

COUNTING THE MONKS THE 1736–1739 CENSUS OF THE CHINESE CLERGY

Vincent Goossaert¹

Part 1. Ideology and Practice — Good and bad clerics

The quantitative approach has, since the 1950s, deeply changed our knowledge of the history of religions in the West, especially for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, this methodology has barely been applied to the history of Chinese religions. Although this situation may be partly explained by sinological tradition, it should be observed that it is also the result of the nature of the currently available sources. Many of the quantitative studies done by Western historians were based upon archives. The archival situation in the West is very different from that in China: there was no Chinese equivalent of a bishop ordering reports on church attendance, and nothing comparable to parish registrars. Yet there was state control of the clergy, but the Chinese central archives have not yet yielded much serial data on religious institutions. Local archives—the next revolution—are slowly beginning to open. As for non-state archives, especially for monasteries, temples, and associations, they have either disappeared or are still unavailable. No scholar has yet had access to a substantial amount of such sources.

The treasure-trove for quantitative-minded China historians, the local gazetteers, are quite disappointing for the quantitative study of religions. They do include lists of temples² but their demographic sections do not normally count the clerics,³ nor do fiscal sections inform us about landholdings of the reli-

¹ The author would like to thank Kristofer Schipper for his guidance, and the two anonymous referees for their useful suggestions. A previous version of this paper was given at the monthly reunion of the Société Asiatique, Paris, on May 15, 1998.

² Such lists were analysed with a quantitative approach by Eberhard 1964 and Taylor 1997. There were also extensive quantitative studies on temples carried out in the first half of this century, by missionaries and Japanese researchers among others, but they usually focused on a given city or county, and are thus quite different in scope and methodology from the nation-wide or at least province-wide data discussed here.

³ Such data are common in Song and Yuan period gazetteers, and in some early twentieth-century ones, where they are based on police reports. They are otherwise very few and far between. The reasons are first the general decay in census procedures during the Ming and early Qing and, after the inclusion of the poll tax within the land tax in 1725, the disappearance of the clergy as a fiscal category.

gious institutions. Gazetteers of religious institutions rarely include much quantitative material. In order to estimate the numerical importance of the religious institutions, one has to rely on guesswork based upon specific cases or to come by chance upon a specific documentation. It is also possible to venture quantitative analysis of non-quantitative data, which is usually very arduous. I plan to chart the state of the field and the possibilities in this regard in a forthcoming paper; I would like here to introduce and analyse one exceptional—and probably unique—document coming from imperial archives, namely the Yellow Registers (*huangce*) prepared by the Board of Rites (*Libu*) summarising the results of the census of all the clerics in the country during 1736–1739.

In the present preliminary study, it is not possible to give the complete data under discussion, nor to provide an overview of all the possible analyses that they afford. I will only deal cursorily with the data pertaining to the Buddhist clergy and go into deeper detail for the Taoist population. Some observations, however, will equally apply to both populations, most notably the general introduction to clergy control and to the registration procedures of the 1736–1739 campaign. These form the first part of the article. The discussion of the data themselves, in the second part, will revolve around three main questions, namely: (1) the reconstruction of the total figures at the national level, (2) the compared importance of the Buddhist and Taoist populations, and (3) the geographical distributions of the various Taoist orders. Because of the lack of comparable evidence for other periods, I will not try a diachronic approach, but will focus upon the clerical geography of the early Qianlong period.

Managing the monks

Bureaucratic control of the Chinese clergy has existed since the Six Dynasties period. The system grew in complexity over successive dynasties. Although many informative studies have been written about specific periods and specific institutions,⁴ a comprehensive study concerning the whole early modern and late imperial periods remains to be done. This will have to go beyond the anecdotal evidence and look for long term strategies used by the state to reduce the independence of the religious institutions. Such a study should also balance out the theoretical injunctions in the main collections of jurisprudence⁵ with the factual data contained in religious epigraphy and gazetteers.

⁴ For the Song, see Eichhorn 1968; for the Ming see Brook 1997; for the Qing, see the forthcoming dissertation by Natacha Stupar, Paris, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

⁵ See especially for the Song period: *Qingyuan tiaofa shilei* (Analytical compendium of laws compiled during the Qinyuan reign, Xie Shenfu, *jinshi* 1166, comp.), j. 50–51 reproduced, translated, and annotated by Eichhorn 1968; for the Ming: *Libu zhigao* (Draft Gazetteer of the Ministry of Rites, 1620, *Siku quanshu* ed.), j. 89 and for the Qing: *Da Qing huidian shili* (Statutes and Precedents of the Great Qing, Shanghai: Shangwu, 1908), j. 501 and *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* (Compendium of Sources—Sequel for the Qing Dynasty, Shanghai: Shangwu, Wanyou wenku, 1936) j. 89.

The clerical (or rather anticlerical) laws of the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties all held in common some basic principles. With a brief respite during the Yuan, when the most important religious orders were given a large autonomy, the modern Chinese state only recognised two monolithic clergies, the Buddhists and the Taoists, largely governed by the same laws. The various schools and lineages were not granted official recognition. Access to the clergy was restricted and one had to secure an authorization from the state. Certain persons were prevented from applying: some professions, convicted offenders, or people in charge of a family were not eligible. There were also age and gender restrictions. Clerics could only live in authorised monasteries or temples, and their construction was severely controlled. Under the Qing, it became virtually impossible to legally build a new temple or monastery, and the only way for expansion was to rebuild an abandoned one. At different periods, especially during the early Ming, the state also tried to limit the number of institutions by regrouping them into fewer and larger units. Clerics were not allowed to travel freely, to start subscriptions, or to preach in public places. All these laws, of course, were rarely fully respected.⁶

Clerical policies were enforced partly through a clerical bureaucracy supervised by the Board of Rites. Religious administration, which had also begun under the Six Dynasties period, had fully matured by the Song. After the much more complex Yuan interlude, the Ming expanded the Song system, which did not change much until 1911. The Buddhist and Taoist clergy were supervised at a national level respectively by the Senglu si and the Daolu si. They had branches in each prefecture and county. Clerics chosen for such offices were symbolically assimilated to the civilian bureaucracy, but normally were not paid for this office. They were responsible for any violation of the law committed by the clerics within their jurisdiction, but had little leverage, especially under the Qing. This may be the reason why one actually rarely finds them mentioned in official documents. It is possible that the Senglu si and Daolu si kept extensive information about the clerics and the various institutions that housed them, but they did not publish documents, nor is there any evidence of their archives. In any case, for the most important affairs, members of the clergy dealt directly with the field bureaucracy.

