more fundamental questions about whether or not NGOs were undermining or supporting the state (or a particular political party). Debates around what kind of political strategy was most effective or appropriate were also evident, and in some cases became central to NGOs' reputational management strategies.

In the PTs, Hamas and Fatah have divergent visions of a legitimate political settlement and the most desirable road to peace. Because domestic political actors fundamentally disagree about the form that any eventual solution to the conflict should take, NGOs can be criticised by some for working to normalise relations with Israel by working with Israeli organizations, receiving funding from certain Western donors or working closely with the PNA (Brown 2003, Youngs and Michou 2011). At the same time, they can also be criticised by others (particularly liberal international actors) for adopting a very different stance – refusing to work with Israeli organizations, or opposing the peace process (Youngs and Michou 2011). As the Peace NGO Forum, an organization that facilitates cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli NGOs, stated in a recent FRIDE report, in the PTs, 'everything is politics' (Youngs and Michou 2011). Unlike the other two contexts examined here, NGOs in the PTs are expected to 'assert and advance' Palestinian sovereignty (Songco et al. 2006). In this context, peace-building activities were often interpreted as 'normalisation' or an attempt to reinforce the status quo. As Gawerc (2012, 91) has noted, 'for Palestinians to maintain legitimacy in their society, the political needed to be stressed and clear'. The dual expectation that NGOs should both support the government in providing services *and* resist the occupation is a key source of tension (Songco et al. 2006).

In Sri Lanka, tensions existed between on the one hand a more populist/ nationalist vision of Sri Lankan politics espoused by nationalist groups (and after 2005, the ruling SLFP party) and on the other, a more liberal cosmopolitan vision promoted by the architects and supporters of the peace process – Western donors and the United National Party. Liberal actors conferred legitimacy on NGOs on the basis of their capacity to support reform of existing systems of governance, while nationalists deemed NGOs legitimate only insofar as they were able to contribute to a state-led process of political change and did not undermine cultural norms (Walton 2012). Although the divisions between these two visions remained dormant through the early years of the ceasefire period (between 2002 to 2005), they became more intense in the competitive environment that emerged after 2005, and NGOs' capacity to influence social and political processes became double-edged: 'it boosted legitimacy in the eyes of liberal peacebuilders, whilst de-legitimating them in the eyes of nationalists' (Walton 2012, 31).

These cases suggest that NGO legitimacy was most challenged during periods of transition, when new groups were establishing themselves and the boundaries of legitimate political action shifted. These transitional moments that occurred between periods of peace and war, or during and after and change in government, created uncertainties around issues of political authority and influence. This either led to NGOs being perceived as a greater threat (as in Nepal and the PTs), or created new configurations of political power, which provided space for critical groups to generate political capital out of attacking them (as in Sri Lanka).

In response to these tensions, NGOs sought to bolster their positions by adapting their political strategies and policing the accepted boundaries of NGO political action. Conflicting visions of NGOs' legitimate role in politics were highlighted by disputes within the NGO sector and broader civil society about what constituted legitimate or effective forms of political action.

In Nepal, Heaton Shrestha highlights tensions between NGOs and the broadly based movement, the Citizen's Movement for Democracy and Peace (CMDP), formed in 2005, and the NGO sector. The CMDP rejected the NGO sector on the grounds that these organizations were highly factional and motivated by a desire to promote their group's interests for 'personal and institutional benefit, rather than that of the "voiceless group itself"' (Heaton Shrestha 2010). The CMDP deliberately sought to distance itself from the political realm, attempting to maintain a counter-political realm by setting limits on the extent to which NGOs could engage with the movement (Heaton Shrestha and Adikari 2010).[4] This counter-political approach responded to the fact that national political parties had used NGOs as a means of rewarding supporters or bolstering grassroots mobilisation (Miklian et al. 2011).

Disputes within civil society and between NGOs can also be observed in the PTs. Franks (2009), for example, interviews NGO representatives who argue that some peace-building NGOs are undermining the grassroots peace process. A number of internal divisions also existed amongst NGOs who worked closely with the PNA, and those who chose not to (Hanafi and Tabar 2003). NGOs also pursued a range of strategies in response to changing political conditions. Gawerc (2012, 80), for example, describes how a number of peace-building NGOs 'managed the normalisation taboo' by reducing their cross-border peace-building initiatives and focusing instead on uninational community service initiatives.

In Sri Lanka, NGOs pursued a variety of strategies to negotiate the contested political terrain that confronted them after 2005. One of the most prominent and well-known organizations in the country – the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement – pursued a counter-political model of change that rejected the norms of the party political arena and drew on Gandhian and Buddhist concepts. Another large national NGO – the Foundation for Co-Existence – responded to attacks from nationalists by emphasising the technical aspects of its peace-building work. In both cases, these organizations' irresolute engagement with politics generated tensions with their key audiences (domestic political actors on the one hand and international donors on the other). While these organizations were able to make their political approaches more palatable to one or other side, their strategies failed to satisfy all audiences (Walton 2012). Both organizations were criticised by other NGOs for adopting approaches that were seen as apolitical or ineffective (Walton 2012).

Another important feature of the three contexts was that struggles for NGO legitimacy were intimately tied up with other domestic actors' own efforts to establish or consolidate their legitimacy in a divided and contested political context. In some cases, processes of NGO legitimation and de-legitimation were instrumentalised – discrediting or promoting NGOs was used as a strategy for

other actors to boost their own legitimacy. Rebel groups used NGOs as a means of boosting their credibility. In Sri Lanka, during the peace process, the LTTE used engagement with NGOs as a tool for consolidating its own credibility. During the ceasefire period, the LTTE used its relief wing, the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), as a means of bolstering its humanitarian credentials to the outside world (Walton 2008). In Nepal, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) had stridently opposed NGOs but began to adopt a more conciliatory approach towards the sector as they worked closely with the civil society groups that led the Democracy Movement (Shah 2008). This collaboration was arguably critical in restoring the Maoists' legitimacy internationally (Shah 2008, 47).

Opponents of NGOs in Sri Lanka used critiques as a means of promoting their own political visions for a more morally informed society or highlighting the threat posed by international actors to Sri Lankan sovereignty (Walton 2008). In the PTs, the PA government sought to delegitimise the NGO sector during various critical moments. As Hammami (2000) has described, these moments followed efforts by donors to provide significant funds directly to the sector – for example, after the World Bank established a $15 million NGO fund in 1995, and after the UN provided $20 million to human rights NGOs in 1999. Palestinian NGOs were also used by donors as a means of legitimating their own strategies of engagement in the region. There was a tendency to use the provision of funds to NGOs as a means of being seen to be 'doing something' in Gaza, without engaging with Hamas or addressing more fundamental political questions (Youngs and Michou 2011, 16).

Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted a number of important and unusual features associated with NGO legitimation processes in conflict-affected and transitional contexts. First, in these contexts, the credibility of NGO sectors has been damaged by a growth in foreign funding and NGOs' increasingly close links to international funders. In each of the three cases examined here, these links have increased internal competition amongst NGOs, and driven a process of professionalization and depoliticisation. Although this trend can also be observed in peaceful contexts, what is unusual about the contexts examined here is the way in which growing concerns about NGOs' motivations and political objectives have become closely bound up with broader concerns about international efforts to build peace. In the conflict-affected environments analysed here, a growth in NGO funding has fuelled accusations that NGOs are being used by foreign donors to pursue their political agendas or that they are posing a threat to state sovereignty. The fact that NGOs became closely associated with wider international support for a peace process or a wider peace-building strategy was damaging in all of these three contexts. This damage was related to the questionable efficacy and legitimacy of liberal peace-building interventions themselves.

Second, NGOs' growing involvement in liberal peace-building and state-building interventions in these contexts involved transgression of political, institutional and territorial boundaries. These interventions also blurred the

boundaries between previously distinct categories of NGOs' work. By blurring distinctions between NGOs, international donors and the state, these modes of engagement exacerbated existing tensions surrounding NGOs' identities and damaged their legitimacy.

Third, the chapter has described how, in these contexts, NGO legitimacy is heavily politicised. NGO legitimation and de-legitimation was intimately linked to the state and other domestic political actors' own struggles for legitimacy, which made them more liable to fluctuate during political transitions and be instrumentalised by a variety of political actors. NGOs in all contexts employed various tactics and strategies to alleviate tensions posed by changes in the political environment to varying degrees of success.

Existing accounts of NGO legitimacy rarely acknowledge these critical dimensions of NGO legitimacy in conflict-affected and transitional contexts. Most research and commentary has placed issues relating to NGOs' accountability, representativeness and performance and the heart of attempts to understand legitimation processes. While the tensions surrounding NGOs in the contexts examined in this chapter shows that issues of accountability and representativeness are not irrelevant in conflict-affected regions, the analysis has demonstrated that these processes of legitimation are primarily driven by their association with international actors and their peace-building strategies on the one hand, and by the legitimation strategies of domestic political actors on the other.

In conflict-affected environments, NGO legitimacy is better understood as a highly contested and politically symbolic set of properties closely shaped by changes in the broader political climate. The political incentives associated with legitimising or delegitimising NGOs are often more important than NGOs' own performance. The cases have also demonstrated that legitimacy is a highly contextual phenomenon. NGO legitimacy should not be viewed as related to characteristics that are generalizable across countries, but rather is best understood in relation to the particular power relations and the social, cultural and political discourses that exist in any given national arena. In the contexts examined here these power relations fluctuated significantly as new groups came to power and new political settlements were established. These periods of transition tended to be particularly challenging for NGOs, who often faced more direct opposition from ascendant political groups, and had to adapt their political strategies to function effectively in the new political environment.

Notes

1. By comparison, the figure for Sri Lanka during the same period was only 3 per cent (Bhattarai 2007), whereas the figure for the PTs was 14 per cent in 2009. One recent study of Nepal estimates that international aid constitutes over a quarter of the annual state budget (Miklian et al. 2011).
2. I am grateful to Celayne Heaton Shresthra for these points.
3. I use the term 'liberal peace-building' to refer to the dominant approach to peace-building pursued by inter-governmental, multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors since the end of the Cold War. The model that emerged in the 1990s combined a more aggressive

pursuit of long-standing international policy goals of economic and political liberalisation, with a commitment to reaching an internationally backed peace settlement and by managing local level conflicts through a range of measures designed to improve the security of local populations.

4. The term 'counter-political' is taken from Jonathan Spencer (2007) and is used to refer to 'the performative construction of a realm the logic of which is meant to contrast with that which guides politics' (Heaton Shrestha and Adikari 2010, 299).

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5 The salvation of religion?

Public charity and new religions of the early Chinese Republic

Thomas DuBois

Introduction

Founded in 1921, Daoyuan combined a growing interest in spiritualism with the emerging civic Confucianism of the postimperial era. In response to the lack of effective government services, Daoyuan formed the World Red Swastika charitable society the following year. The World Red Swastika Society enjoyed the political support of many well-connected individuals, and soon began organizing relief activities on a large scale, but would soon come to conflict with the newly founded Nanjing government. At the same time, elements within the group were moving increasingly close to Japan, forming an ideological alliance with a new Japanese religion called the Teaching of the Great Source, and eventually a breakaway organization under the Japanese client state of Manchukuo. Like Nanjing, the government of Manchukuo remained wary of offering institutional support, and began laying the foundation for its own charitable sector under direct state control. Rather than new sociological phenomena, this chapter views organizations such as the Daoyuan-Red Swastika Society as a response to a particular set of political and social conditions.

In 2000, the venerable scholar of Chinese sectarian religion, Li Shiyu 李世瑜, published a review of Lu Yao's 路遙 Secret and Folk Religion in Shandong (*Shandong minjian mimi jiaomen* 民間秘密教門). The review was generally positive, expressing praise for Lu Yao's decades of pathbreaking fieldwork on the religious origins of the Boxer (*yihetuan* 義和團) movement. But Li did disagree with his colleague on one important point: Why was the World Red Swastika Society (*shijie hong wanzi hui* 世界紅卍字會), a religious charity that was founded and prospered in early twentieth century Shandong, not included in the book? The answer was simply that Lu did not consider the group to have been a religion.[1]

This mild dispute over terminology is not the first of its type, and hints at deeper questions surrounding the transformation of religion during the early years of the Chinese Republic (1912–1949). Li Shiyu suggests the new lay movements of the twentieth century, such as the Red Swastika Society, were a continuation of the older tradition of banned religious teachings known collectively as the White Lotus. Many of the movement's early critics went a step further, characterizing the Red Swastika Society (as well as such contemporaries as the

Goodness and Unity Society, *tongshanshe* 同善社, and the Enlightened Goodness Society, *wushanshe* 悟善社) as neither religion nor charity, but as a part of a longer tradition of religious-inspired underground organizations known broadly as "secret societies" (*mimi jieshe* 祕密結社).[2]

