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COUNTING THE MONKS THE 1736–1739 CENSUS OF THE CHINESE CLERGY

Vincent Goossaert¹

Part 1. Ideology and Practice — Good and bad clerics

The quantitative approach has, since the 1950s, deeply changed our knowledge of the history of religions in the West, especially for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this methodology has barely been applied to the history of Chinese religions. Although this situation may be partly explained by sinological tradition, it should be observed that it is also the result of the nature of the currently available sources. Many of the quantitative studies done by Western historians were based upon archives. The archival situation in the West is very different from that in China: there was no Chinese equivalent of a bishop ordering reports on church attendance, and nothing comparable to parish registrars. Yet there was state control of the clergy, but the Chinese central archives have not yet yielded much serial data on religious institutions. Local archives—the next revolution—are slowly beginning to open. As for non-state archives, especially for monasteries, temples, and associations, they have either disappeared or are still unavailable. No scholar has yet had access to a substantial amount of such sources.

The treasure-trove for quantitative-minded China historians, the local gazetteers, are quite disappointing for the quantitative study of religions. They do include lists of temples² but their demographic sections do not normally count the clerics,³ nor do fiscal sections inform us about landholdings of the reli-

¹ The author would like to thank Kristofer Schipper for his guidance, and the two anonymous referees for their useful suggestions. A previous version of this paper was given at the monthly reunion of the Société Asiatique, Paris, on May 15, 1998.

² Such lists were analysed with a quantitative approach by Eberhard 1964 and Taylor 1997. There were also extensive quantitative studies on temples carried out in the first half of this century, by missionaries and Japanese researchers among others, but they usually focused on a given city or county, and are thus quite different in scope and methodology from the nation-wide or at least province-wide data discussed here.

³ Such data are common in Song and Yuan period gazetteers, and in some early twentieth-century ones, where they are based on police reports. They are otherwise very few and far between. The reasons are first the general decay in census procedures during the Ming and early Qing and, after the inclusion of the poll tax within the land tax in 1725, the disappearance of the clergy as a fiscal category.

gious institutions. Gazetteers of religious institutions rarely include much quantitative material. In order to estimate the numerical importance of the religious institutions, one has to rely on guesswork based upon specific cases or to come by chance upon a specific documentation. It is also possible to venture quantitative analysis of non-quantitative data, which is usually very arduous. I plan to chart the state of the field and the possibilities in this regard in a forthcoming paper; I would like here to introduce and analyse one exceptional—and probably unique—document coming from imperial archives, namely the Yellow Registers (*huangce*) prepared by the Board of Rites (*Libu*) summarising the results of the census of all the clerics in the country during 1736–1739.

In the present preliminary study, it is not possible to give the complete data under discussion, nor to provide an overview of all the possible analyses that they afford. I will only deal cursorily with the data pertaining to the Buddhist clergy and go into deeper detail for the Taoist population. Some observations, however, will equally apply to both populations, most notably the general introduction to clergy control and to the registration procedures of the 1736–1739 campaign. These form the first part of the article. The discussion of the data themselves, in the second part, will revolve around three main questions, namely: (1) the reconstruction of the total figures at the national level, (2) the compared importance of the Buddhist and Taoist populations, and (3) the geographical distributions of the various Taoist orders. Because of the lack of comparable evidence for other periods, I will not try a diachronic approach, but will focus upon the clerical geography of the early Qianlong period.

Managing the monks

Bureaucratic control of the Chinese clergy has existed since the Six Dynasties period. The system grew in complexity over successive dynasties. Although many informative studies have been written about specific periods and specific institutions,⁴ a comprehensive study concerning the whole early modern and late imperial periods remains to be done. This will have to go beyond the anecdotal evidence and look for long term strategies used by the state to reduce the independence of the religious institutions. Such a study should also balance out the theoretical injunctions in the main collections of jurisprudence⁵ with the factual data contained in religious epigraphy and gazetteers.

⁴ For the Song, see Eichhorn 1968; for the Ming see Brook 1997; for the Qing, see the forthcoming dissertation by Natacha Stupar, Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

⁵ See especially for the Song period: *Qingyuan tiaofa shilei* (Analytical compendium of laws compiled during the Qinyuan reign, Xie Shenfu, *jinshi* 1166, comp.), j. 50–51 reproduced, translated, and annotated by Eichhorn 1968; for the Ming: *Libu zhigao* (Draft Gazetteer of the Ministry of Rites, 1620, *Siku quanshu* ed.), j. 89 and for the Qing: *Da Qing huidian shili* (Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing, Shanghai: Shangwu, 1908), j. 501 and *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* (Compendium of Sources—Sequel for the Qing Dynasty, Shanghai: Shangwu, Wanyou wenku, 1936) j. 89.

The clerical (or rather anticlerical) laws of the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties all held in common some basic principles. With a brief respite during the Yuan, when the most important religious orders were given a large autonomy, the modern Chinese state only recognised two monolithic clergies, the Buddhists and the Taoists, largely governed by the same laws. The various schools and lineages were not granted official recognition. Access to the clergy was restricted and one had to secure an authorization from the state. Certain persons were prevented from applying: some professions, convicted offenders, or people in charge of a family were not eligible. There were also age and gender restrictions. Clerics could only live in authorised monasteries or temples, and their construction was severely controlled. Under the Qing, it became virtually impossible to legally build a new temple or monastery, and the only way for expansion was to rebuild an abandoned one. At different periods, especially during the early Ming, the state also tried to limit the number of institutions by regrouping them into fewer and larger units. Clerics were not allowed to travel freely, to start subscriptions, or to preach in public places. All these laws, of course, were rarely fully respected.⁶

Clerical policies were enforced partly through a clerical bureaucracy supervised by the Board of Rites. Religious administration, which had also begun under the Six Dynasties period, had fully matured by the Song. After the much more complex Yuan interlude, the Ming expanded the Song system, which did not change much until 1911. The Buddhist and Taoist clergy were supervised at a national level respectively by the Senglu si and the Daolu si. They had branches in each prefecture and county. Clerics chosen for such offices were symbolically assimilated to the civilian bureaucracy, but normally were not paid for this office. They were responsible for any violation of the law committed by the clerics within their jurisdiction, but had little leverage, especially under the Qing. This may be the reason why one actually rarely finds them mentioned in official documents. It is possible that the Senglu si and Daolu si kept extensive information about the clerics and the various institutions that housed them, but they did not publish documents, nor is there any evidence of their archives. In any case, for the most important affairs, members of the clergy dealt directly with the field bureaucracy.

Clerics, in order to be recognised as such by the state, and benefit from corvée exemption (before the corvée itself was abolished), had to be in possession of an Ordination Certificate (*dudie*). The ways in which the *dudie* were issued varied considerably with time and circumstances. It is well known that they were for sale during various periods, notably the Song. Certificates

⁶ On the distance between the letter of the law and the actual immunity of the clergy during the late Qing, see Welch 1968, chapter 8, "Sangha and State," 132–59.

were also given away by the hundreds, in times of national celebration, or as a gift to meritorious communities. Several dynasties also instituted religious examinations and granted the *dudie* to all those who passed. Finally, it also happened that the government felt that the religious situation had gotten out of control and decided to register the whole religious population in one go, in some cases imposing examinations, and giving *dudie* to those who proved to be *bona fide* clerics.

The question of the Ordination Certificate is a thorny one, due to the fact that the religious institutions handed out documents also called *dudie* to newly ordained clerics, whatever the legal standing of the ordination was. Such documents, that were issued by the ordaining monastery or master, only recorded the spiritual filiation to which the ordinand was heir, as well as the circumstances of the ceremony and relevant precepts and rules.⁷ Although it is very possible that major ordination centers (the state-sanctioned ordination centers, *jietan*), working with the approval of the state, printed certificates whose text had been accepted, or modelled after an official blueprint, each institution nevertheless had specific *dudie*. What the secular authorities meant by a *dudie* was not normally identical with these purely religious documents. It is likely that, in many cases, the religious *dudie* was also certified as an official one after the magistrate had affixed his stamp on it. In some more relaxed periods, the official stamp may even have been dispensed with. However, when the imperial state seriously took into its hands the issuing of *dudie*, these were completely separate administrative documents, and this was the case during 1736–39. Unfortunately, we do not know of any extant copy of such a document, and the administrative literature pertaining to the 1736–39 census does not provide a model. We will have to wait for more research into administrative literature and local archives before we have a precise idea of what the different kinds of *dudie* looked like.

The *dudie* was an instrument to ward off “fake clerics,” those ordained outside the state-sanctioned ordination centers. This preoccupation was shared by the religious institutions themselves: Buddhist and Taoist monastic rules suggest that the monasteries took great care in examining the credentials of travelling clerics taking residence (*guadan*), although they seem to have been more concerned with checking the religious lineage documents than the civilian *dudie*.⁸ The 1736–39 census was motivated by these preoccupations. It aimed at separating the honest, rule-abiding clerics—conforming to the offi-

⁷ For examples from the Republican period, see Prip-Møller 1967 [1937]:326–39.

⁸ For instance, the *Qinggui xuanmiao* (The Secret marvels of the Pure Rules), an authoritative compendium of rules and procedures of late imperial Taoist monasticism, by Min Yide (1758–1836), *Gushu yinlou zangshu* edition, pays great attention to checking the *fapai* (1.1a–b) but does not mention the *dudie*.

cial ideal of a chaste, sober, old man secluded in a large monastery and devoted solely to meditation—from their opposites, called “monks supported by calls (for religious services)” (*yingfu seng*),⁹ clerics travelling, visiting laymen, and begging, and the “Taoists living at home” (*huoju daoshi*).

Although there were certainly cases of criminals or other rogues disguised as clerics, the *yingfu seng* were usually real clerics that did not have the chance or the wherewithal to live in a rich large monastery. Among this “clerical underclass,” as Philip Kuhn describes them, one could find many novices not yet fully ordained, some of whom traveled around the country for education, devotion, or in search of a temple that would accept and support them. The largest part, although not vagrant, would spend most of their time answering devotees’ calls for liturgical services at houses or temples. Trying to apply to them the standards of the large contemplative monasteries was a bit ludicrous.¹⁰

Accordingly, there were degrees in the zeal of the state towards implementing the *dudie* policy. During the Ming, the harsh policies of the late Hongwu reign, which probably had a real effect on the size of the clerical population, soon gave way to two centuries of laxity.¹¹ Although the Ming state tried to maintain quotas for the number of clerics, it is likely that those ordained illegally lived their religious career unhindered. The Qing state did not bring much innovation to the religious policy of its predecessors, and even dropped some cumbersome measures that the Ming had tried to implement. It discontinued the examinations that qualified the novices for ordina-

⁹ This term, rather uncommon in official literature, appears in the first decree dated 1735 discussed below and in all subsequent decrees. Its meaning in this context is not altogether clear. In a routine memorial dated Qianlong 3.12.3 concerning a judicial case (the death of a monk in a Sichuanese monastery), the term seems to mean “a monk who has not yet been ordained and applied for a *dudie*.” See *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo xiancun Qingdai neige daku yuanzang Ming Qing dang’an* (Documents of the Ming and Qing Dynasties from the Main Archives of the Grand Secretariat of the Qing Court now held by the Institute for History and Philology of the Academia Sinica), 1986, vol. 86, p. 48900. It is certainly a variant of the more common *yingfu** *seng*, which means a monk living in a temple but answering calls for (mainly funeral) services at people’s homes; see Welch 1968:198. This word was used in a 1725 decree, where the Yongzheng emperor had begun to sketch the distinction between respectable and despicable clerics: Da Qing huidian shili 809. lb. The term is often applied to both Buddhists and Taoists. It was already used in a Ming ballad describing priests of both religions running to laymen’s homes to perform various rites. Chen Duo’s (ca. 1454–1507) “Daoren yingfu” (*Quan Ming sanqu*, p. 613–14) is an acerbic critique of what he perceives as the unspiritual life of these pedlars of liturgical services, but it provides a rather eloquent testimony on the existence of the *yingfu* clergy as a social category as early as the 15th century. The glossary *Tongsu bian*, written about the time of our census, has an entry for *yingfu seng* which it defines as a modern name for those practising *yujia* (skt. *yoga*), actually meaning in modern Buddhism, tantrism, and hence funerary rites (*Tongsu bian* 20.9b; the other editions of this work that I could use are not as complete as the one used here and do not include the entry on *yingfu seng*); the same definition could already be found in the slightly earlier miscellany *Jianhuji jia* 1.8b–9a. An early nineteenth-century description of Suzhou says that the Taoist and Buddhist priests of the city would gather every morning at their respective rallying point (and wait for calls for rituals): that was called “joining those answering calls”, *ben fuying* (*Wumen biao*, p. 22). The mercantile nature of such vocations was abhorrent to the supposedly disinterested scholars and officials.

¹⁰ Kuhn 1990:42–46, 107–11.