Clerics, in order to be recognised as such by the state, and benefit from corvée exemption (before the corvée itself was abolished), had to be in possession of an Ordination Certificate (*dudie*). The ways in which the *dudie* were issued varied considerably with time and circumstances. It is well known that they were for sale during various periods, notably the Song. Certificates

僧錄司，道錄司

度牒

⁶ On the distance between the letter of the law and the actual immunity of the clergy during the late Qing, see Welch 1968, chapter 8, "Sangha and State," 132–59.

were also given away by the hundreds, in times of national celebration, or as a gift to meritorious communities. Several dynasties also instituted religious examinations and granted the *dudie* to all those who passed. Finally, it also happened that the government felt that the religious situation had gotten out of control and decided to register the whole religious population in one go, in some cases imposing examinations, and giving *dudie* to those who proved to be *bona fide* clerics.

The question of the Ordination Certificate is a thorny one, due to the fact that the religious institutions handed out documents also called *dudie* to newly ordained clerics, whatever the legal standing of the ordination was. Such documents, that were issued by the ordaining monastery or master, only recorded the spiritual filiation to which the ordinand was heir, as well as the circumstances of the ceremony and relevant precepts and rules.⁷ Although it is very possible that major ordination centers (the state-sanctioned ordination centers, *jietan*), working with the approval of the state, printed certificates whose text had been accepted, or modelled after an official blueprint, each institution nevertheless had specific *dudie*. What the secular authorities meant by a *dudie* was not normally identical with these purely religious documents. It is likely that, in many cases, the religious *dudie* was also certified as an official one after the magistrate had affixed his stamp on it. In some more relaxed periods, the official stamp may even have been dispensed with. However, when the imperial state seriously took into its hands the issuing of *dudie*, these were completely separate administrative documents, and this was the case during 1736–39. Unfortunately, we do not know of any extant copy of such a document, and the administrative literature pertaining to the 1736–39 census does not provide a model. We will have to wait for more research into administrative literature and local archives before we have a precise idea of what the different kinds of *dudie* looked like.

The *dudie* was an instrument to ward off “fake clerics,” those ordained outside the state-sanctioned ordination centers. This preoccupation was shared by the religious institutions themselves: Buddhist and Taoist monastic rules suggest that the monasteries took great care in examining the credentials of travelling clerics taking residence (*guadan*), although they seem to have been more concerned with checking the religious lineage documents than the civilian *dudie*.⁸ The 1736–39 census was motivated by these preoccupations. It aimed at separating the honest, rule-abiding clerics—conforming to the offi-

戒壇

掛單

⁷ For examples from the Republican period, see Prip-Moller 1967 [1937]:326–39.

⁸ For instance, the *Qinggui xuanmiao* (The Secret marvels of the Pure Rules), an authoritative compendium of rules and procedures of late imperial Taoist monasticism, by Min Yide (1758–1836), *Gushu yinlou zangshu* edition, pays great attention to checking the *fapai* (1.1a–b) but does not mention the *dudie*.

cial ideal of a chaste, sober, old man secluded in a large monastery and devoted solely to meditation—from their opposites, called “monks supported by calls (for religious services)” (*yingfu seng*),⁹ clerics travelling, visiting laymen, and begging, and the “Taoists living at home” (*huoju daoshi*).

Although there were certainly cases of criminals or other rogues disguised as clerics, the *yingfu seng* were usually real clerics that did not have the chance or the wherewithal to live in a rich large monastery. Among this “clerical underclass,” as Philip Kuhn describes them, one could find many novices not yet fully ordained, some of whom traveled around the country for education, devotion, or in search of a temple that would accept and support them. The largest part, although not vagrant, would spend most of their time answering devotees’ calls for liturgical services at houses or temples. Trying to apply to them the standards of the large contemplative monasteries was a bit ludicrous.¹⁰

Accordingly, there were degrees in the zeal of the state towards implementing the *dudie* policy. During the Ming, the harsh policies of the late Hongwu reign, which probably had a real effect on the size of the clerical population, soon gave way to two centuries of laxity.¹¹ Although the Ming state tried to maintain quotas for the number of clerics, it is likely that those ordained illegally lived their religious career unhindered. The Qing state did not bring much innovation to the religious policy of its predecessors, and even dropped some cumbersome measures that the Ming had tried to implement. It discontinued the examinations that qualified the novices for ordina-

