

Barend J. TER HAAR, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1992); 343 pp.; 7 maps; one index with Chinese terms but no characters.

Barend J. ter Haar's *The White Lotus Teachings* is quite simply a tour de force. Of enormous scope, spanning the Song through Qing dynasties, it argues that the term White Lotus began as a self-referent, or autonym, and degenerated in the sixteenth century into a derogatory label. When used in the Yuan dynasty as an autonym, it conveyed valuable information about the beliefs of its adherents. Later, when outside detractors applied it as a label, it conveyed information only about the prejudices of its critics. This analysis of labels, a thoughtful contribution in itself, allows ter Haar to present much information about both popular beliefs and lay Buddhist practice—among both commoners and literati—in late imperial China.

To do so, ter Haar draws on an extraordinary range of primary and secondary sources. The usual primary sources—collected papers, gazetteers, casebooks, memorials, and newspapers—are supplemented by materials barely touched by historians—rare inscriptions in epigraphical collections, archeological reports, letter-writing manuals, and colophons from early editions of the Buddhist canon. Many of the individual footnotes would support an entire article. The study provides equally ready access to an enormous body of secondary literature, including almost everything written about Chinese religion in Japanese, Chinese, English, French, and German before, during, and since World War II. Just as impressive, the author, a Dutchman, presents his argument with great clarity and force in a language that is not his native tongue.

Let me start with a summary of the main thesis. The term White Lotus first appeared in the Tang to describe Huiyuan's fifth-century assembly of monks and lay followers (who had not called themselves White Lotus). It was revived in the early years of the Southern Song by Mao Ziyuan, although few lay Buddhist used the term to refer to themselves in the Song. The first group to call themselves White Lotus flourished in the Yuan. These White Lotus adherents followed a vegetarian diet, built bridges, roads, and cloisters, and sponsored the printing of sutras. They gave many roles normally reserved for monks, such as managing cloisters, to lay people. Accordingly, monks played only minor roles in their religious lives.

In 1370, the newly founded Ming Dynasty banned four religious traditions by name: the White Lotus Society, Maitreyism, Man-

ichaeism, and the White Cloud Tradition. Ter Haar argues that because the rebels who rose up at the end of the Yuan were not an offshoot of a White Lotus group, the ban was unjustified. With the exception of only one document that names the rebel Han Shantong's grandfather as a member of a White Lotus Gathering, no other source suggests members of the White Lotus groups participated in the overthrow of the Yuan. Still, the founder of the Ming saw the White Lotus followers as sufficient threat to the stability of his rule that he banned their teachings.

Ter Haar suggests that the Ming bans and policies were much more effective than one would expect of any pre-modern government, and the 1370 ban may indeed have caused common people to abandon the term White Lotus. By the sixteenth century the term White Lotus had dropped out of non-elite usage and was no longer an autonym. Only officials used the term as a pejorative label for any suspicious religious group, including the newly arrived Christians. Most of these putative White Lotus groups held regular meetings, read precious scrolls or sutras, and practiced a vegetarian diet. After 1622, officials employed the term White Lotus as a "pseudo-autonym," a term they described "as if it were an autonym that had been adopted by the believers themselves" (p. 228). They were incorrect: the believers did not call themselves White Lotus followers.

The use of the term accelerated after the uprisings of 1796–1804, commonly known as the White Lotus rebellions. At the time, the rebels had several autonoms including Teachings of Collecting the Beginning or Teachings of the Great Vehicle of Western Heaven. They did not call themselves White Lotus. Nor did officials who drafted memorials about them. It was only later that the term came to be used. As ter Haar points out, "the farther removed in time the sources are from the rebellion [of 1796–1804], and the more concisely they summarize the events, the more frequently they use the name White Lotus teachings" (p. 261).

Ter Haar argues that the Boxer rebellion was notable because both elites and ordinary people described itinerant magicians who were thought to bring paper dolls to life as White Lotus. Was the use by common people in the Boxer rebellion really new as ter Haar says? Or was it a continuation of an unrecorded popular tradition? Given the power of Chinese terms to carry a multiplicity of meanings, it seems unlikely that one term should have so totally changed its connotations in the space of a century—among all social groups and in all geographic locations. Still, even if the term remained in commoners' vocabularies, no one can doubt ter Haar's contention

that it had taken on strongly negative implications in official circles.

