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## NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Michael Black

- 1 The journal *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* has brought out a stimulating issue on the theme of anticlericalism in China. In the introduction, Vincent Gossaert and Valentine Zuber defend the comparative approach of the work. Anticlericalism, defined as criticism of religious institutions and of their professionals, is not a reality which is confined to the Latin context. The various Chinese specialists in religion (the clerics) have been the continuous target of severe criticism. Examining these critical discourses both renews the study of the area of religion in China and enriches comparative research. At the same time, China's religious pluralism changes the equation. Chinese anticlericalism can be aimed at a particular category of beliefs, or extend to religion as such. It can be popular or learned, literary, journalistic or philosophical in style. Thus the editors of this issue attempt a "typology of intolerance". The first part sketches various kinds of anticlericalism. The second part centres on the figure of the bonze. The conclusion by Jean Baubérot is a successful attempt to specify the concerns in this issue in terms of other places and cultures.

- 2 Sylvie Hureau's article outlines the appearance of anticlerical themes in medieval anti-Buddhist controversy. The very growth of Buddhism could not but revive fears linked to the purity of morals as well as to the social, political and economic consequences of the new institutions. A completely different context from that studied by Fang Ling: the progressive and surreptitious "secularisation" of medicine during the Ming Dynasty, with the disappearance of the practice of exorcism from the imperial cursus. The contribution by Lars Laamann focuses on the agitation stirred up against the Christian clergy between 1720 and 1810, unrest of which the mythical wellsprings are shown by the contrast between the exuberance of the discourse and the very small number of Christian clerics, whether foreign or Chinese, then present in China. Elisabeth Allès' study concerns the provocations aimed at the Islamic community, from the nineteenth century to the present. Here the difficulties sprang less from the attitude of the state (up to 1958), than from the difficulties which the Han population had in accepting the "foreignness" of the Hui minority, a difficulty expressed in attempts to ridicule their clergy and ritual customs. The antireligious campaign of 1922, analysed by Marianne Bastid-Bruguère, followed a different path. Her contribution describes the political strategies at the origins of the movement. The debate quickly changed into a far-reaching critique of Chinese social and ideological structures, the intellectuals involved being motivated by the conviction that China "did not need" religion, which was harmful to the propagation of science and to national reconstruction.
  
- 3 In the second part, Vincent Durand-Dastès recounts the stories of bonzes who went astray that can be found in the novels of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries: the monk who is suddenly turned aside and seduced on his path towards perfection, the licentious and womanising monk, the terrifying barbarian monk, the monk who is an eccentric righter of wrongs... An evolution appears over the course of time: the development of "Confucian" monks, whose practices empty out and surpass the original Buddhism. Vincent Gossaert's analysis of the discourse of the newspaper *Shenbao* (1872-1878) continues the analysis of the insecurity aroused by the mere presence of a celibate Buddhist clergy: thus a section of the urban population expresses its rejection of the culture of a clergy which is not subject to social control. Isabelle Charleux's article paints a picture of the Chinese imaginary of the "barbarian monk", with his power to fascinate and horrify, and his alleged propensity to appropriate the power of the state. Lastly David Palmer's article shows alternating forms of anticlericalism: that of the *qigong* masters against religion as a whole, systematised by the founder of the Falungong, Li Hongzhi, who was to extend this critique to the *qigong* masters themselves; the anti-Falungong discourse of the clergies, and the discourse articulated against the movement by the Communist Party.
  
- 4 Jean Bauberot's postscript relativises the classical question about the "annexing" or "specialised" nature of religion in China, highlighting the importance of historical changes, in contrast to an overly essentialist approach to the question. He also rightly remarks that "theoretical approaches to the relations between Confucianism and anticlericalism would be particularly welcome" (p.171). He also points out how much the durability of the representation of the Emperor determines a form of anticlericalism which is different from that produced in Europe by the gradual emancipation of the state from the grip of religion. Lastly, he relativises the distinction made between "anti-religion" and anticlericalism, at least in recent times. All these approaches lead the author to give more importance to the study of the relationship

between anticlerical ideology and questions of power, even in China at its most contemporary.

- 5 This issue has the great merit of shaking up the traditional perspectives on the study of religion in China. Using some of his openings, I venture to suggest what the reconstruction thus begun might point towards.
- 6 It seems to me that the question of the relationship to religion in reality determines the image of both clerics and institutions. The relative newness of the term "religion" (*zongjiao*)—a fact which is often remarked on—should not be allowed to mislead: a range of terms have long been applied to relations with the hereafter inasmuch as these relations are mediated by "specialists". The legitimacy and/or effectiveness of this mediation can be disputed for various reasons: denial of the existence of suprasensitive reality; the unknowable character of such reality; a questioning of the mediations carried out by religious agents, a contention put forward either by the state, or by competing agents (scholars, intellectuals who are agents of a different form of religion); contention arising inside a religion because of believers seeking a reformation or because of the doctrinal dynamic of the religion itself, which gives more importance to the immediacy of spiritual experience rather than reaffirming the monopoly its clerics are deemed to exercise over relations between the world of men and suprasensible reality. At least four "doctrinal sites" have developed a specific critique of the institutional mediations of religion: there are the traces left by the Confucian schools on the definition of the "religious"; there is the contesting of Chinese religious forms brought about less by the Buddhist institution than by its doctrine; there is also the religious critique carried on by the Christian churches—to what extent, in China also, is Christianity, as Marcel Gauchet put it "the religion of the abandonment of religion"? Lastly it remains to be seen whether, in today's China, scientific and Marxist discourse is an obstruction to the "return of the religious", or if its decline, on the contrary, fuels this hypothetical return.
- 7 To summarise, anticlericalism revolves around a critique of the forms of mediation which structure relations between the individual and the hereafter, which explains why religions themselves are able, within limits, to develop an "anticlerical" discourse, an internal critique of their own ritual apparatus or of its use by their clerics. As I see it, it is against this background that the image of the cleric in a Chinese context remains a pertinent location for defining the mental representations and the power stakes which are inherent in religion.