⁹ This term, rather uncommon in official literature, appears in the first decree dated 1735 discussed below and in all subsequent decrees. Its meaning in this context is not altogether clear. In a routine memorial dated Qianlong 3.12.3 concerning a judicial case (the death of a monk in a Sichuanese monastery), the term seems to mean “a monk who has not yet been ordained and applied for a *dudie*.” See *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo xiancun Qingdai neige daku yuanzang Ming Qing dang’an* (Documents of the Ming and Qing Dynasties from the Main Archives of the Grand Secretariat of the Qing Court now held by the Institute for History and Philology of the Academia Sinica), 1986, vol. 86, p. 48900. It is certainly a variant of the more common *yingfu* seng*, which means a monk living in a temple but answering calls for (mainly funeral) services at people’s homes; see Welch 1968:198. This word was used in a 1725 decree, where the Yongzheng emperor had begun to sketch the distinction between respectable and despicable clerics: Da Qing huidian shili 809. lb. The term is often applied to both Buddhists and Taoists. It was already used in a Ming ballad describing priests of both religions running to laymen’s homes to perform various rites. Chen Duo’s (ca. 1454–1507) “Daoren yingfu” (*Quan Ming sanqu*, p. 613–14) is an acerbic critique of what he perceives as the unspiritual life of these pedlars of liturgical services, but it provides a rather eloquent testimony on the existence of the *yingfu* clergy as a social category as early as the 15th century. The glossary *Tongsu bian*, written about the time of our census, has an entry for *yingfu seng* which it defines as a modern name for those practising *yujia* (skt. *yoga*), actually meaning in modern Buddhism, tantrism, and hence funerary rites (*Tongsu bian* 20.9b; the other editions of this work that I could use are not as complete as the one used here and do not include the entry on *yingfu seng*); the same definition could already be found in the slightly earlier miscellany *Jianhuji jia* 1.8b–9a. An early nineteenth-century description of Suzhou says that the Taoist and Buddhist priests of the city would gather every morning at their respective rallying point (and wait for calls for rituals): that was called “joining those answering calls”, *ben fuying* (*Wumen biaoyin*, p. 22). The mercantile nature of such vocations was abhorrent to the supposedly disinterested scholars and officials.

¹⁰ Kuhn 1990:42–46, 107–11.

¹¹ Brook 1997.

應付僧
火居道士

應付

tions and also dropped the administrative quota. The Ming took steps to define and impose standard liturgies and rules on the monastic communities, whereas the Qing emperors did not venture into such questions. Apart from a few census takings, the Qing state very rarely took an active interest into the clergy. Many Qing official texts actually express the belief that the religious institutions will slowly lose their relevance and that the numbers of clerics will decrease by themselves, which strikingly prefigures some contemporary thinking. In such conditions, it was generally considered acceptable to let *bona fide* clerics live their life. Of course, this mainstream attitude did not prevent the occasional fiery memorial asking for all monks to be forcibly married to nuns and other such propositions that seem to constitute a specific sub-genre of hard-line Confucian rhetoric. The general disinterest of the state towards religious institutions explains the fact that very few documents pertaining to their activity can be found in administrative sources, either printed or archived.

However, in detail, there were very frequent changes of policy, documented in the *Da Qing huidian shili*.¹² As to the distribution of *dudie*, every few years brought a reversal of the procedures: given to those who knew the basic scriptures from 1632 (in Manchu-controlled territories), they were then sold from 1640 to 1645. They were again sold in 1649 and the previous *dudie* had to be returned, but this ended in 1651. The *dudie* in circulation had to be returned again in 1658, to be exchanged for bilingual (Manchu-Chinese) ones, and for this a fee was imposed. The fee disappeared in 1660 and a census was taken in 1667. The distribution of *dudie* was discontinued in 1676 but partial distributions took place soon thereafter. The *Da Qing huidian shili* is silent for the decades preceding 1736 and we, therefore, have no idea of the documents possessed by the monks and priests at that time. To be sure, all of them had the ordination documents given by the religious institutions, but the administrative literature does not mention that these were given any official value.

The 1736–1739 census

As we have seen above, the Qing state several times felt that it had lost control of the religious population, recalled all certificates, and registered the whole clergy anew. Such a decision was taken by the young Qianlong emperor at the very beginning of his reign, possibly to give the impression that he was capable of exerting a very firm control over all quarters of society. The clergy was prominent among those he saw as enemies of an orderly society, since some leaders of sectarian movements were monks. Another reason for his mistrust was that a large population of uncontrolled vagrant clerics could

¹² For a presentation and English translation of the section of *Da Qing huidian shili* concerning the clergy, see De Groot 1903, vol. 1, 96–136, and especially on the *dudie*, 109–12.

be a cause for social unrest, as would be the case during the 1768 sorcery scare.¹³ The census might be an expression of the emperor's fears towards the clerical population, but it did little to assuage them.

In a decree (*yu*) dated from the eleventh month of Yongzheng 13 (14 December 1735 to 12 January 1736),¹⁴ he proclaimed his policy with regard to the clergy.¹⁵ His discourse begins with the traditional Confucian attacks on the clerics: they eat food and wear clothes without producing anything, they indulge in luxury and own much more than they need, and they do not abide by their own rules, especially concerning sexual activities. Yet, the emperor protects the three religions and can not hinder those who sincerely wish to lead an honest religious life. He therefore announces that only these people will be given *dudie*. He requests advice on a procedure¹⁶ that was promulgated in 1736 through another decree.¹⁷ The “real” monks are to be given *dudie* without any further complication, whereas the *yingfu seng* and the *huoju daoshi* are to be questioned and given the choice between a normal religious life residing in a temple (*shou siyuan*) or a return to lay status. However, if they choose to live in a temple, they are to be given discriminating treatment and are not allowed to have disciples.

The whole measure was contrived to be the last *dudie* distribution ever: each cleric was to adopt (after reaching the age of 40) one disciple who would eventually inherit his master's *dudie*: after his death, the disciple is to ask the local magistrate to add his name on the document. Yet, if the master or the disciple committed a crime, the *dudie* was to be destroyed.¹⁸ This ingenious policy, designed to accompany the “natural” decadence of the clergy, proved to be unworkable a few years later, for even some of the best members of the religious administration were found to be without a certificate. The cycle began all over again, and the Board of Rites issued more *dudie*,¹⁹ although on a much smaller scale.

DQLL, art. 77 tiaoli 6

DQLL art. 77 條例/tiaoli 7
Correspond partiellement au DLCY 私翽
庵院及私度僧道-04,

¹³ Kuhn 1990.

¹⁴ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.2b xia –3a shang. This text and the following ones from the *Da Qing huidian shili* are partially included in *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8487 sq., which also has a late 1735 text recording the young Qianlong emperor's disappointment with the personal conduct of the elite clerics (mostly Buddhist monks) invited to court for intellectual company by his father the Yongzheng emperor, and linking this feeling to his decision to launch the census campaign. On the clerical entourage of the Yongzheng emperor, see the documents and discussions gathered in Liu Yuhong 1997. Basic features of the successive census decrees edicted between 1735 and 1740 were also incorporated in the code as statutes, which appears in the “population control” section of the *Da Qing huidian shili* 752.6a–7b.

