FOREWORD

HARRIET T. ZURNDORFER

This volume is dedicated to Kristofer Schipper, commonly known to friends and colleagues as Rik, in appreciation of his extraordinary accomplishments as a scholar of East Asian religion and history, and the way in which he has conveyed his knowledge to others. For those of us who have come to know him during his “Leiden years” (1993-1999) when he was Professor of Chinese history at the Sinologisch Instituut, he is remembered as a remarkable teacher with a genuine gift to communicate his erudition and keen sense of observation without pretentiousness or pomposity.

Rik Schipper was born in Sweden to Dutch parents in 1934. He spent his youth in the Netherlands, and after having completed his gymnasium education in Amsterdam, went to the École du Louvre and the École nationale des langues vivantes in Paris to study Oriental art and the Chinese language. Awarded diplomas in these subjects in 1958, he decided to continue his education with a focus on the history of Chinese religions; his principal teachers were Rolf Stein and Maxime Kaltenmark, former students of Marcel Granet. Both these scholars had defied the then conventional academic curriculum which divided the study of Chinese religions into “organized systems” (i.e. Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism). Stein had for years been focussed on the “anonymous religions called popular,” and Kaltenmark pioneered the exploration of unstudied texts of the Taoist Canon, including esoteric neidan 内丹 works. Under the guidance of Kaltenmark, Schipper wrote his doctoral dissertation “Han Wou-ti nei-tchouan: la vie intime de l’empereur Wou des Han,” a Taoist novella of unknown authorship originating at the end of the Six Dynasties period, in 1962.

In the same year Schipper went to Taiwan where he became a visiting scholar at the Academia Sinica, first attached to the Institute of History and Philology, and then the Institute of Ethnology. While nowadays it may be standard, or even mandatory, academic procedure

for young researchers of whatever discipline to locate themselves in China or Taiwan for extended periods of study, in the early 1960s it was highly unusual for a young scholar of classical learning to abandon the library in the metropole for the unknown destinies of fieldwork. Schipper's personal agenda was even more unorthodox since he wanted to study the origins of popular religion while living with its contemporary manifestations, i.e. among the common people. In 1964 he left the comforts of Taipei and the Academia Sinica and moved to the south of the island where he resided for the next six years. His decision to relocate had been prompted in part by his fascination with the popular marionette theater which he realized had "profound affinities" with Taoist ritual. The theater was an animate tradition but one discounted by contemporary Chinese intellectuals. Schipper rightly surmised he could learn more about the basis of this ritual if he removed himself from disparagement, and created links with believers and their spiritual leaders.

Once situated in his new abode, the next phase of Schipper's Taiwan experience was to prove one of the most unique in the history of Western sinology. In 1968 he became the first Westerner ordained a Taoist master. This phenomenal development is all the more unusual if one realizes that at the time of his ordination Taoism itself was peripheral to "official" pronouncements on Chinese religion. As one historian of Chinese religion has written: "...it took an educated stranger from Europe to rediscover and immerse himself in a tradition that had become almost totally alien to contemporary Chinese intellectuals." Readers may recall that it was another Dutchman, J.J.M. de Groot (1854-1921) who, in Schipper's words, "was the first to use the sociological methodology which [was to] exert such an important influence on the study of Chinese religion in the 20th century." But

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Schipper also reminds us that it was de Groot too, despite all his accomplishments, who had helped to pervert the Taoist vision in the Western academy. As de Groot had gained increasing scholarly recognition for his sinology, he misrepresented what he saw of Taoist jiao ceremonies and what he himself had written about them at an earlier time.5

Thus, in spring 1964 when Schipper arranged to see a jiao ritual, or more specifically, wenjiao ritual enacted for the prevention of epidemics and the periodic renewal of this regional celebrant community’s confederation, performed over a period of several days, he was at once rejecting the cultural baggage of at least one Western predecessor and the negative view of contemporary Chinese academic authorities toward “folk religion.” He came to realize that this was the first occasion that a Westerner actually witnessed the private “pure rites” of Taoist priests within a temple sanctuary.6 His four year passage to Taoist masterhood has been summarized by Norman Girardot as one of happenstance, bemusement, and not least, revelation. The first discovery concerned the origins of the written liturgy. Schipper observed that the celebrant priests’ hand-written ritual manuscripts were reproduced texts of the Daozang 道藏 (original 1445) dating from the nineteenth century (emphasis added). Since there was only a 1926 Commercial Press photo-reproduction of the original deposited at the Academia Sinica in 1949 and some partial reproductions in Taoist monasteries on the mainland, he surmised that the text in the possession of the priests was in some way related to another “living tradition” of Taoism. And to be sure, the priests confirmed Schipper’s perception: these scriptures were in the possession of individual priests’ family lineages. He was told that it was customary for priests during their apprenticeship to learn to decipher a text’s esoteric terminology and then on the occasion of their ordination, to copy their family’s ritual text which ultimately would be passed on to the next member

5 According to Schipper, *ibid.*, pp.472-473, de Groot’s description of the festival of Yuhuang shangdi 玉皇上帝 on the ninth day of the first moon in his *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Emoi (Amoy) (1886; original in Dutch, 1881-83) may have been the first report in a Western language of this occasion. But, as Schipper writes, at the close of his *Les fêtes*, de Groot characterizes Taoism as one of the “Three Religions” and thus divorces, and even worse, “bends” (distorts) his field observations from his written analysis.