In a recent article, sociologist David Palmer continued this same line of questioning, asking whether the wave of early twentieth century religious movements represented a continuation of a longer historical evolution, or whether these movements were sufficiently unique as to necessitate a new sociological category.[3] As a historian, I strongly favor the former. The inability of previous scholars to definitively identify the Red Swastika Society (RSS) as a religion, charity, secret society, or otherwise, does suggest that the categories themselves are not up to the task, but I would argue that referring to them by a new name does not necessarily add much to our understanding. Even if we do take sociological categories to heart, it is difficult to separate the groups themselves from very specific sets of historical circumstances under which they arose and evolved. This chapter will outline the most important of these changes: the new wave of lay spiritualism, the revival of postimperial Confucianism in a civic idiom, the rising tide of militarism, and the shifting interpenetration of the state and public sphere. Other influences came from the outside. Foreign missionaries inspired Chinese charities to expand and deepen their activities, while the growing influence of Japan in Manchuria added a sense of urgency, and eventually a rival model of state sponsorship. The stresses and opportunities of these years were in many ways prophetic: much of what would come to characterize Chinese religious charities during the later twentieth century was forged in the very particular historical circumstances of the 1930s and 1940s.

New religions in a new era

Although the early Republic is often characterized as a time of secularist iconoclasm, captured in the anti-religious themes of the May Fourth Movement, these same years also saw a burst of religious enthusiasm: the reformation of Buddhism, numerous Christian revivals, and an explosion of interest in what was generally called "spiritualism" (*lingxue* 靈學). Many reasons underlie this trend, but the most immediate change after 1911 was political: in its provisional code, the new Republic promised freedoms of religion and association. This stance reversed (at least on paper) a policy dating back to the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) of criminalizing and persecuting the collection of lay religious teachings officially characterized as White Lotus teachings (*bailian jiao* 白蓮教), or more simply, as heresy (*xiejiao* 邪教).[4] Despite their illegality, these teachings were deeply entrenched at all levels of Chinese society, and their number had proliferated over the course of the nineteenth century.[5] Of course, their new status did not erase centuries of hostility overnight. Soon after seizing power in 1912, Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 initiated the military suppression of a variety of "old style" religious teachings (such as the Way of Yellow Heaven, *huangtian dao* 黃天道, and the Golden Elixir Teaching, *jindan jiao* 金丹教, among others) in the Northeast.[6]

Those teachings that did prosper often relied less upon the strict application of law than the personal patronage of the military cliques that dominated the Beiyang government. Often it was the application of official pressure that forced groups to react and organize more actively – such would be the case with the Buddhist revival of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the new regime provided a unique opportunity for this vibrant lay tradition to expand as never before.

In response, a variety of religious teachings began striving for public prominence. Existing teachings such as Zailijiao 在理教 had entered the Republic firmly established in major cities throughout China, and now began to organize on a more ambitious scale. From its base in Tianjin, Zailijiao began disseminating new scriptures, and went on to establish a new national headquarters in Beijing.[7] The Way of Penetrating Unity (*yiguandao* 一貫道), which had evolved out of a number of smaller teachings during the later decades of the Qing (1644–1911), began a period of rapid expansion during the 1920s.[8] Numerous new teachings and organizations were founded throughout the country, and in rapid succession. Like the Yiguandao, many of these new groups were based on spirit writing (*fuji* 扶乩). Such was the origin of the Morality Teaching (*dejiao* 道教), which was founded by spirit writing adherents in Guangdong, and of the Morality Study Society (*daode xue she* 道德學社), which grew out of spirit writing associations in Sichuan.[9] The new teachings immediately set about establishing a public presence. Duan Zhengyuan 段正元 formed the Morality Study Society in 1912, and just four years later was invited by senior military leaders to establish its national headquarters in Beijing. The Tongshanshe, also from Sichuan, was formed at roughly the same time, and registered as a national organization in 1917. Further north, Ma Shiwei 馬士偉 established the "Single Heart Hall" (*yixin tang* 一心堂) in 1913 near Zouping 鄒平 in Shandong, and from there, began to spread his "Holy Teaching of the Single Heart Longhua Heavenly Way"一心天道龍華聖教會.[10] Befitting their aspirations to respectability, many of these new teachings drew from among the political and commercial elite, who saw in them a forum for moral and civic activism.[11]

Daoyuan 道院 was typical of these new lay movements, and would become one of the most successful. The origins of Daoyuan date to around 1916, when two officials in northeastern Shandong – magistrate Wu Fusen 吳福森 and Garrison Captain Liu Shaoji 劉紹基 – began holding spirit writing sessions in the yamen of rural Bin County 濱縣. Joined by a couple dozen local notables and mid-grade functionaries, Wu and Liu met in what they termed the called the Hall of the Great Immortal (*da xian ci* 大仙祠) to ask a variety of Buddhas, immortals, and sages for sacred counsel (*tan xun* 壇訓, literally the "counsel of the altar") through the medium of the planchette.[12] Among the many deities that this group consulted, the most important was a unique figure called the Grand Immortal or Grand Perfected (*shang xian* 尚仙, *shang zhen ren* 尚真人). Over time, this deity revealed more of his identity, including some of the names by which he would later be known: the Ancestor of Former Heaven (*xiantian laozu* 先天老祖), and more commonly, the Great Progenitor (*laozu* 老祖). The Great Progenitor presided over the Five Teachers (Confucius, Laozi, the Buddha, Jesus, and

Muhammad), as well as a host of lesser deities. This "five-in-one" theology would form the basis of Daoyuan religious life, and its multitude of deities would allow numerous voices to express themselves directly to believers.