¹⁵ The monks of Tibetan Buddhism (most of them Mongols) did not seem to be affected by the Yongzheng 13 policy. They were governed by specific regulations, and *dudie* were given to them much more generously. Even then, only a fraction of the 350,000 or so Mongol monks had a *dudie* under the Qing: see Charleux 1998, pp. 177–78.

¹⁶ The text of the collective and anonymous advice is preserved in *Longhu shan zhi* (Gazetteer of the Longhu mountain) 8.35b–37b, 1740 edition.

¹⁷ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3a shang–4a shang.

¹⁸ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4a xia –b shang.

¹⁹ 1774 answer to a memorial, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.6a shang - xia.

The registration procedure was entrusted to the local magistrates and to the regional governors, but not to the religious administration, whose area of competence seems to have been small indeed during the Qing. All requests were submitted, with credentials, to the magistrates who passed them over to the governors, whose services drafted lists (*qingce*) and then transmitted them to the Board of Rites. The latter issued the certificates that were handed down the hierarchical line and given over to the recipient by the local magistrate in his audience hall. The 1736–1739 campaign was thus completely disconnected from the religious procedures of ordination, although the decree states that, from the end of the census onwards, only after having been registered on one's master's *dudie* could one go to an ordination platform.

This registration policy remained unchanged during the entire three-year campaign. However, some of the accompanying measures showed conflicting pressures that conditioned the state's action towards the clergy. In his initial statement of 1735, the emperor announced that the “excess property” of the religious institutions would be seized and handed over to the public domain.²⁰ The decree of 1736 confirmed the census procedures but stopped all property seizures due to the panic the decision had prompted: clerics sold their lands hastily to brokers and a great deal of corruption on all sides ensued. The decree then explained that it did not mean that religious property was ill-used and that, after all, the public treasuries did not need them.

The emperor also had to do some tongue-biting on the subject of the *yingfu seng* and *huoju daoshi*. The whole census was designed to isolate them from the “good clerics,” but some of them eventually got certificates nonetheless. Such independent clerics had no family to rely on if they reverted to lay life,²¹ or had attained such an age that they deserved to be left in peace: they were therefore to be given *dudie*, or, in the case of the *huoju daoshi*, Ministry's Licenses (*buzhao*), a variant version of the Certificate.²² The argument seems

律 77 | 私創庵院及私度僧道：
（小註：“地基材料入
官”。

²⁰ A slightly later gazetteer of a small county, south of Xi'an (Shaanxi), quotes a Yongzheng 13 decree that calls for the registration by county magistrates of all temples' land and renews the classical ban on their sale by the clerics: (*Qianlong*) *Zhen'an xian zhi* 9.6a–b. The gazetteer indeed provides data on some monasteries' landholdings, a very rare information in Qing local gazetteers: (*Qianlong*) *Zhen'an xian zhi* 9.3a–6a. Although this source does not mention the clerical census, and the decree does not appear in compendia such as the *Da Qing huidian shili*, it would seem that this policy was linked to the seizure of “excess property” mentioned in the 1735 decree. It may thus be that the 1736–39 campaign, which gave the county *yamen* more information on the local clergy than they ever had (and would have later), had concurrently, at least in some places, the similar function of surveying the religious landholdings.

²¹ One can only wonder what the state meant by forcibly reverting to lay life *huoju daoshi*. The forcible secularisation (*huansu*), that is mandated so often in the code for guilty clerics, is a bit clarified by local archival documents. The Qingdai Qian-Ja-Dao Baxian dang'an xuanbian, 1989, p. 64 has an example of a secularisation declaration, signed by a cleric who had lost his action in court, and that prevented him from ever taking again residence in any temple.

²² The *yingfu seng* were originally to receive only *buzhao* like the *huoju daoshi*, and this was stated again in 1739 (*Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4b *xia*), but it is not clear in other sources whether they were actually discriminated in the same fashion, and denied regular *dudie*.

還俗

plausible enough, but it was probably pure rhetoric, especially in the case of the *huoju daoshi*. Since the Song, the state wanted the Taoists to conform to the Buddhist ideal of celibacy and monastic life. Theoretically, it was illegal to be a married *daoshi* living at home and wearing ritual garments only when performing rituals. That was, however, and continues to this day, to be exactly what the majority of Taoists did. Celibacy and a sort of communal living had existed since the fourth century among Taoists of all schools, but was always a minority. The Quanzhen order, which appeared in 1170, was the first and only truly monastic order within Taoism. Its influence was very large but certainly did not convert the majority of Taoists to celibacy.²³ In the census, the only Taoists to be given *dudie* were the Quanzhen Taoists, but the state realised that it could neither condemn its own census to irrelevance nor change a perennial state of affairs.²⁴ It therefore decided to issue *buzhao* (two different kinds, as we shall see) to some non-Quanzhen Taoists. Similar exceptions to the letter of the law were provided for novices and young nuns, not registered in the census. They were allowed to remain novices until the age of 20, when they finally had to secure an ordination or return to lay life. However, older novices, when unable to go back to a viable existence outside the temple, were allowed to stay on.

全真

部照

Such a conciliatory stance, with regard to the initial objectives, was not enough. A decree dated 1737²⁵ reaffirmed the right of the religious institutions to prosper. It was written in reaction to a memorial to the throne (*zouzhe*) submitted by the governor of Anhui, Zhao Guolin (1673–1751), who was arguing for a very limited interpretation of the decree and for a minimal number of clerics. The emperor explicitly rejected Zhang's argument and explained that his intention was not to downsize the clergy. Having unleashed anti-religious zeal among its field bureaucracy through his first rather anticlerical decree, the Qianlong emperor was now obliged to present the clergy as a very honourable profession. Such individual initiatives and changes in the official tone certainly influenced the actual working of the census over the course of the 3-year campaign. Magistrates acting upon their more or less accurate idea of the official policy or upon their own convictions certainly gave different interpretations of the decrees, issuing the certificates liberally or with restraint. Another possibility for magistrates bent on anti-religious policy was provided as the procedures for revoking already issued *dudie* were immediately en-

²³ Chen Yuan 1962 [1941]; Goossaert 1997.