¹¹ Brook 1997.

tions and also dropped the administrative quota. The Ming took steps to define and impose standard liturgies and rules on the monastic communities, whereas the Qing emperors did not venture into such questions. Apart from a few census takings, the Qing state very rarely took an active interest into the clergy. Many Qing official texts actually express the belief that the religious institutions will slowly lose their relevance and that the numbers of clerics will decrease by themselves, which strikingly prefigures some contemporary thinking. In such conditions, it was generally considered acceptable to let *bona fide* clerics live their life. Of course, this mainstream attitude did not prevent the occasional fiery memorial asking for all monks to be forcibly married to nuns and other such propositions that seem to constitute a specific sub-genre of hard-line Confucian rhetoric. The general disinterest of the state towards religious institutions explains the fact that very few documents pertaining to their activity can be found in administrative sources, either printed or archived.

However, in detail, there were very frequent changes of policy, documented in the *Da Qing huidian shili*.¹² As to the distribution of *dudie*, every few years brought a reversal of the procedures: given to those who knew the basic scriptures from 1632 (in Manchu-controlled territories), they were then sold from 1640 to 1645. They were again sold in 1649 and the previous *dudie* had to be returned, but this ended in 1651. The *dudie* in circulation had to be returned again in 1658, to be exchanged for bilingual (Manchu-Chinese) ones, and for this a fee was imposed. The fee disappeared in 1660 and a census was taken in 1667. The distribution of *dudie* was discontinued in 1676 but partial distributions took place soon thereafter. The *Da Qing huidian shili* is silent for the decades preceding 1736 and we, therefore, have no idea of the documents possessed by the monks and priests at that time. To be sure, all of them had the ordination documents given by the religious institutions, but the administrative literature does not mention that these were given any official value.

The 1736-1739 census

As we have seen above, the Qing state several times felt that it had lost control of the religious population, recalled all certificates, and registered the whole clergy anew. Such a decision was taken by the young Qianlong emperor at the very beginning of his reign, possibly to give the impression that he was capable of exerting a very firm control over all quarters of society. The clergy was prominent among those he saw as enemies of an orderly society, since some leaders of sectarian movements were monks. Another reason for his mistrust was that a large population of uncontrolled vagrant clerics could

¹² For a presentation and English translation of the section of *Da Qing huidian shili* concerning the clergy, see De Groot 1903, vol. 1, 96–136, and especially on the *dudie*, 109–12.

be a cause for social unrest, as would be the case during the 1768 sorcery scare.¹³ The census might be an expression of the emperor's fears towards the clerical population, but it did little to assuage them.

In a decree (*yu*) dated from the eleventh month of Yongzheng 13 (14 December 1735 to 12 January 1736),¹⁴ he proclaimed his policy with regard to the clergy.¹⁵ His discourse begins with the traditional Confucian attacks on the clerics: they eat food and wear clothes without producing anything, they indulge in luxury and own much more than they need, and they do not abide by their own rules, especially concerning sexual activities. Yet, the emperor protects the three religions and can not hinder those who sincerely wish to lead an honest religious life. He therefore announces that only these people will be given *dudie*. He requests advice on a procedure¹⁶ that was promulgated in 1736 through another decree.¹⁷ The “real” monks are to be given *dudie* without any further complication, whereas the *yingfu seng* and the *huoju daoshi* are to be questioned and given the choice between a normal religious life residing in a temple (*shou siyuan*) or a return to lay status. However, if they choose to live in a temple, they are to be given discriminating treatment and are not allowed to have disciples.

The whole measure was contrived to be the last *dudie* distribution ever: each cleric was to adopt (after reaching the age of 40) one disciple who would eventually inherit his master's *dudie*: after his death, the disciple is to ask the local magistrate to add his name on the document. Yet, if the master or the disciple committed a crime, the *dudie* was to be destroyed.¹⁸ This ingenious policy, designed to accompany the “natural” decadence of the clergy, proved to be unworkable a few years later, for even some of the best members of the religious administration were found to be without a certificate. The cycle began all over again, and the Board of Rites issued more *dudie*,¹⁹ although on a much smaller scale.

¹³ Kuhn 1990.

¹⁴ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.2b xia –3a shang. This text and the following ones from the *Da Qing huidian shili* are partially included in *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8487 sq., which also has a late 1735 text recording the young Qianlong emperor's disappointment with the personal conduct of the elite clerics (mostly Buddhist monks) invited to court for intellectual company by his father the Yongzheng emperor, and linking this feeling to his decision to launch the census campaign. On the clerical entourage of the Yongzheng emperor, see the documents and discussions gathered in Liu Yuhong 1997. Basic features of the successive census decrees edicted between 1735 and 1740 were also incorporated in the code as statutes, which appears in the “population control” section of the *Da Qing huidian shili* 752.6a-7b.

¹⁵ The monks of Tibetan Buddhism (most of them Mongols) did not seem to be affected by the Yongzheng 13 policy. They were governed by specific regulations, and *dudie* were given to them much more generously. Even then, only a fraction of the 350,000 or so Mongol monks had a *dudie* under the Qing: see Charleux 1998, pp. 177–78.

¹⁶ The text of the collective and anonymous advice is preserved in *Longhu shan zhi* (Gazetteer of the Longhu mountain) 8.35b–37b, 1740 edition.

¹⁷ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3a shang–4a shang.

¹⁸ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4a xia –b shang.

¹⁹ 1774 answer to a memorial, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.6a shang - xia.

The registration procedure was entrusted to the local magistrates and to the regional governors, but not to the religious administration, whose area of competence seems to have been small indeed during the Qing. All requests were submitted, with credentials, to the magistrates who passed them over to the governors, whose services drafted lists (*qingce*) and then transmitted them to the Board of Rites. The latter issued the certificates that were handed down the hierarchical line and given over to the recipient by the local magistrate in his audience hall. The 1736–1739 campaign was thus completely disconnected from the religious procedures of ordination, although the decree states that, from the end of the census onwards, only after having been registered on one's master's *dudie* could one go to an ordination platform.

This registration policy remained unchanged during the entire three-year campaign. However, some of the accompanying measures showed conflicting pressures that conditioned the state's action towards the clergy. In his initial statement of 1735, the emperor announced that the "excess property" of the religious institutions would be seized and handed over to the public domain.²⁰ The decree of 1736 confirmed the census procedures but stopped all property seizures due to the panic the decision had prompted: clerics sold their lands hastily to brokers and a great deal of corruption on all sides ensued. The decree then explained that it did not mean that religious property was ill-used and that, after all, the public treasuries did not need them.

The emperor also had to do some tongue-biting on the subject of the *yingfu seng* and *huoju daoshi*. The whole census was designed to isolate them from the "good clerics," but some of them eventually got certificates nonetheless. Such independent clerics had no family to rely on if they reverted to lay life,²¹ or had attained such an age that they deserved to be left in peace: they were therefore to be given *dudie*, or, in the case of the *huoju daoshi*, Ministry's Licenses (*buzhao*), a variant version of the Certificate.²² The argument seems

²⁰ A slightly later gazetteer of a small county, south of Xi'an (Shaanxi), quotes a Yongzheng 13 decree that calls for the registration by county magistrates of all temples' land and renews the classical ban on their sale by the clerics: (*Qianlong*) *Zhen'an xian zhi* 9.6a–b. The gazetteer indeed provides data on some monasteries' landholdings, a very rare information in Qing local gazetteers: (*Qianlong*) *Zhen'an xian zhi* 9.3a–6a. Although this source does not mention the clerical census, and the decree does not appear in compendia such as the *Da Qing huidian shili*, it would seem that this policy was linked to the seizure of "excess property" mentioned in the 1735 decree. It may thus be that the 1736–39 campaign, which gave the county *yamen* more information on the local clergy than they ever had (and would have later), had concurrently, at least in some places, the similar function of surveying the religious landholdings.

²¹ One can only wonder what the state meant by forcibly reverting to lay life *huoju daoshi*. The forcible secularisation (*huansu*), that is mandated so often in the code for guilty clerics, is a bit clarified by local archival documents. The Qingdai Qian-Ja-Dao Baxian dang'an xuanbian, 1989, p. 64 has an example of a secularisation declaration, signed by a cleric who had lost his action in court, and that prevented him from ever taking again residence in any temple.

²² The *yingfu seng* were originally to receive only *buzhao* like the *huoju daoshi*, and this was stated again in 1739 (*Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4b *xia*), but it is not clear in other sources whether they were actually discriminated in the same fashion, and denied regular *dudie*.

plausible enough, but it was probably pure rhetoric, especially in the case of the *huoju daoshi*. Since the Song, the state wanted the Taoists to conform to the Buddhist ideal of celibacy and monastic life. Theoretically, it was illegal to be a married *daoshi* living at home and wearing ritual garments only when performing rituals. That was, however, and continues to this day, to be exactly what the majority of Taoists did. Celibacy and a sort of communal living had existed since the fourth century among Taoists of all schools, but was always a minority. The Quanzhen order, which appeared in 1170, was the first and only truly monastic order within Taoism. Its influence was very large but certainly did not convert the majority of Taoists to celibacy.²³ In the census, the only Taoists to be given *dudie* were the Quanzhen Taoists, but the state realised that it could neither condemn its own census to irrelevance nor change a perennial state of affairs.²⁴ It therefore decided to issue *buzhao* (two different kinds, as we shall see) to some non-Quanzhen Taoists. Similar exceptions to the letter of the law were provided for novices and young nuns, not registered in the census. They were allowed to remain novices until the age of 20, when they finally had to secure an ordination or return to lay life. However, older novices, when unable to go back to a viable existence outside the temple, were allowed to stay on.

Such a conciliatory stance, with regard to the initial objectives, was not enough. A decree dated 1737²⁵ reaffirmed the right of the religious institutions to prosper. It was written in reaction to a memorial to the throne (*zouzhe*) submitted by the governor of Anhui, Zhao Guolin (1673–1751), who was arguing for a very limited interpretation of the decree and for a minimal number of clerics. The emperor explicitly rejected Zhang's argument and explained that his intention was not to downsize the clergy. Having unleashed anti-religious zeal among its field bureaucracy through his first rather anticlerical decree, the Qianlong emperor was now obliged to present the clergy as a very honourable profession. Such individual initiatives and changes in the official tone certainly influenced the actual working of the census over the course of the 3-year campaign. Magistrates acting upon their more or less accurate idea of the official policy or upon their own convictions certainly gave different interpretations of the decrees, issuing the certificates liberally or with restraint. Another possibility for magistrates bent on anti-religious policy was provided as the procedures for revoking already issued *dudie* were immediately en-

²³ Chen Yuan 1962 [1941]; Goossaert 1997.

²⁴ The status of *huoju daoshi* was actually recognized by the local magistrates; we find Taoist families (*daohu*) in the fragments of population registers in the Baxian archives. See for example *Qingdai Qian-Jia-Dao Baxian dang'an xuanbian* (Selection of Archival Documents from Baxian of the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Daoguang reigns of the Qing Dynasty), 1996, 342–44. The state itself employed married Taoists (*daoding*, registered in *daohu*) for the keeping of the tombs of the first Manchu emperors in Manchuria, and other temples: *Libu zeli*, 170.8b–9b, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.6b *xia*.

²⁵ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4a *shang* - *xia*.

forced, and lists of these revoked certificates were also compiled by the Board of Rites.

During a research trip in Beijing in July 1997, I found in the Number One Historical Archives (Diyi Lishi dang'an guan) two annual reports by the Board of Rites to the throne, covering the periods Qianlong 2.10.1 to Qianlong 3.10.29 (22 November 1737 to 9 December 1738)²⁶ and Qianlong 3.11.10 to Qianlong 4.10.30 (29 December 1738 to 30 November 1739),²⁷ providing details about the numbers of certificates issued. In the same batch was another *huangce* summarising 1316 cases of revoked *dudie* between Qianlong 1.9.1 and Qianlong 2.8.30 (5 October 1736 to 23 September 1737). The census, as documented by the *Da Qing huidian shili*, was conducted over three years and registered 340,112 clerics, either Buddhist or Taoist. Our evidence, therefore, covers two thirds of the period of the census but only a little over one third of the registered clergy. It is not known what happened to the first *huangce* (covering the 1736–37 period): it may have been lost, or may still be in the archives in a uncatalogued batch. In any case, the figures are confirmed and further detailed by a copy, kept by the Censorate branch for the Board of Rites (Like), of a routine memorial (*tiben*) by the Manchu minister of rites Santai.²⁸ According to this document 217,124 certificates were issued the first year (Qianlong 1.9 to 2.10), 99,730 the second (Qianlong 2.11 to 3.10), and 23,259 the third (Qianlong 3.11 to 4.10), for the total of 340,113. With a very narrow margin of error due to accounting mistakes, this fits perfectly with our two *huangce*, and shows that most registrations were made during the first year, for which the *huangce* is still missing. However, as we shall see below, it is still possible to infer significant information from the currently available data.

The two *huangce* were compiled by the Board of Rites and signed by Santai. They are written in a very clear and regular script, are perfectly calibrated, without any variation in either the format or the wording, which allows for quick reading despite their size. They are divided first by province, secondly by prefectures (*fu* or *zhili zhou*), and thirdly by county (*xian* or *zhou*).²⁹ For each county, the clerics are classified into five categories:

²⁶ Dated Qianlong 3.12.19 (28 January 1739).

²⁷ Dated Qianlong 4.12.20 (18 January 1740).