By the early 1920s, the loose association of spirit-writing adherents in Bin had coalesced into a distinct teaching. In 1921, a group of 48 disciples, led by 68-year-old Jiangsu native Du Bingyin (杜秉寅), relocated to permanent premises in the provincial capital of Ji'nan, where on February 9 they established the first Daoyuan.[13] Soon after its founding, the new Daoyuan began receiving writings of a more substantial nature: installments of a scripture. Over the next three months, the Great Progenitor, now known by his more complete title of the Original Singular Three Primordial Progenitor of the Dark and Mysterious Palace (*Qingxuan gong yixuan zhenzong sanyuan shiji taiyi laozu* 青玄宮一玄真宗三元始紀太乙老祖, or simply the Singular Progenitor, *Taiyi laozu* 太乙老祖, for short) revealed a text known as the *Scripture of the Polar Singularity* (*Taiyi beiji zhenjing* 太乙北極真經). The text itself is of rather esoteric interest. Most of its 12 short sections (*juan* 卷) are taken up in matters of metaphysical speculation, such as the formation of the universe from primordial qi (written with the characteristic character 炁), the division of time, the creation of the *taiji* 太極, and Former and Latter Heaven. Each section follows roughly the same pattern, contrasting how important concepts are generally understood (*yanyi zhi* 言意旨) with their true meaning (*zhen quan* 真詮).[14]

Yet even if its specific content was likely to have been of limited interest to most believers, the revelation of the *Scripture of the Polar Singularity* marked the transformation of Daoyuan from a collection of like-minded devotees into a concrete religious movement. With a permanent center and its revealed scripture, the newly formed Daoyuan began to spread through north China. Late in 1921 it registered with the Beiyang government, and within just over a year, well-traveled leaders from the "mother" Daoyuan (*mutan* 母壇) in Ji'nan had founded three new branches in Tianjin, Beijing, and Jining. As its base expanded to include members of the commercial classes (merchants would eventually comprise 63 percent of the Ji'nan Daoyuan), the growing core of members had no trouble coming up with funds for ambitious mission activity locally, as well as to more distant cities to the south. Daoyuan continued to multiply throughout the 1920s, and by the end of the decade appeared in nearly every province in China. The movement remained centered in the North: Ji'nan would remain its spiritual heart, joined by an administrative center (*zong yuan* 總院) in Beijing. Through the decade, the largest number of Daoyuan were in Shandong and the immediately adjacent provinces of Zhili, Jiangsu, and Anhui.[15]

The quickly growing network was only loosely structured. Individual Daoyuan were largely autonomous, and ritual life largely a matter of personal preference. The basic ritual calendar was based on the Five Religions, combining the major occasions of the three religions with the observance of Christmas, as well as an unnamed holiday to represent Islam.[16] The inside of a typical Daoyuan housed a variety of deities, each signified by a decorous spirit tablet in place of a statue. A special effort was made to establish visual and ritual parity among the founders of the five

religions: ritual protocol for most occasions called for an identical offering at each of the five tablets, with the obvious exceptions of not offering meat to the Buddha or pork to Muhammad. Special consideration was made for the Five Teachers' birthdays, each of which was marked by the recitation of an appropriate scripture.[17] However, this ritual regimen was less doctrine than a platform upon which each Daoyuan, as well as individual believers, were free to expand. Some of the largest Daoyuan may have maintained the rigorous ritual calendar later recorded by Japanese investigators in places like Beijing, but most probably resembled the 30-member Daoyuan in Panshi 磐石, Jilin, which simply made daily offerings of incense and candles for each of their deities.[18] The teaching made few demands of its ordinary members – the only specific mention of practice in *Polar Singularity* is advice for how and when to meditate. Quite the opposite, its inclusive nature allowed individual members to pursue their personal beliefs, practices, and needs through Daoyuan.[19]

The one ritual activity that nearly all Daoyuan did engage in was spirit writing. Even after the revelation of *Polar Singularity*, individual Daoyuan each continued to produce their own writings, with content ranging from general statements of philosophy and doctrine to very specific advice. The Great Progenitor remained the most consistent voice, but he was joined by the Five Teachers, as well as famous historical figures such as the monk Huineng 慧能, poet Su Dongpo 蘇東坡, generals Yue Fei 岳飛 and Guandi 關帝, and the Virgin Mary, among many others. Deities spoke about topics that interested them: Laozi would most likely discourse on the Dao, Confucius on filial piety, and Jesus on universal love, as well as the particular place of Christians in China.[20] They also revealed individual personalities. When worshippers in Ji'nan asked one deity about his background, he revealed wounded pride at not having been recognized more quickly:

> Ha ha! You ask about my history? I lived in ancient times, and like the Old Man of the Southern Seas, I studied with the Heavenly Matron. Then I spent 2,600 years refining myself in Kongdong Mountain 崆峒山. Your so-called 'Eight Immortals,' they're all my disciples![21]

Spirit writing also gave specific guidance, such as the instruction to move from Bin to Ji'nan. Over the next two decades, individual Daoyuan would make many of its most important strategic decisions based on instructions delivered through this same medium. However, because there was no real attempt to coordinate or rectify locally produced revelations against each other, the practice of spirit writing did little to draw the teaching together, and had the potential to do just the opposite.[22]

Early publications reveal the intellectual diversity of the movement. Many branches produced their own newspapers, including Morality Magazine (*daode zazhi* 道德雜誌), Morality Monthly (*daode yuekan* 道德月刊), and Swastika Daily News (*wan zi ri ri xinwen* 卍字日日新聞), among others, that explored topics in theology and social philosophy. Like the religious thought of the Daoyuan, these publications are all highly syncretic. The magazine *Philosophy*

(*zhe bao* 哲報) illustrates the breadth of beliefs and ideas that found their way into the group's intellectual cauldron.[23] Beginning with the cover, which combined titles in Chinese, English, and Arabic, each issue began with a standard statement declaring the publication open to any discussion of religion, philosophy, spiritualism (*ling xue* 靈學), morality, charity, or items of a similar nature. Articles cover a wide variety of topics: the nature of forgiveness in the Christian New Testament, a comparison of Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist approaches to meditation, and pronunciation guides for reciting Buddhist sutras, as well as expositions on metaphysics, Confucian morality lectures, Buddhist sermons, and biographies of famous monks. Although there are occasionally items of specific Daoyuan interest, such as excerpts of spirit written texts, the thrust of *Philosophy* is less synthesis than breadth. As viewed in its own publications, Daoyuan was not a single intellectual agenda, as much as an umbrella for a wide variety of ideas and individuals.

Thus, although we may classify Daoyuan as a "new religion," it was not especially innovative. Most of its ideas and practices were already prevalent throughout China. Its formulation of Five Religions under the Singular Progenitor was just one of many variations on the basic "three-in-one" or "five-in-one" formulation that sectarian teachings and popular theology more generally had already embraced for centuries. Spirit writing, the practice that lay at the formation of the group, was commonplace in popular practice, and also featured prominently in many of its contemporaries.[24] And even though publications like *Philosophy* provided an arena for members to explore an eclectic mix of ideas, they never aspired to present anything like a coherent doctrine. It would not be too much of an exaggeration that during these earliest years, movements such as Daoyuan were primarily a reflection of opportunity. The deregulation of religion provided a legally and socially acceptable forum for new movements to expand, even as aspects of their theology and identity remained somewhat inchoate.