6 What is written here in this paragraph and the following is based on Girardot, *ibid.*, pp.xiii-xv.
of the family to train in the Taoist liturgy. And so Schipper found that the practices of this temple located somewhat to the north of Tainan were a legacy of the "age-old ‘Way of the Celestial Masters’."

In autumn 1964 Schipper ventured into the next stage of his religious education: he had himself adopted by one of the priests whose jiao ritual he had witnessed the previous spring. While his earlier sinological training had provided the necessary linguistic tools for this kind of learning, it was Schipper’s particular knack for recognizing the significance of these “popular traditions” for the broader vision of Chinese religion that contributed to the success of this project. His instruction went beyond the decipherment of difficult and rare texts; the learning of the "music of heaven," and bodily ritual movement, inherent to the Taoist tradition, became a major preoccupation. Participation in his master’s ritual orchestra was further preparation for gaining command over each major liturgy. In 1968 Zhang Enpu 張恩溥, the sixty-third Celestial Master in direct descent from Zhang Daoling 張道陵, ordained Rik Schipper a master of the Way.

The ordination ushered in another stage in Schipper’s life. As a teacher and writer, he would guide others about the richness of Chinese religious life but without violating the trust of the Taoist traditions to which he had had such privileged access. Thus, as a Western scholar, but not a religious convert, Schipper chose to devote the rest of his working life to creating those tools by which others too might learn more about Taoism. To accomplish this goal, he returned in 1970 to Paris where he took up a teaching and research position at the École pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) and founded the Center for Taoist Documentation and Study to which a growing number of international scholars were soon attracted. He also established the Daozang project, financed by the European Science Foundation, which shortly will see fruition in the University of Chicago Press publication The Taoist Canon: A Critical and Analytical Bibliography of All Works Contained in the Tao-tsang of the Ming Dynasty (in collaboration with Franciscus Verellen).

In the 1970s Rik Schipper began to publish a wealth of material, monographic and bibliographic, which gave ever more appeal to the increasing interest in his work. As Franciscus Verellen points out in his 1995 “State of the Field” essay on Taoist studies, Schipper’s

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7 See Schipper, “The History of Taoist Studies,” pp. 484-487 where he discusses the work of others.
approach remained within the French academic tradition of the sociology of religion, in which the social, as opposed to the philosophical content of religion, is central. He addressed the social impact of Taoism in studies concerning the affiliation of cult groups and temple networks, neighborhood cult associations, the Taoist ordination system, and monasticism in essays, appearing in such distinguished journals as *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *T'oung Pao, History of Religions*, or in collections edited by such well-known American scholars as Arthur Wolf, G.W. Skinner, David Johnson, and the late Michel Strickmann; later studies he authored concerned a wide range of social topics, including Mulian plays, and even the Qing Rites Controversy. In 1982, Schipper published his masterpiece, *Le corps taoïste: corps physique, corps social* (Paris: Editions Artheme Fayard) which was to have six reprints, and five major translations (with the American edition in several reprints). Directed toward the cosmic corporeality of heaven, earth, and humankind, *Le corps* describes and analyses the ways in which the social body (the community of ritual participants), the physical body (the body as the object of “inner alchemy” practices), and the cosmic body (the body as a macrocosm) are integrated. What Schipper did here was to unveil the actual practice of Taoism--to make known the living faith of Chinese religion. In recognition of the importance of this volume as a major contribution in the field of China scholarship, the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in France awarded Kristofer Schipper the prestigious Prix Stanislas Julien in 1984.

Since coming to Leiden, Schipper has directed his research efforts to the study of temples in Ming and Qing Beijing, a project entitled “Beijing, Holy City: Liturgical Structures and Civil Society” which he conceived before taking up his professorship here. His fascination with a city where at one time it was commonplace for Taoists to celebrate the Buddha’s birthday, and the Buddhists to reciprocate with birthday wishes for Laozi on the fifteenth day of the second month is empathetic and effusive, as those of us with whom he has discussed this enterprise know so well. The rich religious life of the capital’s residents is a topic once studied in depth by such great Chinese scholars as Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, Xu Daoling 許道齡, Zhang Jiangcai 張江栽, and one may say that it is entirely appropriate that

Rik Schipper is taking up where they left off. In the first installment of a new journal he founded, *Sanjiao wenxian* 三教文獻 *Matériaux pour l'étude de la religion chinoise* (Paris/Leiden: École pratique des Hautes Études/Center for Non-Western Studies, 1997), he conveys the first results of his research with an essay in which he argues that the guilds of Beijing’s Dongyue Temple were a major focus of civil society; translations of three steles dating from 1560, 1591, and 1769 provide the documentation to the guild activities.

This brief introduction to the life, publications, and on-going research of Kristofer Schipper cannot do justice to a scholar with more than ten books (some of which are now in their sixth or seventh reprint), more than 50 learned journal publications plus countless newspaper articles, radio and TV interviews; one may also not forget the many Ph.D. dissertations for which he served as advisor. Suffice it to say that the depth and breadth of Rik Schipper’s knowledge about China has touched his friends and colleagues here in Leiden in many ways and on many occasions, and thus the diversity of contributions here, we hope, will reflect his magnanimity and omniscience.