²⁸ *Like tiben* dated Qianlong 4.12, Number One Historical Archives, Beijing. I have not found any biographical data on Santai, but the tables in the *Qing shigao* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1977, j. 22, 6536–93) show that he spent most of his career in the Board of Rites, being vice-minister from 1723 to 1728 and Manchu minister from 1731 to 1745, when he retired.

²⁹ In the present article, I have included subprefectures (*ting*) among counties, and I have not taken the garrisons (*wei*, *suo*) into consideration. My reconstruction of the total number of counties for the 1736–1739 period is based on Niu Pinghan 1990. A few garrisons have entries in the *huangce*, but they represent together less than one hundred clerics.

Buddhist monks, *sengren*
 Buddhist nuns, *niseng*
 Quanzhen Taoists, *Quanzhen daoshi*
 Qingwei Lingbao Taoists, *Qingwei Lingbao daoshi*
 Taoists living at home, *huoju daoshi*

A total of the number of clerics per county is provided, as well as the total per category in each province, and the total number per year is given at the beginning of each *huangce*.

These five categories deserve to be commented upon. They are not symmetrical: the Buddhist clergy is divided by gender, which is not the case of the Taoists, although we know that there were monks and nuns (*nüguan*) among the Quanzhen Taoists, whereas the two last categories comprised mainly, but not exclusively, men. The last two categories stand apart, because they did not receive *dudie* but Ministry's Licenses, *buzhao*. It should be observed that both kinds of documents, *dudie* and *buzhao*, were equivalent and accounted together as *diezhao*. The totals of the *huangce*—and therefore of our own figures in Part 2—encompass both kinds.

Why was the census held over three years? The various decrees state no reason for this. From the results it would seem that, in most counties, the census was conducted in a single year. Of the 737 counties documented in our two *huangce*, only 33 have numbers for both 1737–38 and 1738–39 (for a total of 345 persons registered the second year). Many of them, however, carry a minimal number (1 in many cases). It is possible that some magistrates disliked the whole operation and exerted some passive resistance by returning only one certificate. Reactions such as Zhao Guolin's memorial mentioned above suggest the strong possibility that it was more difficult to register in some counties than in others. However, in most cases, it is likely that a thorough census was taken during the first year (1736–37) and that the numbers for the subsequent years are merely complements, such as a person just ordained, or somebody left out the first time. Our basic hypothesis is that in most counties the census was conducted in one of the three years that the campaign lasted. Different counties in a province, or even a prefecture, did not necessarily conduct the census in the same year. This would imply that the census was meant, from the beginning, to be carried out over several years, although it is not stated in the initial decree.

There are exceptions that make the lack of the missing *huangce* especially unfortunate. The categories that were most severely controlled (nuns, Qingwei Lingbao, and *huoju daoshi*) were obviously registered apart in some counties. For instance, in all seven counties of Jiaxing prefecture (Zhejiang), as well as in other Zhejiang counties, our extant registers have only nuns. It seems strange

that the magistrates of these counties would have chosen to register the different kinds of clerics in separate years. It is more likely that they were at first hostile to any registration of the nuns and were eventually compelled to do so under pressure from the central government. There was a traditional bureaucratic hostility towards nunneries, and these were especially numerous in Zhejiang. The 1736 decree mentions nuns (and points at Zhejiang nuns) as a category which stood, like the *yinfu seng* and the *huoju daoshi*, at the limit of the normative definition of the clergy but which was eventually included.³⁰ Such cases, however, are not numerous, and we have to consider that our figures usually introduce no bias regarding the five categories of the clergy.

For all these reasons, we have called “documented provinces” those for which significant results are available, and “documented counties” those with a total of more than 20 clerics, admittedly a low limit, since the total of 340,112 would provide for an average of 220 per county. Although they are obviously not well documented, we did not disqualify the counties that registered only Buddhist monks, of which there are a relatively significant number. Therefore, out of the 737 counties documented in our two *huangce*, 577 are documented, of which 497 lay within documented provinces. One can see on the maps 1, 3, 4, and 5 the great landmasses of uniformly undocumented areas; however, not all regions in white are documented. Needless to say, if the remaining *huangce* were ever to be found, our analysis would gain in precision and scope, and the extrapolation exercise would become obsolete.

Taking back what was just given

The 1736–1739 census had probably exhausted the field bureaucracy’s interest regarding the question of the clergy, but the magistrates and governors were reminded as early as 1740 that the original edict included a clause for a regular follow-up. The emphasis was again put on the diminution of the number of certificates, and governors were to compile annual registers of the suppressed certificates.³¹ In the last reversal of policy in this story, a decree dated 1754 stated that the suppression had gone too far and that the procedure was to be discontinued.

The follow-up operations are documented by the memorials to the throne submitted by the provincial governors. A *qingce* or *huangce* was attached to some of the memorials, but none of them seem to have survived. Such memorials can be found among the palace memorials kept and published in Taipei,³²

³⁰ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3b shang.

³¹ Edict dated 1740, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.5a shang. A *fuzhun* dated 1742 specifies that the lists have to be *huangce* sent directly to the throne, and not simple *qingce* sent to the Ministry; *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.5a shang.

³² *Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe* (Memorials to the Throne from the Qianlong Reign in the Palace Archives), 1983, vols. 1 to 7.

covering the period from Qianlong 16.7.13 to 19.1.26³³ (2 Sept 1751 to 17 Feb 1754). They all quote the 1740 decree, but the scope of their factual information varies. The more detailed ones provide the total number of certificates issued during the 1736–39 census and the number of certificates suppressed since that date. They therefore supplement the figures from the *huangce*.

Some memorials mention the two reasons for the suppression of a *dudie*: death or condemnation of the owner. As the proportion of the *buzhao* (the only one to be suppressed at the death of the owner) to the total number is not known for any province, and as the proportion of the certificates suppressed for other reasons is not known either, it is impossible to draw any demographic conclusion from the given data. The various numbers allow us to compute annual suppression rates varying between 0.6 and 4.4%, but usually included between 1 and 2.5%. An average rate of 2% would cut the clergy by half in 34 years. This rather high rate could either mean a very high percentage of *buzhao*, or, more likely, that many *dudie* were actually not transmitted from master to disciple. The later hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the fact that the few memorials which mention the *dudie* transferred at their owner's death provide very low numbers. Therefore, the policy of a self-perpetuating corpus of *dudie* very quickly became irrelevant, and the majority of the clergy found itself again without state-sanctioned certificates.

This is confirmed by a memorial submitted by the governor-general of Liangjiang (Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Anhui provinces) during the 1768 sorcery scare that provoked the beginning of an inquisition towards the clerical population. The governor-general himself checked the clerical registers for several counties and found that they had never been updated since the initial census. As the procedure of inscribing one's disciple's name on one's *dudie* was not respected either, it ensued that "only 20% or 30% of the local clerics has a *dudie*."³⁴ The fact that country *yamen* felt no interest in the *dudie* registers is further proved by the absence of reference to them in contemporary gazetteers.³⁵ At the highest level, the 1851 edition of the Ministry of Rites' regulations (*Libu zeli*), although it kept some decisions made during the 1736–39 campaign regarding the conditions for entering the clergy, completely dropped any reference to the *dudie*.³⁶ Routinization, so infamous within the Qing administration, had struck the procedures for clerical control as soon as the cen-

³³ They concern the following provinces: Jiangsu (2), Guangxi (3), Hubei (3), Yunnan (3), Anhui (3), Hunan (3), Shandong (2), Shaanxi (3), Gansu (2), Shanxi (2), Jiangxi (2), Zhili (1), Guizhou (1), Sichuan (1), Fujian (1).

³⁴ Kuhn 1990:43–44. A 1777 statute even suggests that the practice of transmitting one's *dudie* to one's disciple was by then officially discontinued: Da Qing huidian shili 752.7a.

³⁵ I could not find any reference to the *dudie* registration nor to the question of clerical population in any of the twenty-nine county or prefecture gazetteers compiled between 1736 and 1755 that I could use.

³⁶ *Libu zeli*, 170.5a–6a.

sus had ended, and quickly turned the impressive registration work into meaningless paperwork.

Viewed from this angle, the whole operation of the 1736–39 census appears as an episode of no durable historical significance. Like so many other policies of strong social control, it only lasted for a few years before slipping into oblivion. However, it has for us a unique interest in that it provides a comprehensive view of the clergy on a national scale. Before moving to the analysis of the census results, there is another aspect of the census policy that calls for discussion: the way the Taoist clergy was conceived by the state and divided into three categories. Whereas the division of the Buddhists between monks and nuns is straightforward, the tripartition of the Taoists is unique for the entire late imperial history and raises rather complex terminological problems.

The census and the Taoist clergy

It is rather difficult to contextualize the Taoist data of the census, since late imperial institutional history of Taoism is only in its incipient stage. There is no substantial study on this topic and sources (most importantly gazetteers and epigraphy) only begin to be easily available. Many aspects of the initiation procedures and communal life, for instance, are only known from twentieth-century fieldwork done by Japanese and Western scholars. The real importance of the Taoists living at home has only come to light during the last few decades. I shall therefore only make hypotheses concerning the classifications used by the census.

As we have seen, the state considered the Quanzhen Taoists as the only ones worthy of a *dudie*, and granted *buzhao* to a selected number of other Taoists, divided between Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju*.³⁷ Who were the Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi* and what made them different from the *huoju daoshi*? None of the official documents gathered for this study, either in archival or published sources, clearly address this question. The term Qingwei Lingbao itself is altogether absent from the documents gathered in the *Da Qing huidian shili*, and can only be found in the 1736 procedure submitted (and adopted) to the emperor, extant in the *Longhu shanzhi*.³⁸ For a historian of Taoism, this riddle is further compounded by the lack of an obvious other category, the Zhengyi. The Zhengyi is an ancient name of the school of the Heavenly Master, Tianshi, from the Zhang family. From the Ming onwards, all Taoists were officially divided between Quanzhen and Zhengyi.³⁹ The latter received their

³⁷ The *Da Qing huidian* (55.3a, 1764 ed.) has an entry on the certificates saying that Buddhists receive a *dudie* whereas the Taoists receive a *zhizhao*: this must be a mistake or an earlier law that was never applied.

³⁸ See note 16.

³⁹ *Mingshi* (History of the Ming Dynasty, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), j. 74, “zhiguan 3” (officials), p. 1818; Ishida Kenji 1992:145–95.

ordination within a loose system whose head was the Tianshi himself. But the authority of the Heavenly Master was precisely put into question at the time of the census, as the early Qianlong period witnessed several anti-Zhengyi measures.⁴⁰

The Qing state maintained the special status given to the Zhang Tianshi by the Ming. He was nominal head of the Taoist administration, and his residence on the Longhu shan (Jiangxi) as well as a number of institutions on this mountain benefited from a sort of extraterritoriality. There the Heavenly Master reigned as a sort of small-scale emperor. Around the time of the census, the acting Heavenly Master, Zhang Zhaolin,⁴¹ took his role as the head of a nation-wide ordination system seriously. He himself visited the various provinces to hold ordination platforms, or selected other Taoists to do so in his name and gave them licenses bearing his seal. One such license (*zhaopiao*), issued in 1704, has recently been found in possession of a Taoist family from Hunan.⁴² In classical administrative style, it quotes the early Qing imperial edict trusting the Heavenly Master with maintaining orthodoxy within Taoism, and confers on the recipient the quality of a practitioner of pure Taoist liturgy, uncontaminated by local shamanistic traditions. Although the purity of classical Taoist liturgy was perhaps not what the first Qing emperors had in mind when they confirmed the Heavenly Master in his role as guardian of orthodoxy, the elite clerics of the Heavenly Master's office (*Zhenren fu*) did take seriously their duty of controlling the practice of local Taoists, at least in the provinces around the Longhu shan.

The itinerant activities of the Heavenly Master's emissaries of course met with the resistance of some local magistrates, which is documented in two routine memorials (*like tiben*) dated Qianlong 4.4.21 (18 May 1739) and 4.5.18 (23 June 1739) kept at the Number One Historical Archives. Answering to complaints by Guizhou and Hubei governors about Taoist officials managing ordination platforms in the name of the Heavenly Master, Santai answered convolutedly by remarking that such ordinations have been practised for centuries without any apparent problem, but eventually he recommended that such activities be banned. The prohibition was indeed issued in 1739.⁴³ Thereafter, the Heavenly Master's authority was, in official texts, strictly confined to the Longhu shan.⁴⁴ To what extent these decisions actually undermined his direct control over the Taoist clergy remains to be ascertained.

⁴⁰ On the relationship between the Zhengyi and the state at that time, see Hosoya Yoshio 1987 and Qing Xitai (ed.) 1995:59–77.

⁴¹ Zhang Zhaolin was the brother of the 55th Heavenly Master Zhang Xilin (died 1727), whose son, Zhang Yulong, was proclaimed 56th Heavenly Master in 1742. It is characteristic that the state took the opportunity of a regency to curtail the power of a hereditary function.

⁴² The text of the license is reproduced in Liu Jinfeng 2000:263.

⁴³ *Da Qing Huidian shili*, “Zhengyi zhenren shili” (Precedents concerning the Zhengyi zhenren) 501.8a shang; *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8494. See also Hosoya Yoshio 1987:577–81.