Confucian revival and the turn to charity

While the founding of the Republic had opened the door for religious expression, it also prompted a radical reassessment of Confucianism. Over the previous centuries, particularly with the legal reforms of the early Ming dynasty, the ideas and institutions of Confucianism had become inextricably intertwined with the legitimacy of the imperial state.[25] The tie between the two was such that as the Qing fell into decline, it became possible to imagine that this central pillar of Chinese culture might be pulled down along with it. However, once the shock of political change had subsided, many intellectuals of the early Republic came to see things quite differently: the fall of the moribund imperial system had not condemned Confucius' teachings, it had liberated them. Seeing new opportunities on the horizon, a spectrum of elites bridging the old and new regimes now sought to revive Confucianism for a new age. Most of the new religious movements of the period would revolve in some way or another around the restoration or preservation of Confucian morality.[26]

The Confucian resurgence of the early twentieth century was not simply reaction – the death throes of an obsolete political class – it was a forward-looking vision of moral rebirth for China and the entire world. It created opportunities for displaced scholarly elites to reclaim the moral high ground, to join and even lead the forces of political change. Instead of retreating to tradition, they would make Confucian ethics the center of a new universal civilization that would transcend the boundaries of nations and of religious faiths.[27] Such ideas made their way into new religions such as Daoyuan, but also into a variety of new societies that were more strictly oriented toward ethics and morality. Among the earliest of these, the Confucian Society (*Kongjiao hui* 孔教会) was founded in August of 1913, just over one year after the fall of the Qing. The society did not envision Confucianism replacing the world's religions, as much as transcending and uniting them. At the society's founding ceremony in Confucius's own hometown of Qufu 曲阜, the child prodigy Jiang Xizhang 江希張 spoke eloquently of the "way of Confucius," calling Confucius's teaching "the very idea of world unification," and adding that "there is nothing that it does not penetrate, it accepts all teachings, and it has the power to accept the cultures of the world." When pressed further, he replied with a four-line poem:

> Trains and steamship connect the five continents,
> Heaven instructs me to visit them all.
> Christianity, Islam, Daoism and Buddhism each opened a door,
> But the rain of Lu and the wind of Zou sweep the globe.
> 鐵路輪船遍五洲, 天教小子再周遊.
> 基回道佛同開化, 魯雨鄒風滿地球.

Jiang's spontaneous poem was apparently not well received, but its ideas were indeed prescient: just as the speaker could now travel the four corners of the world, so too should Confucian teachings (Lu and Zou being the birthplaces of Confucius and his disciple Mencius, respectively) nourish and unite the world's religions. In its optimistic view of worldwide unity, the Confucian revival was by no means unique. The early twentieth century was charged with this sense of immanent global transformation: just a few years before, the American missionary John Mott had urged his fellow Christians to evangelize the entire world "in this generation."[28] The names of Chinese moral organizations from the time all reveal similarly grand aspirations: the Global Ethical Society (*huanqiu daode hui* 環球道德會), World Religious Unification Society (*shijie zongjiao datong hui* 世界宗教大同會), and Jiang's own International Ethical Society (*wanguo daode hui* 萬國道德會).[29]

Beyond talk, a series of new opportunities propelled Confucian revival into an expanding public sphere. Distressed elites had been bewailing China's moral decline with increasing urgency since the mid-nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century, the idiom of moral regeneration (literally the "moral rescue of the world" *daode jiushi* 道德救世) transcended ideological factions, and pervaded

every corner of political discourse.[30] As the Republic opened up new avenues for private initiative, the emphasis shifted toward the need for citizens to take action to alleviate ignorance and suffering within society. The result would be a vast expansion of social reform movements, moral societies, and private charities.

Charities were nothing new in China. Providing charitable relief had long been an expression of Confucian benevolence, and increasingly since the late Ming dynasty, local officials, gentry, and merchants had taken it upon themselves to support "Halls of Benevolence" (*shantang* 善堂) to care for orphans and widows, distribute food, and provide decent burials for the indigent dead. As Fuma Susumu has discussed in detail, such initiatives bridged any notional gap between public and private: they supplemented the official relief structure, and often worked with government support, even as their activities and finances were closely monitored. The charitable realm began to expand during the late nineteenth century, as the rapid deterioration of public security following the Taiping Rebellion left the population increasingly vulnerable to a variety of crises. Even then, charity remained often a piecemeal effort. Concerned elites might band together to provide emergency relief during a local disaster, but such arrangements were often temporary. Even the more established *shantang* tended to operate individually, serving local needs, and often relying on the largesse of a single patron.[31] It was only during the 1870s that the charitable realm began a more substantive consolidation. The construction of telegraph lines out of Shanghai facilitated communication between scattered shantang, allowing them to coordinate relief activities. All along the coast, and increasingly in the interior, Christian missionaries established schools, hospitals, and orphanages, inspiring local shantang to conduct their own operations on a more ambitious scale. Often it was a moment of immediate crisis that transformed good intentions into actual institutions: when bubonic plague struck the city of Guangzhou in 1894, "private charities mushroomed all over the city."[32] But beyond the sad litany of disasters – floods, droughts, famine and female infanticide – it was the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, each fought at great price to Chinese civilians, that prompted the formation of the first large-scale charities, such as the Red Cross of China, founded in 1904.[33]

Even more than the new religious movements, private charities were poised to expand during the Republican period. If anything, war and disaster increased in severity, just as the Great War in Europe began diverting vital foreign funds and personnel away from the mission institutions. As was the case with religion, the charitable sphere benefitted from a period of initial deregulation (even though new regulations would be imposed later), and in the burgeoning world of print media and public opinion, charitable initiatives were more visible and their social capital greater than ever before.[34] I would argue that the growth of the charitable sphere outpaced even that of religion, and moreover changed the direction that the new religions themselves would take. Although many of the traditional sectarian religions had devoted resources for public acts of benevolence, the new era changed charity from sideline to central focus. Recent work by Komukai Sakurako 小武海櫻子 shows the Tongshanshe undergoing precisely this transition, changing into what she refers to as a "religious-style charitable society" (宗教性的慈善會).[35]

