

highest manifestation of human excellence (*ren*)” (p. 177). Yu is then ready to propose the parallel structure: “Just as *cheng* involves the unity between human beings and Heaven, contemplation involves the unity between human beings and God” (p. 170).

It is significant to note that only Confucius’ highest good is moral, because there is no moral content in pure rational activity. At their highest state Aristotle believes human beings are basking in divine intelligence, while the Confucian sages have perfected the virtue that Heaven has given them. I find it ironic that a comparativist methodology based on Aristotelian friendship tells us that it is the Confucian sage, not the Greek philosopher, who will look for friends.

Yu’s book is the best book on comparative philosophy I have ever read. He has proposed a very creative methodology and he applies his expert knowledge of Greek and Chinese philosophy with great care and insight. I recommend this book without reservation.

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ENDNOTE

1. Martin Ostwald, trans., *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

Democracy’s Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan. By Richard Madsen. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. xxvi, 217 Pp. Paperback, ISBN 978-052025228-8. Hardback, ISBN 978-0-520-25227-1.)

In *Democracy’s Dharma*, a deeply personal, yet objective, and often fascinating book, Richard Madsen explores Taiwan’s postwar religious renaissance and discusses the links between the primarily Buddhist spiritual reflowering in an industrializing and modernizing nation, and the process of Taiwan’s democratization.

In the preface, Madsen tells us that in order to write this book, he had to return to Taiwan, a place that he had learned to know well during his years as a Maryknoll missionary. In his three years of missionary service, he was frustrated by his failure to make converts to Catholicism and left the Order. He then embarked on a career in scholarship, studying at Harvard and becoming a sociologist and China hand. He has had a long and successful academic career and is today a member of the faculty of the University of California, San

Diego. He studied the society and moral economy of rural China during the decades of tumultuous Maoist and post-Maoist change. Working with Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger, he produced a number of superb and important studies. He then focused on larger issues of religion and society. Working with a number of major students of religion, he produced important books and essays. Given the breadth of his background and experience, his decision to study a Taiwan that had changed so radically in the years since he had been there in the 1960s was the right step to take. He repeatedly demonstrates the wisdom of his decision to explore this new Taiwan in *Democracy's Dharma*.

The Preface is the book's true introduction, in which Madsen tells us how he began his second encounter with Taiwan in 1999. It opens with his account of how he learned, firsthand, about one of the major Buddhist organizations involved in the religious renaissance, Tzu Chi, in the midst of the natural disaster: the September 21, 1999 earthquake. He was both participant of and witness to the way this Buddhist quasi-lay organization took action in the wake of that horrific earthquake that struck north-central Taiwan and created havoc in the capital, Taipei. His personal experience gave me insights into the world of the key Buddhist and *minjian* (popular religious) groups that were deeply involved, each in their own way in forging a viable democratic system and an East Asian form of citizens-led sociopolitical consciousness, as they began to take root in a nation that had been in a one-party corporatist stage only a decade or so before. After so setting the stage and engaging his readers, Madsen then spells out his objectives, theoretical concerns, research methods, and the assemblage of his rich data. Finally he shows us a comparative framework he uses in demonstrating his large-scale themes.

In the formal Introduction he takes a step back to become the objective observer and analyst. He sketches out the social dynamics of the religious renaissance that Taiwan has been experiencing while providing a brief history of the island's development. In this macro history he integrates the evolution of religious patterns and practices into the larger patterns of Taiwan's socioeconomic and political developments. In doing so, he profiles some groups and suggests their roles in and responses to the processes of the island's evolution into a quasi-capitalist democracy.

The four substantive chapters each center on one specific religious organization that has played a major role in the religious renaissance and in the democratization process. Three of these are Buddhist and the fourth is an amalgam of Daoism and popular religions. All these chapters have, with slight variations, the same format that he presents in preface. As one who teaches courses on Chinese religion and also

the history of Taiwan, I feel this is very useful. It helps the reader/student to compare these groups and get a clear idea where each fits into the whole of the Taiwanese religious universe. Each chapter begins with a narrative portrait of present state of the specific organization or temple examined. There follows a biography of the founder and then a history of the development of the organization or temple. Finally there is a discussion of the leader and the group's vision of his/her or its role in the larger religious community, and in Taiwan society and the ROC's political evolution. Madsen concludes by discussing how each organization tailors its message and where each organization finds its core membership.

The groups or organizations studied are Tzu Chi (the Buddhist Compassionate Relief Association), Foguang Shan (the Buddha's Light Temple), Dharma Drum Mountain, and the Hsin Tien Kung (the Enacting Heaven Temple). The only flaw I see in this structure is Madsen's failure to focus on the role of Protestant Christianity. While he does deal briefly with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, he does not give the Christian role in democratization and religious renaissance the sort of attention this reviewer thinks it deserves. However, to be fair, as Madsen points out, it has been dealt with by others. He concludes with a brief but clear and crisply written conclusion that pulls the various elements of the book together.

Democracy's Dharma is very well researched, organized, and written. The book is told to us in an authorial voice that manages to be both personal and scholarly. There is a real sense of engagement, eliding both the distance and the aura of the omniscient observer that contemporary academic "Canon Law" forces us to follow. We get to know Richard Madsen, the caring and socially conscious man of action who is also the clear-eyed observer and analyst of a Taiwan that has changed so radically since the late 1960s. However, his book is far more. It is a deeply researched work that is multidisciplinary, combining theology, anthropology, political science, and sociology in a seamless way. It is a model of an interdisciplinary approach in an academic world that often seems to slip back to the sanctuary of specific disciplines. Grand themes and masses of evidence are presented in clear, logical, and effective fashion. The narrative portraits also vividly convey the appeal, lives, and flavors of the religious leaders and their organizations and movements. To put it simply, this is one of the best books ever written about modern Taiwan. The soul of a nation is captured in its pages.

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