⁴⁴ *Libu zeli* 170.3b–4b mentions early 19th century cases of the Heavenly Master recruiting or ordaining Taoists outside the mountain or naming supernumerary officials, and details the subsequent official reaction.

Whereas the Quanzhen order had approximately twenty state-sanctioned ordination platforms,⁴⁵ the non-Quanzhen Taoists had only the Heavenly Master to rely on. Usually, in a Taoist lineage, only one master went to a ceremony directed by the Heavenly Master and then transmitted his ordination rank locally in the name of the Heavenly Master in absentia.⁴⁶ It was also possible for a master several generations down the lineage to return to the Longhu shan and renew his ordination rank. The 1739 decree does not make clear whether it was still legal for an individual to go to the Longhu shan for an ordination and return home afterwards. In any case, the state obviously found that being adopted by one master was enough, and that going through a real ordination ritual was not necessary. It is also possible that the standard Taoist ordination (implying one master and one disciple, although encapsulated in a full scale communal ritual) was tacitly condoned, and only collective ordinations were really banned. This would be in plain contradiction to the policy adopted for the Buddhists and Quanzhen Taoists, whose ordinations were limited to the grand ceremonies held at the state-sanctioned platforms.⁴⁷

The context is further illuminated, or rather obscured, by the *Longhu shanzhi*, which was published in 1740, just at the end of this census. The compiler, Lou Jinyuan (1689–1776), was one of the most eminent Taoists of the time. A dignitary of the Longhu shan administration, he was invited to the court in 1727 where he was given many honors,⁴⁸ and a role in the religious discussions held in the palace under the Yongzheng and early Qianlong reigns, and, most importantly, liturgical functions at the court. Probably with the help of Lou's influence, the Taoists living on the Longhu shan were granted a special status, and their *dudie* were not granted by the secular authorities but by the Heavenly Master himself.⁴⁹ However, such measures tended to seclude the mountain as an isolated fortress. It is very remarkable that in his extensive work, which includes a document pertaining to the 1736–39 census, Lou does not mention once the ordinations performed at the Longhu shan or outside the

⁴⁵ An early twentieth-century list is given in Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 1952:221.

⁴⁶ Sakai Tadao 1992 thinks that during the late Qing, and in relation to the policy on Zhengyi ordinations, there was a trend for the Heavenly Master's monopoly on ordinations to loosen, and for local ordinations to become the norm.

⁴⁷ To abide by the letter of the law, monks and nuns themselves did not actually need to have undergone a religious ordination; they just had to obey the monastic rules. The administrative texts did their utmost to avoid mentioning any specific religious institutions (such as ordinations or rituals). Their use of the term "monastic rules" is also very vague; it does not refer to a precise text and basically means "to be chaste and not to have any activity outside the monastery."

⁴⁸ Lou was notably in charge of the Qin'an dian, the temple devoted to Zhenwu and used for the cult of the living emperor's personal destiny, located at the very north of the Forbidden City. On Lou, see Hosoya Yoshio 1986.

⁴⁹ *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8494, *Longhu shan zhi* 8.37a.

mountain by its masters, especially since this was both economically and symbolically the main *raison d'être* of this religious complex. Once again, gazetteers appear as a remarkably laconic source. Lou only gave of his mountain the official point of view promoted by the state.

Pending further research, we can consider that the state chose to ignore the name Zhengyi in order to avoid recognition of the ordination system of the Heavenly Master that it tried to curtail.⁵⁰ Why choose Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* instead? Qingwei and Lingbao are both originally names of ancient ordination systems. The Qingwei, a ritual school that made a broad synthesis of previous revelations and of the then all-fashionable thunder rites (*leifa*), appeared around the mid-thirteenth century.⁵¹ The Lingbao formed in the fifth century and was the source of all later communal rituals. A refounded Lingbao liturgy, from the Song onwards, became actually the main thrust of Taoist salvation-oriented ritual.⁵² It is also the name of a separate ordination system based at Gezao shan (Jiangxi). Together with Longhu shan and Maoshan (Jiangsu),⁵³ they formed the three mountains, *sanshan*, that gained official status in the Song as the backbone of the Taoist ordination system.

In the beginning of the Ming, Qingwei and Lingbao were prominent among the various names given to the competing/complementary ritual traditions (including lineages and scriptures). As the result of a process which probably took place between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Qingwei Lingbao seemingly became the name of a unified grand liturgical tradition, and modern Qingwei Lingbao Taoists consider themselves as the elite of the Taoist clergy. In contemporary China, only Taoists ordained in a Qingwei Lingbao lineage may conduct (as *gaogong*) the grand offering rituals (*jiao*).⁵⁴ In our census, they are, depending on the counties, called either Qingwei Lingbao, Qingwei, or Lingbao. This reflects the variation in other sources: for instance, Beijing's Taoists who were not Quanzhen were simply called Qingwei. Whether that echoes differences in local ordination lineages or just usage will have to await further studies.⁵⁵ In any case, it seems that the decrees of the 1736–39 census are the first official documents to name the Qingwei Lingbao as the main non-Quanzhen Taoist ordination system. The ordinations presided by

⁵⁰ Although Hosoya Yoshio 1987:580–81 is certainly wrong in distinguishing Zhengyi and Lingbao as two different lineages (*pai*), he points out with much reason that, in official eyes, Zhengyi and Longhu shan were coextensive and that therefore nobody outside the mountain was allowed to claim a Zhengyi identity.

⁵¹ Schipper 1992:715–31.

⁵² The Lingbao liturgy is also practiced by Quanzhen Taoists, with a few variants.

⁵³ Maoshan has been since the fourth century the center of the Shangqing tradition, although, in modern times, it has become more concerned with newer ritual traditions.

⁵⁴ Personal communication, Kristofer Schipper.

⁵⁵ The Longhu shan Taoists are called Qingwei Zhengyi in the 1736 proposition for the registration procedures (*Longhu shan zhi* 8.37a).

the Tianshi actually conferred ranks within a multi-layered spiritual hierarchy, the highest of which was called Qingwei Lingbao and not Zhengyi. Thus the decision by the state to issue Qingwei Lingbao certificates may also seem to reflect a surprising will to keep abreast of the institutional evolutions within Taoism.

How could the state recognise a Qingwei Lingbao Taoist? This raises the thorny question of the authority the state conferred to Taoist ordinations as such. Indeed, the Qingwei Lingbao Taoists cannot be judged by how they abide by their rules since they do not have any set of rules,⁵⁶ monastic or otherwise, which apply to all of them. The only objective way for the state was thus to consider their ordination register (*fapai*), although we have seen that, during the same time, the Qing state tried to limit the possibilities for such ordinations. Even if the state had recognised Taoist ordination grades, there would be no room left for a category such as “*huoju daoshi*” which has no meaning whatsoever as far as ordinations are concerned. Moreover, the difference between Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* could not lie within the question of celibacy versus married life. Most Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi* were actually *huoju*; although some of them did live celibate lives (*chujia*) in cloisters,⁵⁷ others abode by monastic rules for limited periods while on a formative stay within a community, and others still kept their homes in temples.

From the little evidence presented in official texts, it would seem that distinctions between Taoist terms were too far-fetched, and that magistrates did not go in for such subtleties. To be sure, the state did not explain clearly what its own interpretation of these canonical terms was, yet the 1736 decree implies that all Qingwei Lingbao Taoists had to live in temples (*wu jiashi shixin zhumiao fenxiu*)⁵⁸ to be recognized as such. This would make better sense of the term *huoju* thus becoming its opposite. Of course, taking Qingwei Lingbao as meaning “a married Taoist living in a temple” is awkward, but after all the late imperial state had a history of imposing exonyms on religious institutions.⁵⁹ If our interpretation is correct, the *huoju daoshi* are to be understood in the 1736–1739 official context as Taoists who, although working in temples, did not live in them.⁶⁰ This does not exclude, in purely Taoist terms, the possibility that they were actually also Qingwei Lingbao Taoists.

⁵⁶ Rules (*gui*) should be distinguished from precepts (*jie*), that engage the adept privately towards the gods, and are therefore not liable to enforcement.

⁵⁷ They then received celibate precepts very similar to those of the Quanzhen, and those living in convents also obeyed the rules of their convent. Lou Jinyuan himself was *chujia*.

⁵⁸ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3b xia; *Longhu shan zhi* 8.35b–37b.

⁵⁹ ter Haar 1992, chapter 6 “Label and pseudo-autonym,” 196–246.

⁶⁰ It should also be noted that, already in the early Ming, “Taoists called Lingbao and *huoju*” were outlawed; *Libu zhigao* 89.14b.

It is not altogether impossible that the bipartition was originally intended to separate Taoists belonging to the grand Qingwei Lingbao tradition and the masters of the purely local schools (such as Lüshan or Meishan), and that it turned practically into a more secular divide between the well-connected Taoists of the major temples and the rural masters. However, there was another consequence of the somewhat complex distinction between the Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* types of *daoshi*. The magistrates probably lacked the means of sorting out these distinctions by themselves, and enjoyed the liberty to interpret them as they saw fit. Whatever their exact difference in theory, the two categories seem to have been blurred by magistrates in charge of the census. Many, indeed, chose to gather all the non-Quanzhen into one of the two categories while ignoring the other one. The numbers of registered Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* Taoists are negatively correlated. It would seem that a magistrate could grant either of the two types of licenses to a non-Quanzhen Taoist and, in some areas, one type was preferred. For instance, Anhui had 1518 Qingwei Lingbao and 0 *huoju*; Hunan had 371 and 0; at the other extreme, Guangdong had respectively 7 and 787. Very rarely are both categories registered in the same county. This is all the more confusing, since Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* licenses were not equally desirable; the first could be transmitted to one's disciple but not the second.

In summary, awarding Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* licenses to the non-Quanzhen Taoists was motivated by a desire to devise a distinction between an acceptable lifestyle and a barely tolerable one (living in a temple vs. at home), as well as the urge to give partial recognition to the non-Quanzhen Taoists without referring to the Heavenly Master. These complex considerations were not clearly stated, nor, it seems, universally understood. Married Taoists were obviously the part of the clergy about which officials had the most confused conceptions. It was accordingly the least accurately and least consistently registered category.

Part 2. An analysis of the Geographical Repartition of the Clergy

The 1736–39 census of the Chinese clergy studied in this article has two facets. The political one, discussed above, is a case of misinterpreted intentions and ultimately wasted efforts. However, the census-taking itself proved to be quite efficient, for within three years, the Board of Rites managed to compile a nation-wide register of more than 300,000 clerics. This document, unique for its comprehensiveness and geographical detail, deserves its own attention. Although its interpretation calls for caution, for reasons already explained above, the numbers reflect the existence of a very large officially-registered clergy, well identified in terms of place of residence and religious affiliation.

The aggregate numbers

Aggregate totals of the extant data are provided in Table 1, which add for each category the numbers from the two *huangce* (1737–38 and 1738–39). I have attempted in Table 2 a reconstruction of the total census of the 340,112 clerics, in order to give an approximate idea of the spread of the religious population over the whole of Chinese territory. For this, I have chosen the provinces as the basic unit. No province is covered in its entirety by the extant data. However, in seven cases (Anhui, Shandong, Hunan, Shaanxi, Hubei, Jiangxi, and Yunnan), the 1751–54 memorials reporting on the suppression of certificates mention the total number of clerics registered in 1736–39. This number has been divided between Buddhist and Taoists according to their proportion in the extant census data of that province. The other provincial totals have been obtained through extrapolation.

As noted above, our basic assumption is that in most counties the census was conducted in one year, and thus the data for the documented counties are complete. For a province like Fujian we have results for 58 of the 65 counties that existed during this period. The census for the remaining 7 counties was certainly conducted between 1736–1737. As the results for the available counties are detailed, and as these counties are evenly spread over the whole province, it is possible to infer a rather close estimation of the total results from Fujian by extrapolating the total of the 58 counties over the total number of counties. The same operation has been carried out on all the documented provinces, for all of which the same conditions were obtained. However, the smaller uncorrected totals for provinces such as Sichuan naturally introduce a wider margin of error. This proportional correction was applied to Buddhists (monks and nuns), Taoists (Quanzhen, Qingwei Lingbao, and *huoju*), and to their total.

These “corrected totals” then add up to 275,065, which is 65,047 short of the known 340,112 total. The latter are to be found in the undocumented provinces, where we have no idea of their distribution. An even rougher approximation can be suggested from the proportion to the total population. At this point we needed to introduce demographic data, which adds another source of uncertainty. I have relied on the data from the standard historical sources,⁶¹ and used the only contemporary figures available for all provinces, dating from 1749. These may overestimate the 1736 population, since this was a period of very strong demographic growth, but are also widely considered to have underestimated the population at the time of their compilation. From these figures, we can evaluate the density of the clerics among the population at large, which is 1.92 per thousand over the whole country, but only 1.89 in

⁶¹ Liang Fangzhong 1980:258.