²⁴ The status of *huoju daoshi* was actually recognized by the local magistrates; we find Taoist families (*daohu*) in the fragments of population registers in the Baxian archives. See for example *Qingdai Qian-Jia-Dao Baxian dang'an xuanbian* (Selection of Archival Documents from Baxian of the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Daoguang reigns of the Qing Dynasty), 1996, 342–44. The state itself employed married Taoists (*daoding*, registered in *daohu*) for the keeping of the tombs of the first Manchu emperors in Manchuria, and other temples: *Libu zeli*, 170.8b–9b, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.6b xia.

²⁵ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.4a shang - xia.

forced, and lists of these revoked certificates were also compiled by the Board of Rites.

During a research trip in Beijing in July 1997, I found in the Number One Historical Archives (Diyi Lishi dang'an guan) two annual reports by the Board of Rites to the throne, covering the periods Qianlong 2.10.1 to Qianlong 3.10.29 (22 November 1737 to 9 December 1738)²⁶ and Qianlong 3.11.10 to Qianlong 4.10.30 (29 December 1738 to 30 November 1739),²⁷ providing details about the numbers of certificates issued. In the same batch was another *huangce* summarising 1316 cases of revoked *dudie* between Qianlong 1.9.1 and Qianlong 2.8.30 (5 October 1736 to 23 September 1737). The census, as documented by the *Da Qing huidian shili*, was conducted over three years and registered 340,112 clerics, either Buddhist or Taoist. Our evidence, therefore, covers two thirds of the period of the census but only a little over one third of the registered clergy. It is not known what happened to the first *huangce* (covering the 1736–37 period): it may have been lost, or may still be in the archives in a uncatalogued batch. In any case, the figures are confirmed and further detailed by a copy, kept by the Censorate branch for the Board of Rites (Like), of a routine memorial (*tiben*) by the Manchu minister of rites Santai.²⁸ According to this document 217,124 certificates were issued the first year (Qianlong 1.9 to 2.10), 99,730 the second (Qianlong 2.11 to 3.10), and 23,259 the third (Qianlong 3.11 to 4.10), for the total of 340,113. With a very narrow margin of error due to accounting mistakes, this fits perfectly with our two *huangce*, and shows that most registrations were made during the first year, for which the *huangce* is still missing. However, as we shall see below, it is still possible to infer significant information from the currently available data.

The two *huangce* were compiled by the Board of Rites and signed by Santai. They are written in a very clear and regular script, are perfectly calibrated, without any variation in either the format or the wording, which allows for quick reading despite their size. They are divided first by province, secondly by prefectures (*fu* or *zhili zhou*), and thirdly by county (*xian* or *zhou*).²⁹ For each county, the clerics are classified into five categories:

²⁶ Dated Qianlong 3.12.19 (28 January 1739).

²⁷ Dated Qianlong 4.12.20 (18 January 1740).

²⁸ *Like tiben* dated Qianlong 4.12, Number One Historical Archives, Beijing. I have not found any biographical data on Santai, but the tables in the *Qing shigao* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1977, j. 22, 6536–93) show that he spent most of his career in the Board of Rites, being vice-minister from 1723 to 1728 and Manchu minister from 1731 to 1745, when he retired.

²⁹ In the present article, I have included subprefectures (*ting*) among counties, and I have not taken the garrisons (*wei*, *suo*) into consideration. My reconstruction of the total number of counties for the 1736–1739 period is based on Niu Pinghan 1990. A few garrisons have entries in the *huangce*, but they represent together less than one hundred clerics.

Buddhist monks, *sengren*
 Buddhist nuns, *niseng*
 Quanzhen Taoists, *Quanzhen daoshi*
 Qingwei Lingbao Taoists, *Qingwei Lingbao daoshi*
 Taoists living at home, *huoju daoshi*

A total of the number of clerics per county is provided, as well as the total per category in each province, and the total number per year is given at the beginning of each *huangce*.

These five categories deserve to be commented upon. They are not symmetrical: the Buddhist clergy is divided by gender, which is not the case of the Taoists, although we know that there were monks and nuns (*nüguan*) among the Quanzhen Taoists, whereas the two last categories comprised mainly, but not exclusively, men. The last two categories stand apart, because they did not receive *dudie* but Ministry's Licenses, *buzhao*. It should be observed that both kinds of documents, *dudie* and *buzhao*, were equivalent and accounted together as *diezhao*. The totals of the *huangce*—and therefore of our own figures in Part 2—encompass both kinds.

Why was the census held over three years? The various decrees state no reason for this. From the results it would seem that, in most counties, the census was conducted in a single year. Of the 737 counties documented in our two *huangce*, only 33 have numbers for both 1737–38 and 1738–39 (for a total of 345 persons registered the second year). Many of them, however, carry a minimal number (1 in many cases). It is possible that some magistrates disliked the whole operation and exerted some passive resistance by returning only one certificate. Reactions such as Zhao Guolin's memorial mentioned above suggest the strong possibility that it was more difficult to register in some counties than in others. However, in most cases, it is likely that a thorough census was taken during the first year (1736–37) and that the numbers for the subsequent years are merely complements, such as a person just ordained, or somebody left out the first time. Our basic hypothesis is that in most counties the census was conducted in one of the three years that the campaign lasted. Different counties in a province, or even a prefecture, did not necessarily conduct the census in the same year. This would imply that the census was meant, from the beginning, to be carried out over several years, although it is not stated in the initial decree.