Ter Haar's focus on one term allows him to make an important methodological point: scholars should not blindly adopt labels used by officials. They must focus on autonyms if they seek to understand a genuine religious phenomenon. His insight applies to all kinds of labels, not just those used by officials to characterize religious groups. Ter Haar expands path-breaking work by Chikusa Masaaki¹ on other labels used in the Song by officials critical of lay Buddhist gatherings: "gathering at night and dispersing at dawn," "men and women intermingling indiscriminately," and "eating vegetables and serving the devils" (p. 44). Before the Northern Song, different four-character phrases were used for these activities. During the Northern Song, the wording froze—a sure sign that a stereotype had hardened.

These terms recur frequently. In 1305, the Yuan monk Pudu reserved the term "White Lotus" for his own beliefs and attacked the deviant sexual practices of others who used the name: "These [people] are evil essences (*yaojing*) and ghost-natures, [they] 'gather at night and disperse at dawn' and 'eat vegetables and serve the devils,' but they definitely are not the pupils of the Lotus tradition" (p. 107, citing *Lushan lianzong baojian*, 10: 47a). So here we have a White Lotus proponent labeling others with the stereotypes of his time! Sometime in the sixteenth century, the term "White Lotus Teachings" took on the same functions as that of "eating vegetables and serving the devils" and other derogatory labels. When Yang Tingyun wrote *The Owl and the Phoenix do not Sing Together*, a defense of Christianity in 1616, he drew on the same stereotypes and so the same labels. According to Yang, Christianity was not a heretical teaching, but White Lotus and Luo Qing's Non-Action Teachings were. Among their crimes they "gather at night and disperse at dawn," and "men and women intermingle indiscriminately" (pp. 236–237, citing *Xiaoluan bu bingming shuo*, 39–43). The category White Lotus had simply subsumed all the pre-existing stereotypes about lay religion.

Although ter Haar himself is most interested in the use—and misuse—of religious labels, he has done an extraordinary job of mining different sources to suggest the wide extent of lay Buddhist practice. His intent is not to write a social history of lay religiosity for the Song and the Yuan like that of Susan Naquin's for Qing

¹ Chikusa Masaaki, "Kissai jima ni tsuite." In *Chūgoku bukkyō shakaishi kenkyū* (Dōhōsha, Kyoto, 1982), 199–227.

rebels,² but his extensive notes indicate that more than enough material survives in hard-to-find sources for future scholars to do so. Ter Haar is the first scholar to focus on three neglected practices: the recitation of spells, the use of certain characters in names, and the building of bridges, roads, and other public works.

Lay Buddhists believed that continuous recitation of a Buddha's name, like Amitābha or Guanyin, or of a certain spell, or dharani, could protect the person reciting it from harm and also bring salvation in the afterlife. Ter Haar translates one story from Hong Mai's *The Record of the Listener* that sheds light on these beliefs. It concerns the milk-nurse of an official who followed a vegetarian diet and who stayed with her mistress when she did her Chan meditation exercises. The wet-nurse

could only recite [the name of] the Buddha Amitābha, diligently and without the smallest pause. She did not use beads for counting, so she was unaware how many tens of millions of times [she had recited the name]. In 1148, when she was 72, she became ill. She had terrible diarrhoea and could not leave her bed. Still she would persist in reciting even more earnestly. Suddenly she seemed to be without suffering anymore. At that moment she sang the following gatha: "When you have properly cultivated the road to the Western Paradise, then there are no more mountains up high and no more crevices down below [which have to be crossed]. When you go you do not need to wear shoes or socks any more. As you proceed lotus flowers will bud at every step." This she intoned continuously. People asked who had said this. She replied: "I have made it myself." "Dear old woman, when will you go?" She replied: "I will go at the *shen* hour [between 3 and 5 p.m.]." And indeed she died at that hour on the fifth day of the tenth month. She was cremated in the manner of monks and when this was completed only her tongue had not been consumed [by the fire], it was in the shape of a lotus flower (p. 18, citing *Yijianzhi* 2: 9: 262).

Ter Haar translates this tale because it illustrates several of his themes. Here, even an illiterate woman is given a monk's cremation. The proof of her divinity—and the fact that lay Buddhism was open to all, even uneducated women—was the relic of her tongue in the shape of a lotus flower.

Although not ter Haar's topic, much about Buddhist practices of lay women can be gleaned from just this one tale. The wet-nurse recited only the name of Amitābha, nothing more, but Hong Mai's comment about the beads indicates that most people would have used rosaries. Her sudden eloquence could be an instance of possession, the product of hearing her mistress's prayers, or a type of pre-death enlightenment. Her song contains some nice touches. Would a more learned Buddhist have left in the details about shoes

² *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

and socks? The ability to predict her time of death was not unique: the Buddha, enlightened monks, and Daoist practitioners all had it.