The same process shaped Daoyuan, which over the 1920s was gradually eclipsed by the charitable work of the Red Swastika Society. From the outset, Daoyuan had set its sights on performing good works – the 1921 charter declared as the aims of the movement to "raise morality and practice charity." Social activism fit easily into Daoyuan's vision of world transformation. As much as it was in political discourse, the single idiom of "world salvation" (*jiu shi* 救世) was infinitely expansive. In a theological sense, it was raised as the single goal of the Five Religions, as in the following article from *Philosophy*:

> All religions that people believe in today are at their root all the same holy faith. The way at their core is to work to realize the task of world salvation. . . . People's hearts are corrupt, how should we save them? The way of the world is in decline, how should we save it? The teaching of Confucius says to first correct men's hearts. The teaching of Jesus says to spread universal love. The teachings of the Buddha and Laozi say to save yourself and to save all men, rescue them from pain and difficulty. The religion of the Muslims says to maintain purity.[36]

In the same way, the practice of charity was not merely another route to this same goal, it was the one thing that each of the Five Religions shared, the essence of each of their teachings.

With its growing network of faithful, and the backing of such well-placed figures as Xu Shiguang 徐世光, younger brother of President Xu Shichang 徐世昌, Daoyuan was poised to make its mark on the rapidly growing charitable sphere, but it soon became clear that good intentions alone were far from enough. In 1921, the same year that Daoyuan was founded, the Yellow River broke its banks, flooding dozens of villages over hundreds of *li* in northeastern Shandong. Flooding in these dusty lowlands is particularly devastating, because it destroys agriculture and washes away earthen houses, sending waves of refugees into neighboring cities. Leaders of the newly formed Daoyuan soon found themselves faced with a massive human tragedy taking shape on their doorstep. Volunteers did what they could, gathering 120,000 *yuan* in donations, sufficient to buy food, clothing, and basic possessions such as pots and pans for over 40,000, but they had been caught unprepared.[37]

This traumatic event, which took place so soon after Daoyuan's formation, was undoubtedly instrumental in prompting the group to form the RSS as a dedicated charitable organization.[38] Soon after the Ji'nan Daoyuan began sending out missionaries, the Great Progenitor sent instructions to form a branch organization devoted solely to public welfare. This new organization was formally inaugurated on October 28, 1922 to "provide disaster relief and advance world peace," and would be a part of Daoyuan, yet separate from it.[39] In emulation of the International Red Cross, founders chose a Buddhist swastika as the symbol and name of the new society. Although the two organizations would remain technically distinct, the World Red Swastika Society quickly became the public face of Daoyuan, and the outlet for its many social, intellectual, and charitable initiatives.

The next year, when a similar flood devastated twelve counties along the banks of the Grand Canal in southern Zhili, it was the newly formed RSS of Tianjin that responded, sending teams out to assess damage, and raising 120,000 *yuan* to provide material assistance for 50,000 of those affected.[40]

From these beginnings, the Red Swastika Society quickly developed a sophisticated relief infrastructure, and was soon organizing relief activities on a monumental scale. Certainly there was more than enough work to be done: incessant war and natural calamity throughout China left cities and countryside alike to care for their own destitute as well as waves of refugees.[41] The work of the RSS during the 1920s quickly dwarfed the piecemeal charitable efforts of earlier decades. Only two years after its founding, the RSS coordinated a response to flooding in Zhili, Hunan, Hubei, Fujian, and Jiangxi provinces that raised over 100,000 *yuan* to provide blankets, food, and medicine for over 120,000 people. Victims of war were treated on a similar scale. In 1924 alone, RSS branches in Jiangnan provided relief to 18,500 war refugees, a number that would grow to nearly 116,000 after the initiation of the Northern Expedition in 1925. By the mid-1930s, the largest coordinated relief efforts would reach well over a million people.

The relief efforts of the RSS grew not only larger, but also more specialized. In addition to raising money for food and clothing, the RSS also began organizing dedicated teams of volunteers who could provide specialized assistance to disaster victims. As widespread warfare engulfed much of China during the mid-1920s, the RSS established triage hospitals for sick and wounded soldiers, shelters for women and children, and soup kitchens for refugees who poured into the unprepared cities. In Beijing alone, two RSS soup kitchens served well over a million free meals each. One of the most characteristic RSS activities was to organize teams of volunteers to bury the thousands of corpses that would otherwise rot on the battlefield or in the deserted homes of famine stricken villages. (See Appendix 5: Major RSS relief efforts, 1921–1931.)

Along with these large-scale coordinated efforts, individual RSS branches continued to work locally. The Harbin branch, founded in August of 1922, began running a local network of soup kitchens in 1928. By the mid-1930s, this effort had expanded to include over a hundred volunteers, who served free meals to

Table 5.1 Number of meals served at RSS soup kitchens in Beijing

	East Gate	*West Gate*
1928	177,564	160,475
1929	320,110	319,640
1930	274,151	216,169
1931	167,584	204,741
1932	105,120	140,121
1933	118,039	171,623

Source: Shijie hong wanzi hui 1932, 35–36; 1935, 42.

as many as 2,000 people per day, and included a free clinic to provide medical care to the city's poor.[42] When floods struck mountainous Chahar in 1924, local branches established ten relief stations and four soup kitchens that served over 4,800 refugees. In the coastal city of Yantai, which was largely spared the disasters faced by the interior, a branch of RSS built charitable institutions of a more durable nature. Between 1929 and 1933, RSS in Yantai built an orphanage, a hospital, and homes for the aged and disabled, as well as initiating antismoking campaigns. In Yantai, as elsewhere, it was the merchant and political elite who took the initiative in RSS projects.[43] The report of charitable activities published biannually by the RSS is mostly taken up with records of donations, ranging from the very large (both by individuals and corporate donors such as banks) to a few *yuan*, and including donations in kind by grain merchants.[44]

The brief flowering of private charities would not last long. After 1927, the newly established Nanjing government gradually moved to rein in or assimilate many of the occupational organizations, labor unions, chambers of commerce, and literary associations that had formed in the previous decade.[45] Religions were not exempt. Buddhists and Christians were harassed, and any religion unlucky enough to be labeled heretical or superstitious was banned outright. Nor were private charities, which at least some in the new government saw as rife with corruption: following an accounting of 60 private charities in Nanjing, disgusted officials claimed that "not one or two out of ten provided accurate information." Between 1928 and 1933, local and national governments enacted a series of new regulations to scrutinize the organization and funding of charities, and even very high profile organizations such as the Red Cross of China found themselves facing an unusual degree of political scrutiny.[46]

