In the West, and especially in North America, the 1960s, the decade in which I myself reached university, witnessed the start of a remarkable upsurge of interest in the religions and philosophies of the East. The influence of this unforeseen extension of religious pluralism upon the religious life of the United States has been explored to some extent already by Harvey Cox, but its wider effects may be traced much further than the world of the exotic imported cults themselves. In academic circles, where the enthusiasms of youth confront the requirements of scholarship, a somewhat more pallid reflection of the change in society at large may be seen in the expansion since that decade of the teaching of Eastern thought and Eastern religion. In its turn, one effect of this expansion has been the establishment of the study of Chinese religion as a recognized area of religious studies and of sinology. This development may be measured by a number of indicators: the creation of a Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, which is formally related to the Association of Asian Studies as an “Affiliated Group”, and constitutes the “Chinese Religions Group” of the American Academy of Religion; the production of bibliographies of past scholarship; the appearance of review articles surveying new developments; and the translation into English from other European languages of important writings in the field dating from the first half of the century.

The origins of this last practice may be taken back to as early as 1951, when the first English edition of Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth, was published by the Free Press in Glencoe, Illinois. But despite the addition of a thirty-one page introduction by C. K. Yang to the 1964 edition, bringing it closer in format to the translations now appearing, this volume may perhaps best be seen as marking a stage in the development of sociology rather than of the study of Chinese religion as such. Both sociological and sinological concerns are prominent in Maurice Freedman’s 1975 translation of Marcel Granet’s early work on Chinese religion. Here, however, Freedman’s statement that the “decision to undertake the translation was made as a result of a few week’s work in Paris towards the end of 1972 when I was collecting material upon Granet in connexion with a study of the Western perception of Chinese religion,” and some more extended remarks in an earlier publication which attempted to survey the contributions of pioneering figures like Granet and de Groot, show that a close relationship existed for Freedman between the progress of his own thinking about China and the translation of a book already half a century old. Thus his volume differs markedly from earlier translations of books by Granet produced during his lifetime, where no attempt was made to add introductory material commenting on the original. Implicit in Freedman’s introductory essay (and quite explicit in his earlier paper) is a desire to take stock, to place Granet in the context of his own times so as better to be able to understand the distance between his perceptions and contemporary Western thinking on Chinese religion.

Frank Kierman Jr.’s translation of the writings of Henri Maspero on Taoism and Chinese religion, for which I was asked to provide an introduction, was prompted by a more immediate need: that of presenting to college students not at home in the French language a classic study frequently cited in later scholarship. This work formed a natural sequel to Kierman’s earlier translation of Maspero’s writings on early China, which contains a substantial introduction by D. C. Twitchett. Though not the product of quite the same process of reexamination that inspired Freedman’s work, Twitchett’s introduction also characterizes Maspero as a man of his times and provides a clear and useful outline of the changes that