

Reflection On The Concept Of "Magic arts" In The Context Of Chinese And Western Cultures

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Abstract. By combing the basic concept of the study of religion, "magic arts", this paper reveals some basic problems in the field of the study of religion in China. We should reasonably consider the consideration of the Chinese context in the construction of the Study of Religion and the interpretation of The Study of Religion. At the same time, when applying the Western the Study of Religion theory, we must have a thorough reflection on this theory. The purpose of this is to make China's religious research practice and religious theoretical research a better interface, and to understand religious problems and phenomena more in line with the objective reality.

Introduction

Since the 19th century, with the near modernization of the world and under the influence of powerful economic and political power, the western knowledge system, political system and values have been imported into our country in an unprecedented trend. This has particularly great impact on the academic community in China. The traditional knowledge structure and concept of "Confucian classics" collapsed in almost decades. With the establishment of the new education system and the reconstruction of the discipline system, various knowledge and discipline systems originating from the modern Western world have taken root in China. In this wave, "religion" and "the study of religion", as a concept with "modernity" identity and a humanities subject, entered our country from the end of the 19th century. So it result that a new theoretical perspective for the Chinese academic community to examine various phenomena and problems in history and reality.

With the spread of the concept of "religion" in society, the academic circles gradually regard some traditional cultural phenomena, beliefs and customs in Chinese society as the content of "religion". The meaning of the word "religion" has produced tremendous changes in modern China. It has changed from Buddhist language to Japanese-made Chinese, and under the influence of Western Christianity, the semantics of the present day came into being, and in the process of translation and introduction, they were introduced into China from Japan. The semantic change of the word "religion" is also an important way for the source of many academic terms in the humanities and social sciences since modern China.

Although "the Study of Religion" as a discipline is not very prominent in Chinese higher education, due to the "political colors" of "religion" itself, the theory study of "The Study of Religion" in China has produced an important Aspect - A "characteristic" of religion under political discourse. For example, under the theoretical perspective of serving the social reality, the Study of Religion's important task is to distinguish between "religion" and "superstition" on the academic level, or to make a theoretical study of "religion" and "cult". This underlined interpretation plays an important theoretical basis in dealing with "religion" in real life. On the one hand, this distinction is a guide to the concept of public religion, on the other hand, it gives a theoretical basic point for dealing with the problems related to "religion" at the political, economic and other levels.

With the introduction of "the Study of Religion", Western ideas of various religious theories have also been introduced. Classical works have been recognized by the academic world through translation and translation. Many researchers agree with the theories of the Western study of The Study of Religion. And the point of view, and use these points to explain China's religious

phenomenon, this is another important aspect of China's The Study of Religion. For example, the social life is divided into "sacred" and "secular", and the relationship between political rights and religion is explained by the "combination of politics and religion" and "the separation of church and state", and so on. With the gradual deepening of the practice of Chinese scholars in religious research, scholars quickly discovered that when some classical Western religious theories explained and explained the problems and phenomena in China's religion, there would always be a "curtain and moon" result, even some. The application of theory to the issue of religion in China would be very embarrassing. For example, in the Western religious environment, religious organizations are divided into "churches," "sects," "factions," and "cults." Whether it is to describe religious organizations in traditional Chinese society or religious groups in real society, many problems will arise.

As an introduction to the study of the study of religion, the classical theory of the study of religion in the West provides us with a variety of perspectives and methods to illustrate religious phenomena and problems, which will give researchers great inspiration and should not be given up. These will give researchers a lot of inspiration. We do not should give up. On the other hand, when we explore the academic fields of concern, we will also reflect on the "Religion," "The Study of Religion," and the various The Study of Religion theories, and give up on religions based on "universalism". After being tied up with "values", should we put the study of Chinese religion into a historic context, begin with the review of the terms of Religious Studies.

In the study of traditional Chinese religion, there is a word that is familiar to the study of religion researchers, and this is the word "magic arts". In China, "magic arts" is an important content in the fields of Buddhism, Taoism, ethnic minority religions and folk religions. In the study of Religion, "magic arts" is also one of the key concepts. . Based on the needs of academic research, I have combed the concept of the word "magic arts". In the process, I discovered a phenomenon that has occurred in the study of the study of The Study of Religion in China - within the same academic field. In the study of the Study of Religion, the concept of the term in the study of Chinese religion has almost intrinsically differed. This also shows us from one aspect - China's The Study of Religion and China's religious studies are often on different tracks. For the purposes of The Study of Religion theory, it is necessary to play a theoretical framework or guiding role in the study of religious reality. However, in the case of such a huge ambiguity in key terms, the guiding significance of the theory of the study of religion often becomes a castle in the air, which is also an important aspect of the theory of the study of religion that needs to be constantly reflected and adjusted in China.