Charges of corruption aside, the new government was clearly uneasy with the strength of private charitable organizations and enacted a series of laws to exert a direct administrative control over disaster relief. Following the massive Yellow River flood of 1933, it allocated over four million *yuan* to refugee aid. Even if these funds were used to poor effect, we can still see in these efforts a desire not merely to bring independent civil organizations to heel, but also to take the mantle of charity from Christian missions and groups like the RSS.[47] As a result, many religions and most charities, including Daoyuan-RSS, automatically lost the legal status that they had enjoyed under the Beiyang government, and were forced to reapply for government recognition. Although in the end, Daoyuan-RSS was able to reregister with relatively little difficulty, it remained under suspicion in many quarters, owing both to the spirit-writing activities of Daoyuan, and to the continued portrayal of the RSS as a "secret society."[48]

The price of pacifism

The final feature of the period was violence: the near constant warfare that plagued China from the death of Yuan Shikai until 1949. Of course, war and war relief go hand in hand: it was the growing frequency and violence of war in Europe that had led to the creation and expansion of the Red Cross during the nineteenth century.

The unique difficulties that relief organizations would face in a militarized environment had also shaped their outlook and tactics, most notably their guarantee of neutrality. In China, the Red Cross had already displayed this stance in conflicts such as the 1911 Revolution, and the Red Swastika Society followed suit in providing relief to victims of the domestic wars of the 1920s.[49] Like the Red Cross, they responded by announcing their neutrality to all belligerents, entering the ruins of battle bearing their symbol on flags and tunics, and promising aid to any wounded soldier who approached them unarmed.

As Duara and others have noted, the practical issue of providing relief to both sides of a military conflict reflected an ethical stance of placing human need above politics, including national loyalties. Soon after its founding, the RSS began limited operations outside of China, and despite the growing wave of anti-Japanese sentiment during the 1920s, their first destination was Japan. Again, the impetus was provided by external events, the Kantō Earthquake that decimated Tokyo region in 1923. In response to this disaster, the RSS sent three representatives: (Hou) Sushuang 侯素爽, (Feng) Huahe 馮華和, and (Yang) Yuancheng 楊圓誠 to Japan to deliver 2,000 *shi* of rice, and a message of goodwill.[50] But this was not their only mission. Before leaving China, Sushuang had met in Nanjing with the Japanese consul to Ningbo, Hayashide Kenjirō 林出賢次郎, who gave him a book about a new Japanese religion named Ōmotokyō 大本教, the Teaching of the Great Source. After Huahe and Yuancheng had already returned to China via the port city of Kobe (where they converted a handful of influential Chinese, including the vice consul and the head of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce), Sushuang stayed on to meet with Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎, Ōmotokyō's charismatic leader.[51] The two immediately perceived significant similarities between their respective teachings, and with Deguchi's blessing, Daoyuan opened its first foreign branch in Kobe in 1924. Both sides were willing to learn from each other; two years after this meeting, Deguchi went on to found the Universal Love and Brotherhood Association (*jinrui aizenkai* 人類愛善会), a charitable organization very similar to the RSS. Yuancheng would retain close ties with Deguchi, and returned to Japan after the smaller Kansai earthquake of 1927.[52]

Observers such as Uchida Ryōhei 内田良平, an advocate of Japanese continental expansion, and active member of Ōmotokyō, would later portray these events as the beginning of a clear trajectory that propelled RSS and other ethically minded Chinese to Japan, but we should not overestimate the importance of this internationalist sentiment, nor underestimate the patriotism of RSS's Chinese members. The mission to Japan had indeed laid the foundation for a cosmopolitan alliance that included both influential Japanese in China, and Chinese in Japan, and certainly enhanced the identity of the RSS as an international organization in the model of the Red Cross.

Red Cross donation

Moreover, despite their high profile, such international efforts paled in comparison to the work of the RSS within China itself. While the 2,000 *shi* (approximately 145,000 kg) of rice that the 1923 mission brought to Kobe was certainly much more than a token gesture, a 1928 relief effort closer to home distributed no less than 80,000 *shi*, much of which was donated by nationalistically minded grain merchants. The RSS was only one of forty major Chinese donors to Japanese earthquake relief, and it was not even the most significant. The Chinese government itself made a sizeable donation, and Foreign Ministry Head Wellington Koo (顧維鈞) had called for patriotic Chinese to aid their neighbors in a time of distress, even going as far as to suggest that the Chinese government itself should take charge of the relief effort: "China is grounded in the ethic of aiding the stricken and helping neighbors, and cannot stand idly by. The government should take charge, and urge all of its citizens to send aid."[53] Given the growing tensions between the two countries, aid for Japan was more than humanitarian in motive; such a display of Chinese magnanimity was also diplomatically useful for China. This and other RSS efforts overseas were aided by Chinese diplomats, and demonstrate the clout the group carried in political circles. When a Chinese attempt to seize the Russian-owned China Eastern Railway in 1928 prompted a brief but disastrous border conflict with the Soviet Union, teams of RSS doctors were sent to the railway cities of Harbin, Manzhouli, and Suifenhe. Pinned down by Soviet shelling, these teams appealed to the Foreign Ministry in Nanjing, which assured Soviet authorities (through third country diplomatic intermediaries) that the group was solely interested in providing medical relief.[54]

This balance of interests shifted dramatically after the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931. The quick but brutal assault on Chinese territory presented a real challenge to the naive internationalism expressed by people such as Jiang Xizhang during the early days of the Confucian revival, and left organizations like the RSS in a very difficult position. In the wake of the fighting, local branches mobilized to provide what relief they could to the civilian population.[55] Representatives from Beijing, Tianjin, Jiaodong, Yingkou, and Andong met in Dalian to coordinate efforts to feed and clothe the multitude of refugees that were just beginning to pour south. Relief stations in Shenyang began feeding 5,000 per day, a number that eventually rose to 20,000. It is hard to say how neutral members of the RSS actually were in the conflict, but all parties involved had an interest in maintaining that appearance. RSS leaders did contact the Japanese high command, but only with the very modest request of being allowed to organize teams of volunteers to bury the dead.