Table 1 : 1737–1739 Results from the Two Extant Huangce

	monks	nuns	total Buddhists	Quanzhen	Qingwei	huoju	total Taoists	grand total
<i>1. Documented provinces</i>								
Shuntian	2,986	180	3,166	248	239	3	490	3,656
Zhili	7,217	1,460	8,677	1,453	676	144	2,273	10,950
Shengjing	3,139	42	3,181	202	84	567	853	4,034
total	13,342	1,682	15,024	1,903	999	714	3,616	18,640
Shandong	6,761	1,840	8,601	3,843	248	592	4,683	13,284
Anhui	19,215	1,682	20,897	66	1,518		1,584	22,481
Jiangsu	6,002	1,369	7,371	588	1,231	144	1,963	9,334
Zhejiang	15,364	3,691	19,055	120	625	86	831	19,886
Hunan	7,870	7	7,877	1,029	373		1,402	9,279
Sichuan	2,513	62	2,575	198	32	34	264	2,839
Fujian	10,170	797	10,967	44	183	249	476	11,443
Guangdong	9,244	2,300	11,544	187	7	787	981	12,525
Total	90,481	13,430	103,911	7,978	5,216	2,606	15,800	119,711
<i>2. Undocumented provinces</i>								
Henan	77		77		17		17	94
Shanxi	250	4	254	2	52		54	308
Shaanxi			0				0	0
Gansu			0				0	0
Hubei	1		1				0	1
Jiangxi	1		1		15		15	16
Guangxi	842	7	849	13	112	73	198	1,047
Guizhou	1,664	36	1,700	8			8	1,708
Yunnan			0				0	0
Total	2,835	47	2,882	23	196	73	292	3,174
Grand total	93,316	13,477	106,793	8,001	5,412	2,679	16,092	122,885

the documented provinces. This slight discrepancy could be due to three reasons: (1) a genuine difference, (2) a bias introduced by unrepresentative documented counties, or (3) the fact that the registration during the first year, in the documented counties, was after all substantial. The very small difference suggests that there is no strong bias and our basic assumption must hold.

Table 2 : Extrapolated Totals (actual census figures in bold)

	population 1749	documented counties	total counties	extrapolated buddhists	extrapolated taoists	extrapolated total	clergy to population per 1000	taoists to clergy %
<i>1. Documented provinces</i>								
Shuntian		11	25	7,195	1,114	8,309		13.4%
Zhili		94	119	10,985	2,878	13,862		20.8%
Shengjing		22	23	3,326	892	4,217		21.1%
total	14,339,769	127	167	21,506	4,883	26,389	1.84	18.5%
Shandong	24,011,829	46	107	17,785	9,684	27,469	1.14	35.3%
Anhui	21,567,929	42	56	23,774	1,802	25,576	1.19	7.0%
Jiangsu	20,972,437	20	66	23,625	4,406	28,030	1.34	15.7%
Zhejiang	11,877,436	33	78	37,832	1,595	39,428	3.32	4.0%
Hunan	8,672,433	34	69	9,603	1,823	11,426	1.32	16.0%
Sichuan	2,506,780	37	125	8,699	892	9,591	3.83	9.3%
Fujian	7,620,429	58	65	12,291	533	12,824	1.68	4.2%
Guangdong	6,460,638	54	88	18,812	1,599	20,411	3.16	7.8%
Guizhou	3,075,111	51	60	2,000	9	2,009	0.65	0.5%
Total	121,104,791	502	881	175,927	27,226	203,153	1.68	13.4%
<i>2. Provinces for which the total is known</i>								
Shaanxi	6,734,158	0	79			7,911	1.17	
Hubei	7,527,486	0	69			29,152	3.87	
Jiangxi	8,428,205	1	78			31,099	3.69	
Yunnan	1,946,173	0	81			3,750	1.93	
total 2	24,636,022	1	307			71,912	2.92	
Total 1+2	145,740,813	503	1,188			275,065	1.89	
remaining	31,754,426					65,047	2.05	
<i>3. Completely undocumented provinces</i>								
Henan	12,847,909	0	106			26,318	2.05	
Shanxi	9,509,266	5	96			19,479	2.05	
Gansu	5,709,526	0	57			11,696	2.05	
Guangxi	3,687,725	23	98			7,554	2.05	
total 3	31,754,426	28	357			65,047	2.05	
Grand total	177,495,239	531	1,545	294,531	45,581	340,112	1.92	13.4%

It can be observed from the documented provinces that the densities of the clerics to the population at large vary within wide bands (0.65 to 3.87 per 1000). The richer provinces of the Yangzi valley (Sichuan, Hunan, Zhejiang) and the coast (Guangdong) seem to have a denser religious population than the inner provinces, with the striking exception of Jiangsu. It was home to many of the largest, richest, and most prestigious Buddhist (and to a lesser extent Taoist) communities, and yet has one of the lowest reconstructed densities. However, it is obvious that the documented Jiangsu counties (only 24 out of 66, and most of them in the northern part of the province) are not representative of the much richer southern part.

One should also keep in mind that the total of 340,112 registered clerics should be far from being a complete inventory of all Chinese people considering themselves and considered by others as clerics, and living from religious activities. To begin with, it excluded the novices. The census aimed to separate the *bona fide* clerics from the undeserving ones, and in the view of the Confucian elite, many monks and *daoshi* were to fall in the second category. Moreover, the procedures gave the local administration great latitude as to whom they could register. The extent of under-registration is very difficult to estimate, especially since we lack comparable evidence from other periods; Ming figures—as mentioned in the *Libu zhigao*—do not make much sense, as they are only administrative quota.⁶² A previous Qing census, taken in 1667, counted 140,193 clerics, among whom 110,292 were Buddhist monks, 8,615 Buddhist nuns and 21,286 Taoists.⁶³ The total figure is 59% lower than our census, and it seems most unlikely that the size of the clergy changed that much in 75 years. One should rather consider that the 1667 registration left out even more unregistered clerics. Of course, it is likely that the very high density of the clergy in medieval times (up to 1% of the population during the Tang)⁶⁴ was a thing of the past, but the actual figure for the mid-Qing was nonetheless higher than 340,000, and the density higher than 0.2%; probably around 0.4%. This clergy density compares rather well with the figures from pre-revolutionary France—a vantage point which does make some historical sense.⁶⁵

The best data with which to compare our figures is, as far as I know, the Buddhist census conducted in 1930 by the Buddhist association, which certainly took a more comprehensive approach.⁶⁶ This census is difficult to com-

⁶² *Libu zhigao* 89.13a, 24b.

⁶³ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.1b xia–2a shang.

⁶⁴ Gernet 1995:6 sq.

⁶⁵ Langlois & Tackett 1980. For creative cartography, see also Langlois 1996.

⁶⁶ Welch 1967:411–20.

pare province by province with our data because of the unequal demographic development of the various provinces during the two intervening centuries, and because the 1930 census also had obvious biases (underreporting for northern provinces).⁶⁷ However, it shows that in 1930 the Buddhist clergy (monks and nuns) numbered at least 740,000, around 3.5 per thousand inhabitants. As the likely trend during the late Qing and early Republic was a diminution of the density of the clergy to the total population, one can fairly consider that our 1.93 clerics per thousand is very low, and that the 1736–1739 census underestimates the size of the clergy by more than half. The missing numbers are likely to come mostly from the Buddhist nuns and the non-Quanzhen Taoists. For instance, in the 1930 census, nuns account for 30.5% of the total Buddhist population, whereas they are only 12.6% in our census.

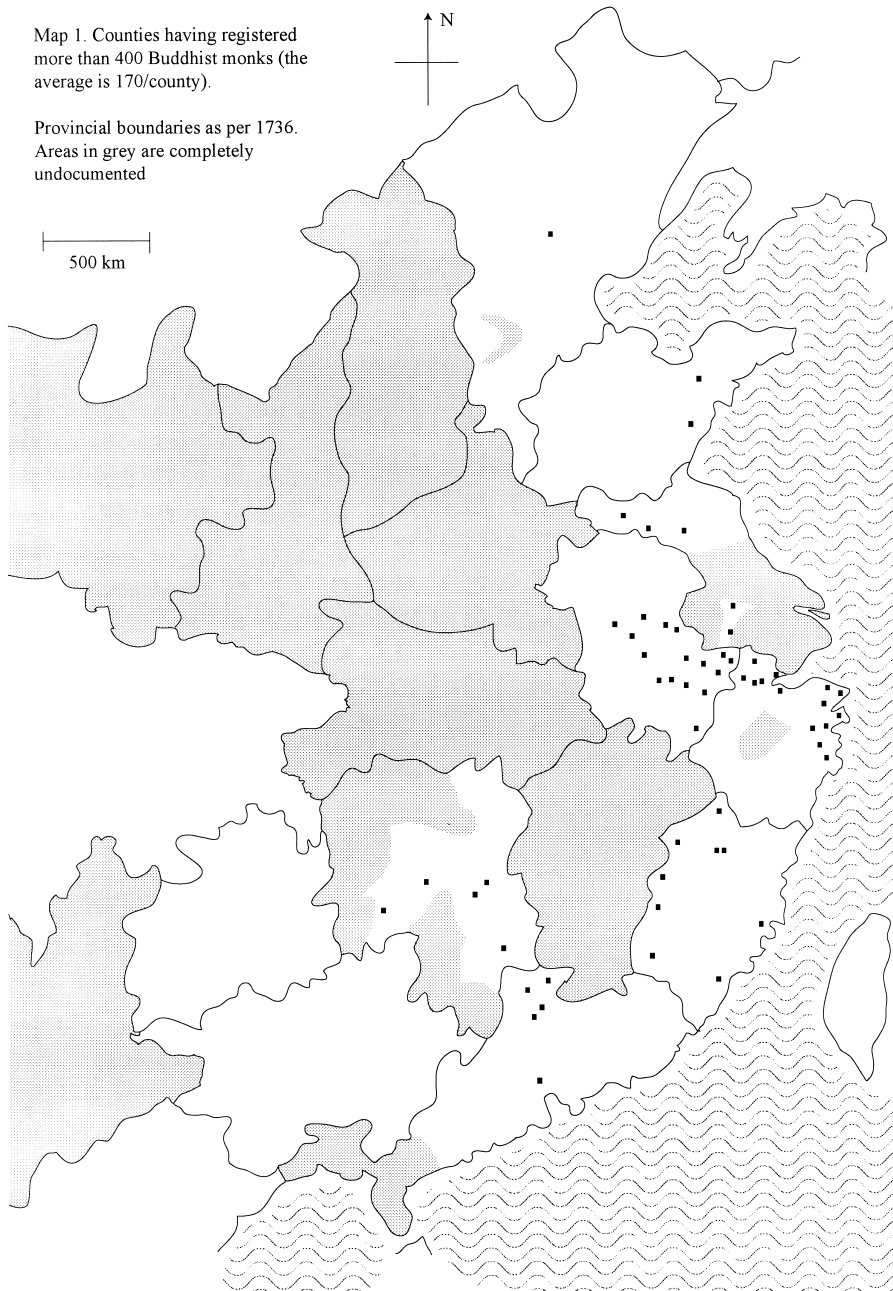
One should keep in mind that results from Table 1 are actual census results, whereas Table 2 provides corrected estimates. The most interesting possibilities offered by these data do not lie within such estimates, for they rely on external information itself not completely trustworthy. The very rich and detailed information provided in the best documented counties allows us to attempt a microanalysis that only considers the relative dispersion of the religious population of the various orders, and therefore a glimpse into their coexistence.

Buddhists and Taoists

The first observation from Tables 1 and 2 is the overall large domination of the Buddhists. The proportion of Taoists in the total, around 13%, is remarkably similar to the figures from other periods, such as the few extant data from Song, Yuan, and Hongwu censuses.⁶⁸ The 1667 census, for its part, reported 15% Taoists. The Qianlong census thus gives the global picture of a massively Buddhist male clergy. It would seem that the imbalance is stronger in the South than in the North. Map 1 brings out the counties with a massive male Buddhist presence, showing its dominance in the Jiangnan area, which does not come as a surprise. It is the sheer size of the Buddhist clergy there, rather than the absolute number of Taoists, which explains the low proportion

⁶⁷ Some figures fit nicely (the high Buddhist density in Zhejiang, the medium one in Hunan and Fujian), but others do not (Guangdong, Sichuan, and Anhui are more densely Buddhist in 1736–39, Jiangsu less).

⁶⁸ I plan to provide a comprehensive set of data in a forthcoming publication on the Taoist clergy from 1200 to 1400. One example will suffice here: Guangzhou prefecture. The *Yongle dadian* (11907.13a–22a) has transmitted data from the 1290 census, which can be compared with the complete data of the 1736–39 census. In the whole prefecture, there were 14.8% Taoists among the 1805 registered clerics in 1290, and 11.4% among the 3539 registered in 1736–39. For the two counties encompassing the prefectural city, the proportion was 15.6% in 1290 and 9% in 1736–39. These figures can be said to illustrate the global picture of a stable distribution of the clergy over time.



of the latter. However, as almost no province provides a comprehensive census, I chose to examine the difference at the county level and use the absolute numbers as well as the proportions of the categories as our indexes.

One preliminary question is why there are such wide discrepancies in the numbers of clerics among the different counties. Of course, all counties were not of equal size or population, nor were their economic conditions equally conducive to the maintenance of a large clergy. Yet there seems to be more than that to a fluctuation that bottomed at a few monks and rose as high as 2,671 in Haining xian (Hangzhou prefecture, Zhejiang, 2,274 of which were Buddhist monks). Such huge discrepancies call for an explanation.

