000).
QUESTION 2

Ritual competition refers to the existence of more than one affective regime that have their own social, political, and religious views, and to which defend them against the other regimes. As far as the practice of these ideologies is concerned, the affective regimes view themselves as the best and deservedly of ruling over the others. The regimes would achieve this through imposing their rituals, practices, and beliefs on the others. Ritual competition is the source of the revolutionaries and struggles that dominated many dynasties in China as different groups scrambled to dominate the others with their ideologies and religious views. Ritual competition was characterized by the “old” world of superstitious associations, exploitative and irrational behaviors as the new platform for party and faith competitions. Because ritual competition was the foundation of struggles and competition among different groups, the concept rightly characterizes the events at Nanjing. They bid factions against others in an effort to instill the religious, political, cultural, and party-state policies that existed in the dynasty (Mei-hui, 2008).

QUESTION 3

The female deity called Mazu began as a goddess of poor fishermen whom she saved in the sea from drowning. The people started seeing Mazu as their savior as poor and uneducated people in China. The second transformation came when the deity became popular with the common people where she was a symbol of safety for seafarers, a representative of female fertility, and divine intervention in familial and personal adversity. This transformation elevated her to become the standardized and appropriated symbol of civilization by the imperial state. She began to be associated with coastal pacification of the pirates, rebels, and smugglers.
The third transformation came when Mazu deity began to be associated with political ideologies in Taiwan. The Japanese colonialist saw Mazu as a hindrance to their spread of State Shinto. The deity also got a new stature upon the prohibition and later strict regulation of religious sects by the Chinese government, quickly turning her into a cult movement. The Mazu cult is used as a political tool nowadays especially in Taiwan, where the followers of the cult have influence in the political matters of the country. Mazu followers also force the unification of Taiwan and Mainland China since the practice started in China. The followers forced the two governments to negotiate terms of pilgrimage such as opening Strait Sea between China and Taiwan for pilgrims to make their voyage to the temples in China (Mei-hui, 2008).

**QUESTION 4**

The most memorable chapter in the autobiography is chapter one, where some people get to hear about a little by chairman Mao. Despite the fact that the book does not arrive, the villagers have a glimpse of what it ought to look like. They even have a new name based on their pronunciations and understanding. By the time the book finally arrives no one is ready to miss it including poor families. The families can afford to miss salt or sugar but buy a little book. Moreover, a family of five must buy five copies for every member of the family. The significance of the chapter is based on the fact that it shows the cult formation process as was experienced by many poor people during this period. It is no wonder that Chairman Mao later became a popular entity in the lives of so many people in mainland China and Taiwan. Maybe he could not have become that popular if people were not obsessed by his ideologies even before his coming to the stage. He might have, as well, rode on the wave of popularity among the people before he emerged as a political leader of the people (Bhun, 2001).