The beginnings of what would become the Manchukuo propaganda machine presented a somewhat rosier picture. During the final months of 1931, the Japanese-owned *Shengjing Times* (盛京時報, already the highest circulation Chinese language daily in Manchuria) frequently reported on RSS activities, but did not dwell on their response to the war. Rather, it portrayed RSS branches in cities such as Dalian, which was largely spared the ill effects of the fighting, raising funds for relief from natural disasters in Manchuria, as well as for flood-ravaged provinces further south. Other articles presented the local RSS opening a new school, and funding a Buddhist festival in Huadian 樺甸, near Changchun. One

short article briefly mentioned that the Changchun branch had begun operation of a soup kitchen, but stated the reason simply as expectation of a cold winter.[56]

The seizure of Manchuria and formation of the Japanese-sponsored state of Manchukuo cut the local Daoyuan-RSS off from the national organization, but even before these events, the network of branches in the northeast had already been developing into something of an independent entity. The teaching had first moved north during the early 1920s, and initially required a period of nurturing: even large branches like Jilin had to occasionally send leaders to study at the Mother Daoyuan in Ji'nan.[57] Yet by the end of the decade, a time when Daoyuan expansion in the rest of China had begun to wane, a burst of new energy invigorated the northeast.[58] With the Shenyang Daoyuan at the center, new Manchurian branches were opened, ties between existing Daoyuan were rejuvenated, and groups of RSS branches banded together to mount regional relief efforts. In one unique expression of unity, a text called the *Essence of the True Scripture of the Polar Singularity* (*taiyi beiji zhenjing jingsui* 太乙北極真經經髓) rotated among Daoyuan in Manchuria. Daoyuan in Beijing and Tianjin had each begun preaching introductory sections of this scripture in 1929, after which the movement moved north, with Daoyuan in Shenyang, Yingkou, Binjiang, Changchun, Dalian, and Andong each expounding one section. Over the next 33 days, the network of Manchurian Daoyuan had preached the entire scripture.[59]

This core of Manchurian Daoyuan had already begun gravitating toward Japan through their relationship with Ōmotokyō. In 1929, a flurry of spirit writings in Beijing and Shenyang laid the plans for a Daoyuan mission to Japan. This "Eastern Sea Mission" (*dongying budao tuan* 東瀛佈道團) was to become very much a Manchurian project: 14 of its 18 members came from the Northeast, seven from Shenyang alone.[60] Once in Japan, the mission visited Kobe, Kameoka, and Osaka before reaching Kyoto, where they again met with Deguchi. This meeting named Deguchi as the head of the small but expanding network of Japanese Daoyuan, in return for which he agreed to visit China that August. Daoyuan delegates also promised to send a second mission to the Great Religions Exposition (*Dai shūkyō hakurankai* 大宗教博覧會), to be held in Kyoto in February of the following year.[61] This Second Eastern Sea Mission, like the first, consisted primarily of delegates from Manchuria. (In this case, seven of the nine delegates came from Andong, one from Dalian, and another from Beijing.) It was only after this trip that the two teachings formally merged, thus giving nearly 500 branches of Ōmotokyō in Japan a new dual identity as Daoyuan.[62]

Although we cannot know how typical such sentiment might have been within Manchurian Daoyuan before 1932, it is obvious why those interested in the Manchukuo project would wish to exaggerate the ties between RSS and Japan, and the enthusiasm within RSS for an internationalism that might resemble Japanese pan-Asianism. Perhaps the best example of this sort of wishful thinking is Uchida's 1931 *The World Red Swastika Society and the Manchuria-Mongolia Independence Movement*. Published soon after the commencement of hostilities, but before the actual founding of Manchukuo, this short book aimed to convince Japanese readers of their natural allies in the contested territory. Only after spending 80 pages,

more than half of the book, reminding readers of the vital economic and military importance of Manchuria to Japan (a relationship that Uchida and many others termed the "Manchurian lifeline" 生命線 *seimei sen*), does the book finally go on to introduce the RSS itself, albeit in terms designed to appeal particularly to the Japanese reader.[63] In describing the religious beliefs of Daoyuan, Uchida simultaneously reaches out to a number of audiences, employing again the dichotomy between their essential (*xiantian* 先天) and common (*houtian* 後天) meanings, in order to compare the teaching to the "Way of the Gods" (*kannagara no michi* 惟神の道), an unambiguous reference to Shinto. He ends with an implicit reference to Ōmotokyō, the Teaching of the Great Source.

> The "Dao" in Daoyuan refers to the great Way of the Gods, it most decidedly does not derive from Daoism. Actually, "Dao" has both a *xiantian* and a houtian meaning. Daoyuan is most certainly not a religion. It is a pure belief organization (信仰団體 *shinkō dantai*) whose teaching spreads the *xiantian* meaning (of Dao) that is, the great Way of the Gods, and is purely devoted to reform of the world. The Way that Daoyuan promotes is that all things being from a single source. It is extremely inclusive.[64]

Uchida further makes the tenuous case that Daoyuan actively supported Japanese intervention in Manchuria. He begins with the ideological argument: since its teaching of unity among religions and nations was so perfectly in tune with the promise of an independent Manchuria, that Daoyuan branches throughout the country would naturally welcome Japanese liberation from Chinese misrule. He notes that late in 1931, just as provincial governments in Manchuria were severing ties with Nanjing, the Daoyuan of Japan (i.e., Ōmotokyō) sent a message to their brethren in Manchuria and Beijing encouraging them to take hold of this unique opportunity to "press on for the common good of all humanity, the benefit of society, and peace and unity in the world." He further claims that spirit writings foretold the Manchurian independence movement before it broke out, but offers no proof more substantial than a few vague statements about Chinese-Japanese unity.[65] The weakest argument is the claim that the leadership of the RSS represented the progressive elite of Manchuria, who were eager and prepared to take the reins of a new state. Here again, Uchida proves stronger on slogans than evidence, and is only able to mention a handful of military figures such as Zhang Haipeng (張海鵬) and Tang Yulin (湯玉麟) as specific examples.[66]

The problem with using such sources to trace Daoyuan ideology is that it is difficult to know where Uchida's understanding of Daoyuan stops and his own thoughts begin. As Uchida was himself an enthusiastic convert to Ōmotokyō, and believed unreservedly that the teachings of Ōmotokyō and Daoyuan were "absolutely the same," it is not at all clear that he was particularly concerned with such distinctions. He confidently places into the mouth of Manchurian Daoyuan (or more specifically, the Great Progenitor) the grand political ideal of the "Bright Land," (*Mingguang guo/Meikōkoku* 明光國), which Uchida describes as nothing less than the "the unity of god and man in an independent kingdom." He further