There are exceptions that make the lack of the missing *huangce* especially unfortunate. The categories that were most severely controlled (nuns, Qingwei Lingbao, and *huoju daoshi*) were obviously registered apart in some counties. For instance, in all seven counties of Jiaying prefecture (Zhejiang), as well as in other Zhejiang counties, our extant registers have only nuns. It seems strange

that the magistrates of these counties would have chosen to register the different kinds of clerics in separate years. It is more likely that they were at first hostile to any registration of the nuns and were eventually compelled to do so under pressure from the central government. There was a traditional bureaucratic hostility towards nunneries, and these were especially numerous in Zhejiang. The 1736 decree mentions nuns (and points at Zhejiang nuns) as a category which stood, like the *yinfu seng* and the *huoju daoshi*, at the limit of the normative definition of the clergy but which was eventually included.³⁰ Such cases, however, are not numerous, and we have to consider that our figures usually introduce no bias regarding the five categories of the clergy.

For all these reasons, we have called “documented provinces” those for which significant results are available, and “documented counties” those with a total of more than 20 clerics, admittedly a low limit, since the total of 340,112 would provide for an average of 220 per county. Although they are obviously not well documented, we did not disqualify the counties that registered only Buddhist monks, of which there are a relatively significant number. Therefore, out of the 737 counties documented in our two *huangce*, 577 are documented, of which 497 lay within documented provinces. One can see on the maps 1, 3, 4, and 5 the great landmasses of uniformly undocumented areas; however, not all regions in white are documented. Needless to say, if the remaining *huangce* were ever to be found, our analysis would gain in precision and scope, and the extrapolation exercise would become obsolete.

Taking back what was just given

The 1736–1739 census had probably exhausted the field bureaucracy’s interest regarding the question of the clergy, but the magistrates and governors were reminded as early as 1740 that the original edict included a clause for a regular follow-up. The emphasis was again put on the diminution of the number of certificates, and governors were to compile annual registers of the suppressed certificates.³¹ In the last reversal of policy in this story, a decree dated 1754 stated that the suppression had gone too far and that the procedure was to be discontinued.

The follow-up operations are documented by the memorials to the throne submitted by the provincial governors. A *qingce* or *huangce* was attached to some of the memorials, but none of them seem to have survived. Such memorials can be found among the palace memorials kept and published in Taipei,³²

cf. DQLL, art. 77 tiaoli 5

³⁰ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3b shang.

³¹ Edict dated 1740, *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.5a shang. A *fuzhun* dated 1742 specifies that the lists have to be *huangce* sent directly to the throne, and not simple *qingce* sent to the Ministry; *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.5a shang.

³² *Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe* (Memorials to the Throne from the Qianlong Reign in the Palace Archives), 1983, vols. 1 to 7.

covering the period from Qianlong 16.7.13 to 19.1.26³³ (2 Sept 1751 to 17 Feb 1754). They all quote the 1740 decree, but the scope of their factual information varies. The more detailed ones provide the total number of certificates issued during the 1736–39 census and the number of certificates suppressed since that date. They therefore supplement the figures from the *huangce*.

Some memorials mention the two reasons for the suppression of a *dudie*: death or condemnation of the owner. As the proportion of the *buzhao* (the only one to be suppressed at the death of the owner) to the total number is not known for any province, and as the proportion of the certificates suppressed for other reasons is not known either, it is impossible to draw any demographic conclusion from the given data. The various numbers allow us to compute annual suppression rates varying between 0.6 and 4.4%, but usually included between 1 and 2.5%. An average rate of 2% would cut the clergy by half in 34 years. This rather high rate could either mean a very high percentage of *buzhao*, or, more likely, that many *dudie* were actually not transmitted from master to disciple. The later hypothesis is strongly confirmed by the fact that the few memorials which mention the *dudie* transferred at their owner's death provide very low numbers. Therefore, the policy of a self-perpetuating corpus of *dudie* very quickly became irrelevant, and the majority of the clergy found itself again without state-sanctioned certificates.

This is confirmed by a memorial submitted by the governor-general of Liangjiang (Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Anhui provinces) during the 1768 sorcery scare that provoked the beginning of an inquisition towards the clerical population. The governor-general himself checked the clerical registers for several counties and found that they had never been updated since the initial census. As the procedure of inscribing one's disciple's name on one's *dudie* was not respected either, it ensued that "only 20% or 30% of the local clerics has a *dudie*."³⁴ The fact that country *yamen* felt no interest in the *dudie* registers is further proved by the absence of reference to them in contemporary gazetteers.³⁵ At the highest level, the 1851 edition of the Ministry of Rites' regulations (*Libu zeli*), although it kept some decisions made during the 1736–39 campaign regarding the conditions for entering the clergy, completely dropped any reference to the *dudie*.³⁶ Routinization, so infamous within the Qing administration, had struck the procedures for clerical control as soon as the cen-

DQLL, art. 77 /tiaoli 5
Art. disparu du DLCY,
suite à décret 1754 ?

³³ They concern the following provinces: Jiangsu (2), Guangxi (3), Hubei (3), Yunnan (3), Anhui (3), Hunan (3), Shandong (2), Shaanxi (3), Gansu (2), Shanxi (2), Jiangxi (2), Zhili (1), Guizhou (1), Sichuan (1), Fujian (1).

³⁴ Kuhn 1990:43–44. A 1777 statute even suggests that the practice of transmitting one's *dudie* to one's disciple was by then officially discontinued: Da Qing huidian shili 752.7a.

³⁵ I could not find any reference to the *dudie* registration nor to the question of clerical population in any of the twenty-nine county or prefecture gazetteers compiled between 1736 and 1755 that I could use.

³⁶ *Libu zeli*, 170.5a–6a.

sus had ended, and quickly turned the impressive registration work into meaningless paperwork.