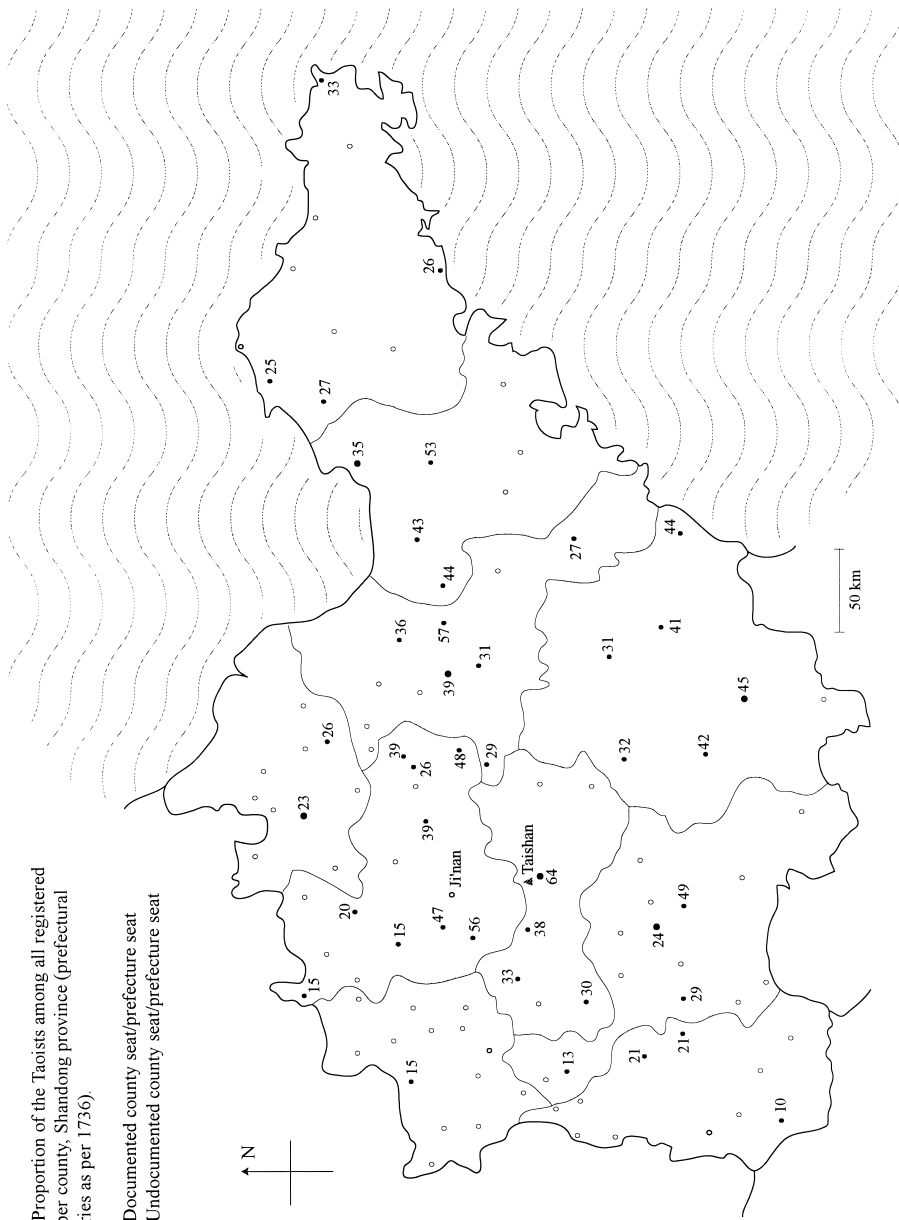
Obviously, the clerics are registered according not to their place of birth (which would provide for a more equal repartition) nor to their place of ordination (which would in turn provide for an even more unequal spreading), but to their place of residence. As said before, it can be fairly reckoned that the registered clerics do not comprise the whole population of people professionally involved with religion, but the official part, who tend to live more in large communities.

It is therefore very tempting to correlate the results of the census with what we know of the official monasteries of both religions. This appears, alas, as another tricky task. Lists of religious buildings in counties, prefectures, or provinces are numerous in the gazetteers. However, barely a few of them can be safely considered as a list of the buildings extant and in activity at the time of compilation. This problem, well known by the pioneers who have attempted a quantitative approach to late imperial Chinese religion,⁶⁹ is related to the general nature of the gazetteers, made up of both previously printed material and first-hand or fieldwork information. The division between the two is rarely explicit, and in matters such as religious institutions, which always appear secondary to compilers, the part of the old information copied over from previous gazetteers should not be underestimated. It should be added here that, in the present state of research, we do not know how accurately the local administration kept track of the religious institutions within its realm. The opening of local archives will hopefully tell us more on this issue.

The only option left is therefore to use at face value the lists in the chapters “monasteries” (*siguan*) in the gazetteers, keeping in mind that they probably included nominal monasteries not in operation. The list I have used concerns Shandong, to which I have paid special attention due to the high percentage of Taoists in its religious population. A provincial gazetteer compiled in 1736, just before the census, lists 504 Buddhist and Taoist monasteries, county by county.⁷⁰ It is very likely that some of these were no longer extant by 1736, as

⁶⁹ See note 2.

⁷⁰ *Shandong tongzhi*, Yue Jun (1704–1753) et al. (comp.), *Siku quanshu* ed., 21.46b–65a.



Map 2. Proportion of the Taoists among all registered clerics per county, Shandong province (prefectural boundaries as per 1736).

many of the building dates provided are from the Yuan and before. However, a check with some contemporary and later *xianzhi* suggests that most of them have had some type of activity (repair, imperial favor, etc.) during this period. I also assume that the presence of long-disappeared monasteries in the list would be evenly spread and not introduce any strong bias. I have therefore correlated, county by county (within the 46 documented counties), the number of Buddhist monasteries with the number of Buddhist monks and nuns, and the same for the Taoists. The correlation coefficients are: 0.09 for Buddhism and 0.33 for Taoism.

These coefficients are very low. Pending a demonstration that the *siguan* lists are utterly unreliable, one can only deduce that the majority of the clerics as registered in 1736–1739 did not live in large official monasteries. This does not come as a surprise; most of the clerics have always been living in small institutions serving lay communities, and the trend in late imperial times seems to be to the relative decline (in numerical terms) of the large monasteries (with huge endowments) in favor of small temples managed by lay congregations. Our data thus seems to confirm the observation of Holmes Welch concerning the first part of the twentieth century, who estimated that only 5% of the Buddhist clergy lived in large public monasteries (over 50 monks).⁷¹ A comparable situation obtained for the Quanzhen Taoists. Moreover, one should remember that the large monasteries, whether Taoist or Buddhist, served as formation centers, and most residents were not officially registered there, but in their original smaller temple. The clearest conclusion is that the number of monasteries can not be used as a proxy for the size of the clerical population.

If the density of the Buddhist and Taoist population, in a given county, cannot be explained solely by the existence of specific monastic institutions, their relative proportion takes on even more significance as to the religious culture of the local society. Consequently, it is important to know whether this proportion is normal. In order to determine this, I have compared the numbers of clerics belonging to the two religions in a limited number of documented counties which satisfy specific criteria designed to ensure that all categories were registered (more than 10 Buddhists, more than 10 Taoists, and more than 1 Buddhist monk).

⁷¹ Welch 1967:4. He estimates there were about 300 such large public monasteries, for a total “elite” clergy of 20,000 to 25,000 monks. The average monastery or temple counted only 5 clerics in residence. This is confirmed by earlier isolated sources. For the numbers of clerics per monastery in a sixteenth century Hunan prefecture, see (Longqing) *Yuezhou fu zhi*, Tianyige ed., j. 7. The average is four clerics per monastery (with 40% novices).

Province (number of counties)	correlation between the numbers of Taoists and Buddhists	Average of the % of Taoists	Standard Deviation of the % of Taoists
Zhili (including Shuntian fu, 72)	0.62	27	15
Shandong (44)	0.61	33	13
Jiangsu (20)	0.68	19	12
Zhejiang (9)	0.73	12	11
Hunan (16)	0.34	26	22

The numbers of Taoists and Buddhists in the chosen counties seem mildly correlated, mainly due to the variations of the total population in those counties: the more populated a county, the more clerics it had, Buddhist and Taoist together. However, the correlation is not strong, especially in Hunan. This suggests that the size of the two clerics is not just a function of the size of the local population. Another way of looking at this proportion is by taking the percentage of Taoists among the whole registered clergy as a variable, which does not depend on the total size of the population. The standard deviations of this index are very high, when compared to their average.⁷² This means that the proportion of the Taoist clergy greatly varied and that there were definitely patterns of distribution of Buddhist and Taoist clerics, and thus, Buddhist and Taoist counties. This phenomenon seems even stronger in the South.

Distribution patterns can also be mapped, which I did for Shandong province. Map 2 shows evidence of two broad trends. The western and northern peripheries of the province tend to have a lower proportion of Taoists, whereas the central and southern areas return higher proportions. On the other hand, this overall pattern does not mask the strong differences from one county to the next. Admittedly, some prefectures show quite homogeneous distribution figures, but there are also hiatuses, for example the county with 48% Taoists sandwiched between two counties with respectively 26% and 29% Taoists.

However, one should remain wary on this topic, as the Buddhists and the Taoists were not registered in the same way, and, as we have seen, the level of registration of the non-Quanzhen masters was very low. Fujian, for instance, appears in our census as a purely Buddhist province. It was actually once famous for its many Buddhist monasteries; but contemporary fieldwork has

⁷² Which is not the percentage of the Taoists in all the counties under consideration as a whole, since it is an average of proportions in counties with different populations.

shown that Taoist masters—all of them *huoju daoshi*—are, by far, the most important part of the clergy in the Fujian countryside.

Whatever the failures of the census to reproduce the patterns of distribution among Buddhists and Taoists, one must admit that the clergies of the two religions were not evenly spread, and therefore must look for possible explanations. Although the traditional split between the North with large numbers of Taoists (although less numerous than the Buddhists) and the massively Buddhist South is of some significance, major differences can also be observed from one county to the next. A valid model should therefore play at a more local level. The most immediate approach is to consider another classical division, namely cities vs. countryside. Our data, aggregated by counties, does not allow for a very minute examination of this problem, that was taken up by Eberhard on the basis of temple location (inside city walls, in villages, or atop mountains) according to local gazetteers.⁷³ It is however possible to look at the counties which included the largest cities. Among the documented counties, I selected those whose jurisdiction includes the prefectural city (*fuguo xian*). Not all large cities were prefectural seats nor were all *fuguo xian* encompassing large urban areas, yet it can be assumed that these counties were more urbanised than the average. We compared the clerical population of the *fuguo xian* of 12 provinces with that of the whole province. The results show no strong pattern of specific urban clergy. None of the five categories used by the census was systematically over- or under-represented in the prefectural counties, and most proportions are very similar in those counties and in the whole province.

This suggests that the patterns of implantation are not primarily dictated by urban or rural socio-economic conditions. Of course, one would like to precisely compare the results of the census with data concerning population and richness of the counties, but gathering a large amount of such data for the period 1736–1739 seems too difficult to be ventured here. In any case, our data seem to point to different reasons for the religious specialization of the counties, which appear to lie with social history. The quantitative observations fit very nicely with the fieldwork results of ethnographers such as Kristofer Schipper in Taiwan or Kenneth Dean in Fujian. They found that specific liturgical traditions in different areas favored different parts of the clergy. For instance, death rituals were performed in some parts of Taiwan and Fujian by the *daoshi*, and in other parts by Buddhists. It is the cultural tradition of a given area, and hence the ritual needs and choices of the local population, that dictates the size of the Buddhist and Taoist clergies. These differences do not depend on administrative geography nor on economic conditions: they can be

⁷³ Eberhard 1964:291–97.

shown by numbers but cannot be explained by them. Rather similar considerations will apply to the distribution of the different Taoists categories.

A geography of Taoist institutions

Just as the census data give hints as to the relative strengths of the Buddhist and Taoist clergies, they also document the distribution of Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen Taoists. This question is linked to the peculiarities of the registration of Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* Taoists. We have seen that they both only received licenses (*buzhao*). Furthermore, not all of them were entitled to such a document: only those who could neither become a monk nor return to lay life were granted a *buzhao*. Yet, it is likely that other considerations played a part in the magistrates' decision whether or not to grant a *buzhao* to a married Taoist. The magistrates were probably differently disposed towards such demands. The more hostile ones, considering from a rigid ideological stand that married clerics did not deserve any status at all, might have chosen not to register any Qingwei Lingbao or *huoju daoshi*. This could explain the fact that few counties have a significant number of Taoists of these two categories. Only 66 counties have registered more than 20 Qingwei Lingbao Taoists. Yet they could also be numerous, as in Shangyuan xian (the city of modern Nanjing, Jiangsu), where 442 of them obtained a license. They were certainly the inhabitants of the many Taoist temples and cloisters in and around Nanjing.⁷⁴ Yet Nanjing was far from exceptional in having many temples staffed by non-Quanzhen Taoists.