While this wet-nurse recited Amitābha's name, others would have said Guanyin's name or a spell. One of ter Haar's typically rich footnotes lists forty-nine references to recitation of spells and twelve to the recitation of Guanyin's name in *The Record* (p. 19 n. 10). The wet-nurse was in Shandong; where were the others who recited these names or spells? Clearly her social status was low, although like many wet-nurses, she seems to have been very close to the birth-mother of her charge. What was the social status of the people appearing in the other sixty-one tales? Future scholars should be able to say much about the social background of lay Buddhism simply by following up on ter Haar's extraordinarily full notes.

Ter Haar notes that Hong Mai says little about the worship of Amitābha and speculates that other types of miracles generated more testimony than cases of someone attaining the Western Paradise. He turns to other sources besides miscellaneous notes to find evidence of extensive Buddhist activity in south China. Ter Haar has combed a huge range of epigraphical sources, gazetteers, the Yongle encyclopedia, miscellaneous notes, the Collected Documents of the Song (*Song huiyao*) for Buddhist autonyms and listed them in his Appendix 1. These include, among others, the terms *daomin* 道民, *daoren* 道人, *daoyou* 道友, and *nüdao* 女道, all of which could be translated as People of the Way. Another sign of explicit Buddhist devotion was the use of a Buddhist name; rather than share a character with relatives of the same generation, one did so with those who had taken lay vows at the same time. Many of his examples are, predictably, from the lower Yangzi, but some are from Jiangxi and Fujian.

Ter Haar has mined an extraordinary range of sources to illustrate the concept of Fields of Merit (*futian* 福田), according to which lay people were thought to generate merit by giving money to monasteries, printing Buddhist texts, helping the ill, or building public works projects like bridges and roads. An archeological field report of 1983 from Jiangsu tells of two Yuan bridges built by Buddhist women, one by a man; four bridges had carved lotus flowers on them (*Wenwu* 1983. 10: 86–88). Contributing to the printing of Buddhist texts also was a field of merit, and ter Haar has culled rare examples of colophons from two Song canons to show that the donors hoped for rebirth in the land of the Western Paradise.

The lay Buddhists of the Song pursued these different activities but remained, for the most part, unorganized. On occasion they

joined together to make a contribution to a monastery or to finance the printing of a text, or even to rebuild the Daoist Temple of the Eastern Peak. Ter Haar tells of other links between lay Buddhists and Daoists. In 1170, the famous poet Lu You saw a White Lotus gathering at a Daoist monastery in Jiangxi, and in 1344 one White Lotus teacher invited a Daoist perfected man to join him.

The lay Buddhists of the Song and the Yuan were able to pursue these many activities even though they lacked a strong sense of themselves as a group distinct from others. The followers of the White Lotus movement in the Yuan seem to have had a stronger sense of group identity than other lay Buddhists of the Song and the Yuan. They tended to limit themselves to just the term Man (wouldn't Person be more appropriate since women used this title too?) of the Way (*daoren*) and the religious affiliation characters *jue* 覺 ("awareness") and *pu* 普 ("universal"), with *miao* 妙 ("wondrous") for women.

The end of the thirteenth century witnessed a boom in activities by those explicitly identifying themselves as White Lotus followers. Although the White Lotus hall with the longest continuous history had been built in 1239 in Jianyang, Fujian, a number of White Lotus cloisters were built in Fujian and Jiangxi around 1300, and some White Lotus temples are recorded in Hubei. White Lotus followers based in Jianyang joined with others in distant provinces, even Sichuan, to reprint some sections of the Buddhist canon at Yanshang Jisha monastery near Suzhou. Of the seven monks and forty-five lay people involved, most were from northwest Fujian or just across the provincial border in Chongren county in Jiangxi. Some were rich enough to pay for a chapter; others could only afford a page or two.

A letter from a White Lotus adherent proposing marriage captures the devotion of these lay people who still wanted to marry and have children:

... For long I have admired the Friends of the Society of the White Lotus. Fortunately we are both pupils of the Buddha's household and do not need to follow the mediation of a match-maker. We can settle in one word to join these two names together. Let us make love and obtain the [visualisation of the] marvelous appearance of Guanyin. Where our feet walk, they shall create the seeds of the [lotus] flower. We shall sow the good seed [for achieving] perfect wisdom (Bodhi). . . . Let us execute [the marriage] in a simple way through the congratulations of one stick of incense. I hope you can place your trust in such an alliance (p. 79, citing *Xinbian shiwen leiju qizha qingqian* 7: 17b).

