Religious Renaissance in China Today
Richard Madsen

Abstract
Since the beginning of the Reform Era in 1979, there has been a rapid growth and development of religious belief and practice in China. A substantial new scholarly literature has been generated in the attempt to document and understand this. This essay identifies the most important contributions to that literature and discusses areas of agreement and controversy across the literature. Along with new data, new paradigms have developed to frame research on Chinese religions. The paradigm derived from C. K. Yang's classic work in the 1960s came from structural functionalism, which served to unite research in the humanities and social sciences. However, structural functionalism has been abandoned by the new generation of scholars. In the humanities, the most popular paradigm derives from Michel Foucault, but there are also scholars who use neo-Durkheimian and neo-Weberian paradigms. In the social sciences, the dominant paradigms tend to focus on state-society relations. None of these paradigms fully captures the complexity of the transformations happening in China. We recommend greater dialogue between the humanities and social sciences in search of more adequate theoretical frameworks for understanding Chinese religions today.

Keywords
China; religion; humanities; state-society conflicts

Full Text:

China is a religious country with all kinds of faiths being practised across its vast territories—despite Mao's attempts to eradicate them. The Chinese Communist Party tolerates a variety of religions but continues to grapple with the potential challenge they pose to its authority. Prize-winning journalist Ian Johnson introduces the best books on the complex topic of religion in China. Read. Buy all books. Read. 1. The Religious Question in Modern China by Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer. Read. 2. You don't see that in China today. Religion is no longer the lifeblood of society. Now it is something that people do in their own time, their private sphere, which is essentially how modernity has dealt with religion in many other countries throughout the world.