The purpose of this paper is to give a brief survey of the publications on religious studies by academic circles in modern China so as to facilitate academic exchanges in the same field with scholars in the West. Since ancient times China has produced a series of literary works on religious studies, but to regard religion as an object of scientific research resulted mainly from the impact of the 19th century tide of religious studies in the West. The history of religious studies in modern China, beginning at the end of the 19th century, can be roughly divided into four stages, namely: period of enlightenment and initiation, period of creative formulation, period of relative stagnation and period of productive prosperity.

1. Period of Enlightenment and Initiation

The period when academic circles in China started to regard religion as an object of scientific research began at the end of the 19th century and lasted until 1919 in the 20th century. It was closely linked with the tide of momentous changes in modern Chinese history. Exactly at the turn of the century, reformist elements within Chinese national bourgeoisie initiated constitutional reform and modernization, and then the Chinese bourgeois democratic revolution succeeded in overthrowing the Manchurian feudalistic dynasty in 1911. These events were not only inspired and modelled after Western democratic political ideas, they also promoted the assimilation of Western civilization and spiritual values, giving impetus at the same time to a new attitude and approach to religious studies on the part of modern Chinese academic circles. They started to reject the historical tradition of subjectivism in religious studies, and embarked on investigating religion as an object of scientific research. Though this was but the beginning of enlightenment, it constituted an important step forward in the history of religious studies in modern China.

According to the statistics of major Chinese papers and periodicals* from 1878 to 1919, there were altogether 38 published articles dealing
with religion, among them 9 were of the nature of general introduction to religion(s), 6 on the history of religion(s) in general, 6 on Buddhism, 15 on the study of Christianity, and only 2 on the study of Islam. That is to say, in the course of 41 years, the average number of articles on religious studies amounts to less than one per year, miserably scanty and inadequate.

The content and authorship of the articles further reveal that articles dealing with Christianity are by far the greatest in number, and that the authors of the articles are mostly British or American scholars and missionaries rather than Chinese scholars. Among these articles, we have "Jesus Christ" (Yesu Jidu) (1878), "I believe in Christ" (Wo zong Jidu) (1979), "A study of Biblical Lands in the Chronicles of Han" (Shengjing suo zai chu tu jian yu Hanshu kao) (1882), "On Christianity and the Chinese Academic Changes" (Lun Jidujiao yu Zhongguo xueshu gengbian de guanxi) (1902), "Origins of the Great Religions in the East and West" (Dong xi da jiao suyuan pian) (1902), "Present Condition of Christianity in China" (Lun Jidujiao zai Zhongguo de xianzhuang) (1906). The brief survey clearly indicates the state of affairs existing in China soon after the introduction of Christianity from the West. It also shows that Western scholars and missionaries began to take great interest in the study of Chinese Buddhism. For example, we have an article entitled "A Summary Study of the Origins of Buddhism" (Fojiao yuanliu zonghe) (1905), signed with the Chinese name Wei Lianchen, and also "A History of Chinese Buddhism" (Zhina Fojiao kao [Shina Bukkyo kô]) (1908), signed with the Chinese name Gao Baozhen. All these articles were published in "International Communique" (Wan'guo gongbao), a Chinese monthly sponsored by British and American missionaries in China. The other eleven articles which appeared earlier were translations of introductory and historical writings on religion. They accounted for over 25 percent of the total number of articles on religious studies. Among them were "The Story of Buddha Sakyamuni" (Shijiamoni zhuan) (1902), "Evolution of Religion" (Zongjiao jinhua lun) (1902), "Psychology of Religion" (Zongjiao xinli lun) (1902), "History of Religion" (Zongjiaoshi) (1902), and "Eastward Spread of Western Religions during the Tang Dynasty" (Tangdai xi jiao zhi dong jian) (1904). All these articles and translations constituted a new approach on religious studies among Chinese scholars at the time. From 1878 to 1919, 38 articles on religious studies were published, among them 13 were written in Chinese by foreign scholars including missionaries, 11 appeared in translations made by Chinese scholars. They comprised a total of 24 articles, accounting for 56 percent of the total number of articles. Articles