Viewed from this angle, the whole operation of the 1736–39 census appears as an episode of no durable historical significance. Like so many other policies of strong social control, it only lasted for a few years before slipping into oblivion. However, it has for us a unique interest in that it provides a comprehensive view of the clergy on a national scale. Before moving to the analysis of the census results, there is another aspect of the census policy that calls for discussion: the way the Taoist clergy was conceived by the state and divided into three categories. Whereas the division of the Buddhists between monks and nuns is straightforward, the tripartition of the Taoists is unique for the entire late imperial history and raises rather complex terminological problems.

The census and the Taoist clergy

It is rather difficult to contextualize the Taoist data of the census, since late imperial institutional history of Taoism is only in its incipient stage. There is no substantial study on this topic and sources (most importantly gazetteers and epigraphy) only begin to be easily available. Many aspects of the initiation procedures and communal life, for instance, are only known from twentieth-century fieldwork done by Japanese and Western scholars. The real importance of the Taoists living at home has only come to light during the last few decades. I shall therefore only make hypotheses concerning the classifications used by the census.

As we have seen, the state considered the Quanzhen Taoists as the only ones worthy of a *dudie*, and granted *buzhao* to a selected number of other Taoists, divided between Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju*.³⁷ Who were the Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi* and what made them different from the *huoju daoshi*? None of the official documents gathered for this study, either in archival or published sources, clearly address this question. The term Qingwei Lingbao itself is altogether absent from the documents gathered in the *Da Qing huidian shili*, and can only be found in the 1736 procedure submitted (and adopted) to the emperor, extant in the *Longhu shanzhi*.³⁸ For a historian of Taoism, this riddle is further compounded by the lack of an obvious other category, the Zhengyi. The Zhengyi is an ancient name of the school of the Heavenly Master, Tianshi, from the Zhang family. From the Ming onwards, all Taoists were officially divided between Quanzhen and Zhengyi.³⁹ The latter received their

³⁷ The *Da Qing huidian* (55.3a, 1764 ed.) has an entry on the certificates saying that Buddhists receive a *dudie* whereas the Taoists receive a *zhizhao*: this must be a mistake or an earlier law that was never applied.

³⁸ See note 16.

³⁹ *Mingshi* (History of the Ming Dynasty, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), j. 74, “zhiguan 3” (officials), p. 1818; Ishida Kenji 1992:145–95.

ordination within a loose system whose head was the Tianshi himself. But the authority of the Heavenly Master was precisely put into question at the time of the census, as the early Qianlong period witnessed several anti-Zhengyi measures.⁴⁰

The Qing state maintained the special status given to the Zhang Tianshi by the Ming. He was nominal head of the Taoist administration, and his residence on the Longhu shan (Jiangxi) as well as a number of institutions on this mountain benefited from a sort of extraterritoriality. There the Heavenly Master reigned as a sort of small-scale emperor. Around the time of the census, the acting Heavenly Master, Zhang Zhaolin,⁴¹ took his role as the head of a nation-wide ordination system seriously. He himself visited the various provinces to hold ordination platforms, or selected other Taoists to do so in his name and gave them licenses bearing his seal. One such license (*zhaopiao*), issued in 1704, has recently been found in possession of a Taoist family from Hunan.⁴² In classical administrative style, it quotes the early Qing imperial edict trusting the Heavenly Master with maintaining orthodoxy within Taoism, and confers on the recipient the quality of a practitioner of pure Taoist liturgy, uncontaminated by local shamanistic traditions. Although the purity of classical Taoist liturgy was perhaps not what the first Qing emperors had in mind when they confirmed the Heavenly Master in his role as guardian of orthodoxy, the elite clerics of the Heavenly Master's office (*Zhenren fu*) did take seriously their duty of controlling the practice of local Taoists, at least in the provinces around the Longhu shan.

The itinerant activities of the Heavenly Master's emissaries of course met with the resistance of some local magistrates, which is documented in two routine memorials (*like tiben*) dated Qianlong 4.4.21 (18 May 1739) and 4.5.18 (23 June 1739) kept at the Number One Historical Archives. Answering to complaints by Guizhou and Hubei governors about Taoist officials managing ordination platforms in the name of the Heavenly Master, Santai answered convolutedly by remarking that such ordinations have been practised for centuries without any apparent problem, but eventually he recommended that such activities be banned. The prohibition was indeed issued in 1739.⁴³ Thereafter, the Heavenly Master's authority was, in official texts, strictly confined to the Longhu shan.⁴⁴ To what extent these decisions actually undermined his direct control over the Taoist clergy remains to be ascertained.

照票

⁴⁰ On the relationship between the Zhengyi and the state at that time, see Hosoya Yoshio 1987 and Qing Xitai (ed.) 1995:59–77.

⁴¹ Zhang Zhaolin was the brother of the 55th Heavenly Master Zhang Xilin (died 1727), whose son, Zhang Yulong, was proclaimed 56th Heavenly Master in 1742. It is characteristic that the state took the opportunity of a regency to curtail the power of a hereditary function.

⁴² The text of the license is reproduced in Liu Jinfeng 2000:263.

⁴³ *Da Qing Huidian shili*, “Zhengyi zhenren shili” (Precedents concerning the Zhengyi zhenren) 501.8a shang; *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8494. See also Hosoya Yoshio 1987:577–81.

⁴⁴ *Libu zeli* 170.3b–4b mentions early 19th century cases of the Heavenly Master recruiting or ordaining Taoists outside the mountain or naming supernumerary officials, and details the subsequent official reaction.