Starting with the Word "Magic"

"Magic arts" is a Chinese vocabulary. The corresponding word in English is "Magic". The following is an explanation of this term in different English dictionaries: 《*Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary Advanced English*》“Magic” : the power to make impossible things happen by saying special words or doing special actions.

《*Collins English and Chinese dictionaries*》 “Magic”: Magic is the power to use supernatural forces to make impossible things happen, such as making people disappear or controlling events in nature.^①

《*Oxford High order English-Chinese Dictionary (6th Edition)*》 “Magic”: the secret power of appearing to make impossible things happen by saying special words or doing special things.^②

《*Macmillan encyclopedia*》 “Magic”: A belief and ritual system, it is believed that humans can control the natural and supernatural forces that have an impact on their lives. In the industrialized society, it is generally considered as a "superstitious belief", but it is still popular in some rituals, such as touch wood to avoid bad luck. In many pre-industrial societies, magic arts played an important social role. The Master is second only to the leader in terms of prestige and authority. They are considered to have the ability to communicate with the gods of good and evil to ensure the victory of the war, the success of hunting, the fertile land, and the flourishing of livestock. Some

primitive rituals, such as splashing water to pray for rain, are purely magic arts. These rituals are different from religious rituals (rain pray), because they believe that throwing water can in some way directly accelerate the process of rainfall. ^③

From the concept of the word "magic" in the dictionaries cited above, the following are the main points: first, that there is a "supernatural power"; second, some people can control "supernatural power" through language and behavior. In order to achieve certain practical purposes of mankind, the third is one of the most important principles of this concept. The rituals of "magic arts" are fundamentally different from those of "religion". This is the understanding of the word "Magic" in English context. "Supernatural power" is the fundamental basis for the establishment of "Magic". Under the Chinese context, scholars translate "Magic" with the word "magic arts" in Chinese. So do they have the same meaning? Can you imagine whether we use this term in a much similar sense in the field of the study of religion?

The Definition of the Word "Magic Arts" by Domestic Philosophy, Anthropology, and the Study of Religion

The "philosophy," "anthropology" and "the study of religion" are very similar to each other. They are both disciplines and knowledge systems imported by the West into China since modern times. The "philosophy" and "the Study of Religion" were all established under the reinterpretation of the structure of Chinese traditional knowledge. Therefore, "philosophy" is often faced with many difficulties in explaining traditional knowledge systems like "The Study of Religion". . . And because "The Study of Religion" is a sub-discipline under "philosophy" in the discipline setting in China, "philosophy" tends to capture the study of religious issues. So under the term of "magic arts", *《A Dictionary of Marxist philosophy》* and *《Great Dictionary of Religion》* adopted a completely identical concept:

This is one of the quasi-religious phenomena, which originated in the early society. Fantasy uses specific actions to influence or control objective objects. Most of these actions are initially imitated. For example, you can dance with the animal and animal that you want to hunt before you hunt. You can dance with a beast of a beast or a bull horn, or blow air for the wind and sprinkle water for the rain. The method of holding is similar to the original religious ceremony, but there is no concept of relying on divine power. Moreover, the purpose of religious rituals is to please the gods and ask them for help; the magic arts are considered to be able to exert their desired effects on the basis of specific movements themselves. After the emergence of various religions and spiritual concepts, magic arts still exists and does not need to be based on the "the help of the gods" as the premise.

A slightly different definition is given in *《Anthropological dictionary》*: This is one of the quasi-religious phenomena that originated in the early primitive society. The original magic arts was not meant to pray for happiness in the afterlife, but to alleviate the actual plight of daily life or to exorcise illness and protect health. There are various forms of magic arts, some mimicking birds and beasts; some are run with beasts and bones or bees and horns, and others breathe for the wind and sprinkle water for the rain. In the early stages of the development of primitive religions, there was no magician who specialized in performing magic arts. Magic arts activities were often conducted by experienced elders or any member of the tribe. After the appearance of the mage, specialized props, implements, titles of magic arts, and occupational marks such as grazing staff, bells, gongs, drums, wooden fish, garb, and hair styling have appeared one after another.

In the three disciplines of "philosophy," "the study of religion," and "anthropology," which are closely related to religious studies, the term "magic arts" is essentially defined as a "quasi-religious phenomenon," meaning that "magic arts" does not have the nature of a "religious" phenomenon. Because it has a variety of connections with the "religion" phenomenon, it is a phenomenon similar to "religion." Judging from the general understanding of the concept of "magic arts" in the West, we have almost completely borrowed from this conceptual interpretation system, and under the concept of "The Study of Religion", we have especially emphasized "magic arts" and "religion. The fundamental difference is that there is no need to presuppose "God's help." It is obvious that