This proposal poses several challenges to traditional families. The couple see themselves as members of the "Buddha's household"—

not two separate families. They do not need a matchmaker, and by implication, they do not need their parent's consent either. Still, they wanted a family and did not join a monastery or nunnery as others might have.

What happened to the lay Buddhists of the Song and the Yuan? Some of their practices continued in later centuries. Luo Qing objected to the taking of lay vows, but his disciples called themselves Person or Friend of the Way and continued to use the same naming practices and even the same characters. Yunqi Zhuhong's followers took Buddhist names and sponsored the reprinting of the Buddhist canon; they simply dropped the by-then pejorative adjective white to become the Lotus Society. In the sixteenth century, some lay Buddhists, People of the Way, were still building bridges in the lower Yangzi, and Buddhist naming practices persisted in late-nineteenth-century Hubei and Fujian.

The second half of ter Haar's book explains why White Lotus was an inaccurate label and how little its detractors knew of the religious practices they fulminated against. In discussing the common White Lotus stereotypes, which were wide of the mark, ter Haar is still able to offer a tantalizing glimpse of the religious beliefs of the day. One of the most interesting themes is that of the recurrent belief in magicians who could bring a piece of paper, a block of wood, or a strand of hair to life and use their creations to attack others. A woman named Tang Saier 唐賽兒 who lived in Shandong in 1420 was credited with this ability; so were two travellers in Jiangsu in 1876, and so were some of the Boxers' victims in Beijing. Ter Haar analyzes why these people were given the label White Lotus, and at the same time he sheds light on practices that few scholars have studied, with the exception of Philip Kuhn's recent book.³

Ter Haar concludes his discussion of the term White Lotus with a caution worth citing in full:

Yet, in all our discussions of the name White Lotus Teachings, it is important to realize the name was never used as a label with any great consistency, and was often simply not used at all in situations where one would have expected it to be used (as for instance in most 18th century inquisition reports). The systematic use of the name in analysis is very much the result of modern scholarship, which, faced with the prominence of this name and its frequent appearance in the sources of the late Ming and the nineteenth century, has overemphasized its importance and misunderstood its meaning" (p. 287).

³ *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

Given the power of ter Haar's monograph, no scholar should ever again use the term White Lotus to describe any religious phenomenon after 1600. I hope, too, that ter Haar's larger argument will be remembered. Autonyms reveal much about their users. Labels, in contrast, reveal much more about the prejudices of those doing the labelling than they do about the practices of those who are labelled.

This book should prompt a reconsideration of other types of labels as well. Why would officials of all periods use a term like *yinci* 淫祠 (unauthorized cults) to describe a local temple? Was it simply a quick way to draft an easy memorial? And how could a term like Learning of the Way (*daoxue* 道學) shift from being an autonym to a term of opprobrium in just one generation? Of course, labelling was not limited to pre-modern China. What are we to make of the labels so characteristic of political campaigns since 1949? Is "rightist" the modern equivalent of White Lotus? Ter Haar's study raises these and a host of other equally important questions, all demanding further research.

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Pierre-Étienne WILL and R. Bin WONG, with James LEE, *Nourish the People: the State Civilian Granary System in China, 1650-1850*, Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies n° 60, The University of Michigan, Center for Chinese Studies Publications, Ann Arbor, 1991, xxiv + 608 pp., 7

Issu d'un projet de recherche collective, ce livre rédigé en fin de compte par trois collaborateurs a exigé plus de six ans de travaux et de réflexion. C'est sans doute un des premiers essais d'exploitation systématique des archives, recueils officiels et monographies locales de l'époque mandchoue afin d'éclaircir un aspect particulier mais des plus importants de la gestion administrative de l'empire des Qing: le rôle de l'État en Chine dans le maintien en vie de la population ou, plus précisément, le fonctionnement des greniers régulateurs et de prévoyance au cours de deux siècles d'histoire, et cela dans l'ensemble des provinces chinoises. À cause de la richesse même de l'information et de la multiplicité des points de vue, l'ouvrage est particulièrement touffu. Bien souvent même—mais c'est la rançon de la précision apportée à l'analyse—la lecture est quelque peu fastidieuse. Une difficulté supplémentaire venait de la