The case for the very uneven quality of registration of the *huoju daoshi* is even stronger: in only 33 counties were they more than 20, yet they were 295 in Chengde xian (the city of Mukden, or modern Shenyang, Liaoning)⁷⁵ and 193 in Pingdu zhou (Shandong). *Huoju daoshi* were the part of the clergy most likely to be related to population density, since they served local unofficial "parishes" of the temples. Although the differences in religious practice imply different sizes for the parishes, one would expect the numbers of *huoju daoshi* to be loosely related to population. Therefore, to find more than one hundred of them registered in a county suggests that actually many if not most counties of China counted many tens of (unregistered) *huoju* Taoists.

The fact that the largest groups of married Taoists registered in our census—whether Qingwei Lingbao or *huoju*—are to be found in cities suggests another reason why they were awarded licenses. It is likely that they were

⁷⁴ A detailed description of 68 Taoist temples in Nanjing in the late sixteenth century is given in the *Jinling xuanguan zhi*—anonymous, but probably compiled by Ge Yanliang (*jinshi* 1601); early Qing reedition from the Beijing daxue tushuguan. Unfortunately, this very valuable source gives no hint as to the size of the clergy.

⁷⁵ *Huoju daoshi*, named *daoding*, were actually employed by the court for the sacrifices at the imperial mausolea in Mukden: see note 24.

priests in charge of the temples of the state cults (*guanmiao*) or other large temples dedicated to deities on the Sacrifice register (Sidian). It might have seemed awkward to the magistrates that temples involved in the rituals of the state religion relied on an unregistered clergy, and therefore they were inclined to grant them *buzhao* more easily than to Taoists not affiliated with the official religion. For instance, in all administrative seats a Chenghuang miao existed as an official foundation which the magistrate visited regularly in his liturgical capacity. These temples were often run by married Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi*: some of them must have managed to obtain a *buzhao*.

Given such discrepancies in the registration of the Taoists, it is impossible to infer national patterns of distribution from the census data. The census returned nearly identical numbers of Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen Taoists, but, given the under-registration of the latter, one should conclude that Quanzhen Taoists were a minority. On a more local scale, it should have been possible to learn something of the obedience of Taoists inhabiting certain important centres. If the Longhu shan was outside of the registration, we could expect information about the other main mountains and other holy sites, which would give an idea to the relative importance of Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen Taoists in such places, as well as further hints concerning the difference between Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju daoshi*. We are rather unfortunate though, that most of these centers fell in counties not registered in our two extant *huangce*. The Wudang shan (Hubei), where the Qingwei and Quanzhen both had important communities, is not among them, nor is the Maoshan, the Gezao shan, and the Qingcheng shan (Sichuan). The major Quanzhen mountains, such as the Zhongnan shan (Shaanxi) and the Laoshan (Shandong), are similarly outside the scope of our *huangce*. The same situation obtained for Beijing, which is especially disappointing since we have detailed data for the twentieth century which could have allowed for a diachronic perspective.

The only Taoist center with a nation-wide appeal included in a registered county is the Southern Peak, Hengshan (Hunan). In Hengshan xian, there were 100 Quanzhen *daoshi* registered and none belonging to the other orders (it is very unlikely but not absolutely impossible that some Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi* were registered during the first year). This would suggest that this sacred peak had been successfully taken over by Quanzhen institutions. However, 100 monks is not a very large number when compared with the 343 Quanzhen *daoshi* registered for Hengyang xian, the county encompassing the prefectural city not far from there. We should also mention here another famous Quanzhen centre, the Luofu shan (Guangdong), lying in Boluo xian which registered 71 Quanzhen Taoists.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ This total seems congruent with the history of the Longmen institutions of this mountain which reached national fame during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Map 3. Counties having registered more than 40 Quanzhen clerics.

- > 40 Quanzhen clerics
- > 100 Quanzhen clerics

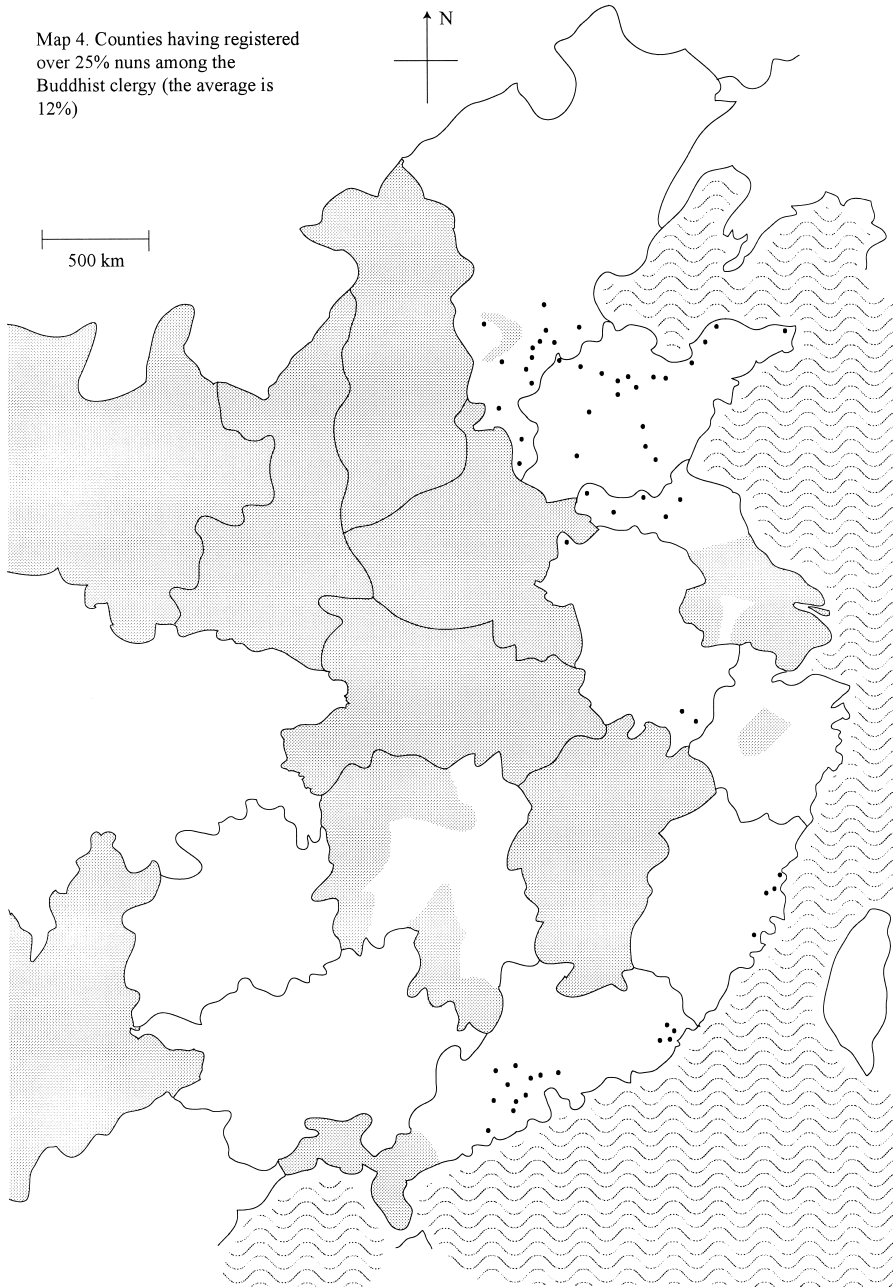


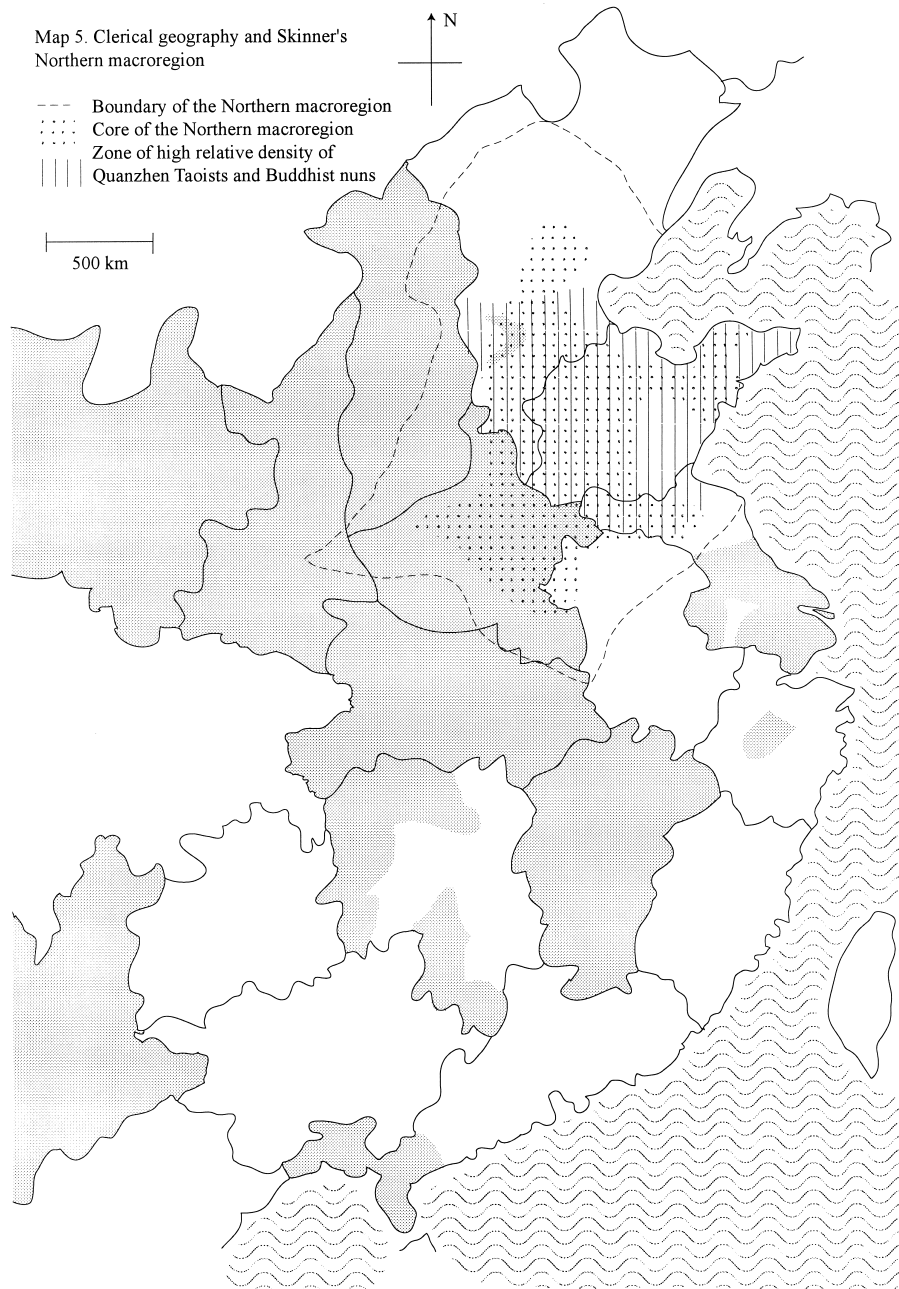
Although the comparison of the distribution of the Taoist clergies on a national scale is unworkable, it is still possible to study the Quanzhen clergy on its own and to venture a microanalysis. We can expect the Quanzhen monks and nuns to have been registered with an accuracy similar to that of the Buddhist clergy. Hence Map 3 shows the counties of strong Quanzhen presence and should hint at general trends. Its stronghold is the North and its importance in all southern regions is limited, with the exception of a few isolated places of important presence, such as the Hengshan. Its implantation is most remarkable in Shandong, where, in some counties, Taoist monks are more numerous than Buddhist ones. It is possible that the results for northern Henan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi may have yielded similar results. Yet, the provinces mask the real “natural regions”: Northern Jiangsu and Southern Hebei, which really belong together with Shandong, report similarly high numbers of registered Quanzhen *daoshi*, whereas the rest of these two provinces do not. The way the map of Quanzhen implantation matches this culturally homogeneous area is really remarkable. One could also point to a similar if smaller grouping in Hunan, where five of the six counties with a strong Quanzhen presence are contiguous.

The patterns of the Quanzhen implantation evidenced by the map would seem to go against the idea that the Quanzhen, which appeared and matured in Northern China between 1170 and 1280, later developed in the South, and that the Quanzhen renaissance, the Longmen lineage, was a movement based in the South. In this instance, historians of Taoism used to point to the fact that the Longmen reform of Quanzhen ordination procedures—begun by Wang Changyue (died 1680) in Peking in 1656—was rooted in Jiangnan, which Wang visited between 1663 and 1668, and where he ordained many monks and sent his best disciples. It is also true that the few pre-1911 extant gazetteers of Quanzhen institutions all came from the Jiangnan, and that the most famous late-Qing Longmen masters, like Min Yide (1758–1836) or Chen Mingguì (1824–1881), were all southerners. The census shows that what is true at the elite level is not necessarily so at the grassroots level.