scholars who have studied The Study of Religion can see that at the time of the definition of “magic arts”, the researchers of The Study of Religion in China completely accepted the book “The Golden Branch” in Fraser’s An Interpretation of the "Witchcraft" Concept. Many of the many religious researchers in China have also applied Fraser’s findings “similarity laws” and “touch laws” to the analysis of religious phenomena in China, especially for some folk religions and minorities. Fraser’s theory as an anthropologist in the study of ethnic religions is widely recognized. Indeed, Fraser’s theory provides a reasonably convenient and logically clear rational structure for us to interpret “magic arts”. However, most scholars often neglect the applicability and rationality of the theory itself when applying this theory. Inspection. Therefore, this explanation will give people a lot of questions. How many "magic arts" or "witchcrafts" in belief-related activities in Chinese folk or minority areas are not dependent on the help of the gods? The definition of “magic arts” in The Study of Religion based on Fraser’s conception, if applied to actual religious studies, we will find that most of the belief-related activities are excluded from the concept of “magic arts”. According to The Study of Religion, we can make these activities "religious ceremonies." Looking at the reality of Chinese religious studies, we will find a very contradictory problem: Fraser’s religious theory explains a pre-religion or quasi-religion phenomenon, and we use it to explain “religious rituals”. Under such a vague premise, many scholars still think that using Fraser’s theory can make a basic satisfactory interpretation of China’s "religious rituals," which is in fact a phenomenon that lacks a profound understanding of the study of religion itself. At the same time, it is a common problem of using western the study of religion theory in religious research.

The Definition of "Magic arts" in the Context of Chinese Traditional Culture

The word "magic arts" is an inherent word in Chinese and has a completely different meaning in ancient Chinese before it was translated as "magic":

First, the combination of "Fa" and "Shu" is put forward by Han Fei at the end of the Warring States Period. He thought that Shang Yang think highly of "Fa" and Shen Buhai regard as important in "Shu", both are not perfect, advocating both of them, So it's often used the word "magic arts" in books, such as "A magician". The latter also refers to the "magic arts" as a jurisprudence. In Fu Xuan’s *《ZHANGJIANZHISHANGSHU》*: “Recently Wei Wu like magic arts, and the world values criminal names.” Second, like astrology. Refers to the secret tricks used by the old alchemists and warlocks to deceive people. In *《Jin Shu Art preface》*: “The magic arts are numerous and changeable.”

Because "magic arts" and "astrology" have similar meanings, after Buddhism was introduced into China and Taoism gradually formed, people gradually called some of these religious rituals and religious acts as "magic arts". Therefore, the word "magic arts" is an inherent concept in Chinese traditional culture, and its meaning is also different in different periods. However, when "magic arts" was defined as a term for The Study of Religion, it ignored its inherent meaning in traditional Chinese religion and social context. However, the meaning of terminology used by us in the context of realistic religious research is the connotation that there is no law to avoid traditional semantics. When we study the "magic arts" of Taoism, it must be conducted in the context of traditional Chinese culture. For example, the magic arts for praying for rain and curing diseases all require people to believe in gods and classics. There are a series of ceremonies and Act, or use spells and spells. In the actual academic research, we often see that the theory of the study of religion in China is in a state of rupture with the practice of religious research. Regardless of the strictness of the logic of the Study of Religion theory and the novelty of its views, the biggest problem is that it is too low in its engagement with the history and status quo of Chinese religion.

This situation is different from that in the West. Western religious theories take Christianity as a specimen, and after a very deep understanding of their own religious practice, one of the disciplines of "the study of religion" and its theoretical basis have gradually emerged. This is a theoretical state of nature. The study of “The Study of Religion” in our country is different. From the very beginning, it was a transplant discipline. We have introduced a whole set of Western theoretical systems under

a relatively complete understanding of China's religious issues. The result is a variety of yes and no conclusions. On the one hand, our religious studies seem to come to a general "scientific" conclusion, on the other hand, the lack of understanding of our religion has left the context and social environment of our country, forming a kind of static research.

Summary

The concept of "religion" and "the study of religion" have been introduced into China for a hundred years. In the 21st century, the Study of Religion has become a hot area in the humanities and social sciences. Even today, regardless of history or reality, although most countries in the world have achieved a "separation of church and state" in the legal sense, it is undeniable that "religion" naturally has a close connection with power, politics, and the state. "The Study of Religion" also has a certain "political" nature. This is even more so in China's social environment. The "The Study of Religion" always inevitably bears the stigma of political discourse, tradition and modernity, and Eastern and Western trends of thought. The current academic environment and social environment all provide great discourse for the study of religious theories in China. The present academic environment and the social environment provide a great deal of discourse space for the research of religious theory in our country. At least some scholars in the field of study of religion are allowed to re-examine some basic theories, concepts and research methods of the study. The method allows us to relate the understanding and interpretation of religious phenomena to the lives of people and society that are symbiotic with each other. This can at least reduce the gap between the study of religion research practice and the study of religion.

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