Having mapped the distribution of Quanzhen Taoists, I was tempted to do a similar exercise with Buddhist nuns (Map 4), and I realised, with surprise, that both maps fitted nicely together. I focused the comparison on the area where Quanzhen were numerous and the data satisfactory—that is Shandong and Zhili. It appeared that counties with a high proportion of Buddhist nuns to Buddhist monks were mostly the same as those with high numbers of Quanzhen Taoists. The causal link behind this correlation is very difficult to ascertain and I do not want to suggest that Buddhist nuns and Quanzhen monks equally served as “alternative clergies” in this area traditionally weak in Buddhist

Map 4. Counties having registered over 25% nuns among the Buddhist clergy (the average is 12%)





monks.⁷⁷ Still, one may argue that in these areas both clergies (Quanzhen clerics and Buddhist nuns) had reached a critical mass that both established them as legitimate avenues for religious vocation (it was standard and honorable to become or send a child to become a member of those clergies)⁷⁸ and put them in charge of a sizeable network of small temples. The hereditary transmission of the charge of *zhuchi* (clerical manager of a temple), that was universally respected, ensured that such a position perpetuated itself over long periods. On the other hand, in areas where very few temples had a resident clergy made up of nuns or Quanzhen Taoists, it was very difficult to enter those clergies, or rather it was not a natural proposition, and if one did enter, it was just as difficult to find a temple to live in.

Although there was some competition for the clerical positions in temples opening in the new cities such as the nineteenth-century treaty ports, no clerical order in late imperial China was really missionary. A sizeable part of the clergy moved from their native place to other regions to take clerical positions there (a fact documented by the Buddhist and Quanzhen monastic ordination registers that detail the careers of all ordinands),⁷⁹ but they remained within regions where their order had a long-standing tradition. It is therefore possible to define for each order the regions of established presence, where vocations were common, and temples were staffed by fellow clerics in large numbers. The area centered on Shandong was such a clerical region for the Quanzhen and the Buddhist nuns.⁸⁰ When charted approximately on a map, notwithstanding some irregularities, the area of “many nuns, many Quanzhen monks” appears quite similar to the core of the “North China macroregion” of economic geography as defined by G. William Skinner (Map 5), which also has linguistic homogeneity. The overlap of these geographic patterns of very different nature, however, does not seem to hold for other parts of China.

The existence of distinct clerical regions does not imply their homogeneity. On a smaller scale, even among these areas with an established Quanzhen clergy, the numbers vary greatly between counties, and the counties of strong Quanzhen presence are difficult to characterize. Tai’an county (382 Quanzhen *daoshi* registered), which supervised the numerous Taoist institutions on and around the Taishan, supported by pilgrims coming from the whole of China,

⁷⁷ On the paucity of Buddhist institutions in Shandong, see Brook 1993:238–42.

⁷⁸ Welch 1967:255–57 argues that Northern Jiangsu (Subei) was an area that exported many monks because of the cultural acceptance and valuation of the Buddhist monastic career there. The thorny question of the social acceptance of nuns should also be viewed in this geographical perspective.

⁷⁹ Goossaert, forthcoming.

⁸⁰ Goossaert, forthcoming shows, with later material, the existence of three other Quanzhen regions: one encompassing south Henan, south Shaanxi-Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hubei, and part of Hunan, and two smaller ones around Shanghai-Hangzhou and around Guangzhou.

could be expected to be among them. Others, however, are not so easily explained. For instance, the gazetteers of Changqing xian (267 Quanzhen *daoshi* registered) or Weixian (277 Quanzhen *daoshi* registered) do not hint at any specific Quanzhen tradition, which again shows the limited value of the *difang zhi* for a quantitative approach to religious institutions.

Again, as in the case of the relative importance of Buddhists and Taoists, the great North/South divide is only a part of the story of the Taoist clergy. Significant changes take place when one crosses county boundaries. In this regard, the most remarkable and statistically clear-cut aspect of the Taoist registered clergy is that Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen clerics seem to exclude each other. Rather than correlating such incomplete numbers, I have chosen to look at the 191 counties where Taoists number 20 or more.⁸¹ I have computed the proportion of Quanzhen among them and grouped these proportions in classes.

The results are as follows:

Number of counties according to the % of Quanzhen among all Taoists

	0 to 10%	10 to 20%	20 to 50%	50 to 80%	80 to 90%	90 to 100%
North	17	5	9	15	10	45
South	52	4	10	4	1	19

The average proportions, which are the cases where registered Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen Taoists are in comparable numbers, are the exception rather than the rule. In the large majority of cases, one of the two kinds of Taoists are in quasi-monopoly (over 90%): such cases account for 61% of the selected counties in the North, and 79% of them in the South.

Such an observation leads to the hypothesis that Quanzhen and non-Quanzhen Taoists were competing for the positions of temples' *zhuchi*, and that all counties, for reasons linked to their own history and independent of being urban or rural, Southern or Northern, tended to make a once-and-for-all choice and staff their temples with Taoists of one obedience only (which did not prevent locals from employing *huoju daoshi* for certain rituals anyhow).⁸² This does not mean that they played identical roles in the religious system: their liturgical services actually partly overlapped, but also differed to a cer-

⁸¹ North: Shuntian fu 8 counties, Zhili 43 counties, Shanxi 1 county, Shengjing 8 counties, Shandong 41 counties. South: Jiangsu 20 counties, Zhejiang 6 counties, Guangxi 2 counties, Anhui 21 counties, Fujian 10 counties, Hunan 12 counties, Sichuan 3 counties, Guangdong 16 counties.

⁸² This applies less in cosmopolitan cities such as Beijing, which tended to be more inclusive. In the early twentieth century, there were 15% of Qingwei Taoists among Taoists registered in small temples (not accounting for *huoju daoshi*) and 10% when one included the population of the large Quanzhen monastery (the Baiyun guan).

tain extent. The hypothesis of a local “clerical choice” is also congruent with fieldwork observations and with the fact, known from the epigraphy, that the temples of the same cults are staffed by Taoists of different obediences—or by Buddhists—according to the county.⁸³ The decision to employ or support clerics from a given order depended solely on the preference of the temple or cult associations.

Conclusion

During the course of this analysis, I have had to express many caveats as to the census data: only a number of randomly spread counties are well-documented, and even those always carry the suspicion of having already been partially registered during the first missing year. Moreover, a large under-reporting of nuns and married Taoists mars all the results. However, it is possible to reach certain conclusions by comparing at the county level the best data from different viewpoints. From the more reliable results, one can infer a few basic, probably long-term patterns of clerical distribution. While there was a Buddhist male population just about everywhere in China, this should not preclude the appearance of a more complex clerical geography: these results should also interest historians concerned with defining a cultural geography of China.

As many studies have found, provinces are not usually natural regions and are far from being homogenous. Disregarding these administrative larger units, it seems reasonable to distinguish three levels of meaningful religious geography. First, large areas, roughly equivalent to the size of a province, have specific religious traditions, such as the Southern Zhili-Shandong-Northern Jiangsu area which had a strong tradition of Quanzhen Taoism. At this larger level, clerical traditions are not exclusive from each other, but there is a dominant pattern. This suggests, reasonably enough, that the larger clerical regions are formed in relation to socio-economic and cultural geography. The Skinnerian analysis, however, shows its limits here when one sees, such as in Shandong’s case, how large differences from one county to the next can mock a theoretical pattern of gradual changes from core to periphery or from one region to another.

Second, other boundaries of religious geography can also be drawn with the help of the census data, albeit less easily: separate locales the size of one or a few counties. Units thus defined would have either no Taoist officially-registered clergy, or either a Quanzhen or a Zhengyi one, and very rarely both. Finally, we also know that there are differences of religious choices between villages, and the census stays silent on this point.⁸⁴ These fine patterns of

⁸³ For an earlier period, see Goossaert 1998.

⁸⁴ For a very remarkable microgeography of the temples and the clergy in central Fujian, see Dean 1998, chapter 7.

religious geography somewhat recall the sharp differences in the indices of religious practice between adjacent parishes in nineteenth-century France. However, it will take much more evidence and analysis before we can draw maps as precise as those that chart French religious geography.⁸⁵

Although we are only beginning to discern them, and although they would also need to be studied with indices other than the size of the clergy, the patterns of Chinese religious geography already seem to raise specific questions. The boundaries of the clerical geography are not easily explained by history or by different socio-economic conditions, nor are the differences in the numbers of clerics usually linked to the presence of large monasteries. They therefore point to more fundamental cultural and religious local identities and to shifts in the function of the clergy from one locale to the next. Previous and recent fieldwork have suggested ways to explain such variations. Besides some large monastic communities with a nation-wide appeal (mostly in Jiangsu and Zhejiang) most members of the officially-registered clergy lived in temples or in small communities supported by local patronage, itself related to the needs of cultic and liturgical activities. This calls for other quantitative research that would focus on the patronage of cults and rites.⁸⁶ Although some patterns are valid throughout China, a large choice is left to the local population as to whom to employ: Buddhists or Taoists, men or women, celibate or married, and, even more significantly, which liturgical tradition. Such choices tend to embody a sense of local identity and, once made, were not questioned easily, especially in the places where the clergy was hereditary. Although the state did not formally recognize this geography and the underlying unofficial structures of society, with its administrative efficiency at its peak, during the Qianlong reign, it imparted to us documents that allow a glimpse into their existence.

⁸⁵ On the current state of the field, see Association Française d'Histoire Religieuse Contemporaine 1992.

⁸⁶ On the difficulties of this approach, see Brook 1993.

Glossary

ben fuying	奔赴應	Hengshan	衡山
Boluo xian	博羅縣	Hengshan xian	衡山縣
buzhao	部照	Hengyang xian	衡陽縣
Changqing xian	長清縣	huangce	黃冊
Chen Duo	陳鐸	Huoju daoshi	火居道士
Chengde xian	承德縣	jiao	醮
Chenghuang miao	城隍廟	Jianhu ji	堅瓠集
Chen Minggui	陳銘珪	Jiaxing Prefecture	嘉興府
chujia	出家	jie	戒
Chu Renhuo	褚人穫	jietan	戒壇
daoding	道丁	Jinling xuanguan zhi	金陵玄觀志
daohu	道戶	Laoshan	勞山
Daolu si	道錄司	Leifa	雷法
daoren yingfu	道人應付	Libu zeli	禮部則例
Da qing huidian	大清會典	Libu zhigao	禮部志稿
Da Qing huidian shili	大清會典事例	Like	禮科
diezhao	牒照	Longhu shan	龍虎山
Diyi Lishi dang'an guan	第一歷史檔案館	Longhu shanzhi	龍虎山志
dudie	度牒	Longmen	龍門
fapai	法派	Lou Jinyuan	婁近垣
fu	府	Luofu shan	羅浮山
fuguo xian	附郭縣	Lúshan	閩山
gaogong	高功	Maoshan	茅山
Ge Yanliang	葛演亮	Meishan	梅山
Gezao shan	閣皂山	Mingshi	明史
Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe	宮中檔乾隆朝奏摺	Min yide	閔一得
guadan	掛單	niseng	尼僧
guanmiao	官廟	nüguan	女冠
Guangzhou prefecture	廣州府	pai	派
Gu Zhentao	顧震濤	Pingdu zhou	平度州
gui	規	Qin'an dian	欽安殿
Haining xian	海寧縣	qingce	清冊
Hengshan	衡山	Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao	清朝續文獻通考
Hengshan xian	衡山縣	Qingcheng shan	青城山
Hengyang xian	衡陽縣	Qingdai Qian-Jia-Dao Baxian dang'an xuanbian	清代乾嘉道巴縣檔案選編

Qinggui xuanmiao	清規玄妙	wu jiaoshi shixin zhumiao fenxiu	無家室實心住廟焚修
Qing shigao	清史稿	xian	縣
Qingwei Lingbao daoshi	清微靈寶道士	xianzhi	縣志
Qingyuan tiaofa shilei	慶元條法事類	yingfu seng	應付僧
Quanzhen	全真	yingfu* seng	應赴僧
Quanzhen daoshi	全真道士	Yongle dadian	永樂大典
Sanshan	三山	yu	諭
Santai	三泰	(Longqing) Yuezhou fuzhi	(隆慶)岳州府志
Senglu si	僧錄司	yujia	瑜伽
sengren	僧人	Zhai Hao	翟灝
Shandong tongzhi	山東通志	Zhang	張
Shangqing	上清	Zhang Guolin	趙國麟 (zi Renpu 仁圃)
Shangyuan xian	上元縣	Zhang Xilin	張錫麟
shou siyuan	守寺院	Zhang Yulong	張遇隆
Sidian	祀典	Zhang Zhaolin	張昭麟
siguan	寺觀	zhaopiao	照票
sizhi	寺志	Zhengyi	正一
suo	所	Zhengyi zhenren shili	正一真人事例
Tai'an County	泰安縣	Zhenren fu	真人府
Taishan	泰山	Zhenwu	真武
Tianshi	天師	Zhili zhou	直隸州
tiben	題本	zhizhao	執照
ting	廳	Zhongnan shan	終南山
Tongsu bian	通俗編	Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjisuo xiancun Qingdai neige daku yuanzang Ming Qing dang'an	中央研究院歷史語言 研究所現存清代內閣大庫 原藏明清檔案
Wang Changyue	王常月		
wei	衛	zhou	州
Weixian	濰縣	zhuchi	住持
Wudang shan	武當山	zouzhe	奏摺
Wumen biaoyin	吳門表隱		

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