Whereas the Quanzhen order had approximately twenty state-sanctioned ordination platforms,⁴⁵ the non-Quanzhen Taoists had only the Heavenly Master to rely on. Usually, in a Taoist lineage, only one master went to a ceremony directed by the Heavenly Master and then transmitted his ordination rank locally in the name of the Heavenly Master in absentia.⁴⁶ It was also possible for a master several generations down the lineage to return to the Longhu shan and renew his ordination rank. The 1739 decree does not make clear whether it was still legal for an individual to go to the Longhu shan for an ordination and return home afterwards. In any case, the state obviously found that being adopted by one master was enough, and that going through a real ordination ritual was not necessary. It is also possible that the standard Taoist ordination (implying one master and one disciple, although encapsulated in a full scale communal ritual) was tacitly condoned, and only collective ordinations were really banned. This would be in plain contradiction to the policy adopted for the Buddhists and Quanzhen Taoists, whose ordinations were limited to the grand ceremonies held at the state-sanctioned platforms.⁴⁷

The context is further illuminated, or rather obscured, by the *Longhu shanzhi*, which was published in 1740, just at the end of this census. The compiler, Lou Jinyuan (1689–1776), was one of the most eminent Taoists of the time. A dignitary of the Longhu shan administration, he was invited to the court in 1727 where he was given many honors,⁴⁸ and a role in the religious discussions held in the palace under the Yongzheng and early Qianlong reigns, and, most importantly, liturgical functions at the court. Probably with the help of Lou's influence, the Taoists living on the Longhu shan were granted a special status, and their *dudie* were not granted by the secular authorities but by the Heavenly Master himself.⁴⁹ However, such measures tended to seclude the mountain as an isolated fortress. It is very remarkable that in his extensive work, which includes a document pertaining to the 1736–39 census, Lou does not mention once the ordinations performed at the Longhu shan or outside the

龍虎山志

⁴⁵ An early twentieth-century list is given in Yoshioka Yoshitoyo 1952:221.

⁴⁶ Sakai Tadao 1992 thinks that during the late Qing, and in relation to the policy on Zhengyi ordinations, there was a trend for the Heavenly Master's monopoly on ordinations to loosen, and for local ordinations to become the norm.

⁴⁷ To abide by the letter of the law, monks and nuns themselves did not actually need to have undergone a religious ordination; they just had to obey the monastic rules. The administrative texts did their utmost to avoid mentioning any specific religious institutions (such as ordinations or rituals). Their use of the term "monastic rules" is also very vague; it does not refer to a precise text and basically means "to be chaste and not to have any activity outside the monastery."

⁴⁸ Lou was notably in charge of the Qin'an dian, the temple devoted to Zhenwu and used for the cult of the living emperor's personal destiny, located at the very north of the Forbidden City. On Lou, see Hosoya Yoshio 1986.

⁴⁹ *Qingchao xu wenxian tongkao* p. 8494, *Longhu shan zhi* 8.37a.

mountain by its masters, especially since this was both economically and symbolically the main *raison d'être* of this religious complex. Once again, gazetteers appear as a remarkably laconic source. Lou only gave of his mountain the official point of view promoted by the state.

Pending further research, we can consider that the state chose to ignore the name Zhengyi in order to avoid recognition of the ordination system of the Heavenly Master that it tried to curtail.⁵⁰ Why choose Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* instead? Qingwei and Lingbao are both originally names of ancient ordination systems. The Qingwei, a ritual school that made a broad synthesis of previous revelations and of the then all-fashionable thunder rites (*leifa*), appeared around the mid-thirteenth century.⁵¹ The Lingbao formed in the fifth century and was the source of all later communal rituals. A reformed Lingbao liturgy, from the Song onwards, became actually the main thrust of Taoist salvation-oriented ritual.⁵² It is also the name of a separate ordination system based at Gezao shan (Jiangxi). Together with Longhu shan and Maoshan (Jiangsu),⁵³ they formed the three mountains, *sanshan*, that gained official status in the Song as the backbone of the Taoist ordination system.

In the beginning of the Ming, Qingwei and Lingbao were prominent among the various names given to the competing/complementary ritual traditions (including lineages and scriptures). As the result of a process which probably took place between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, Qingwei Lingbao seemingly became the name of a unified grand liturgical tradition, and modern Qingwei Lingbao Taoists consider themselves as the elite of the Taoist clergy. In contemporary China, only Taoists ordained in a Qingwei Lingbao lineage may conduct (as *gaogong*) the grand offering rituals (*jiao*).⁵⁴ In our census, they are, depending on the counties, called either Qingwei Lingbao, Qingwei, or Lingbao. This reflects the variation in other sources: for instance, Beijing's Taoists who were not Quanzhen were simply called Qingwei. Whether that echoes differences in local ordination lineages or just usage will have to await further studies.⁵⁵ In any case, it seems that the decrees of the 1736–39 census are the first official documents to name the Qingwei Lingbao as the main non-Quanzhen Taoist ordination system. The ordinations presided by

清微靈寶

⁵⁰ Although Hosoya Yoshio 1987:580–81 is certainly wrong in distinguishing Zhengyi and Lingbao as two different lineages (*pai*), he points out with much reason that, in official eyes, Zhengyi and Longhu shan were coextensive and that therefore nobody outside the mountain was allowed to claim a Zhengyi identity.

⁵¹ Schipper 1992:715–31.

⁵² The Lingbao liturgy is also practiced by Quanzhen Taoists, with a few variants.

⁵³ Maoshan has been since the fourth century the center of the Shangqing tradition, although, in modern times, it has become more concerned with newer ritual traditions.

⁵⁴ Personal communication, Kristofer Schipper.

⁵⁵ The Longhu shan Taoists are called Qingwei Zhengyi in the 1736 proposition for the registration procedures (*Longhu shan zhi* 8.37a).

the Tianshi actually conferred ranks within a multi-layered spiritual hierarchy, the highest of which was called Qingwei Lingbao and not Zhengyi. Thus the decision by the state to issue Qingwei Lingbao certificates may also seem to reflect a surprising will to keep abreast of the institutional evolutions within Taoism.

How could the state recognise a Qingwei Lingbao Taoist? This raises the thorny question of the authority the state conferred to Taoist ordinations as such. Indeed, the Qingwei Lingbao Taoists cannot be judged by how they abide by their rules since they do not have any set of rules,⁵⁶ monastic or otherwise, which apply to all of them. The only objective way for the state was thus to consider their ordination register (*fapai*), although we have seen that, during the same time, the Qing state tried to limit the possibilities for such ordinations. Even if the state had recognised Taoist ordination grades, there would be no room left for a category such as “*huoju daoshi*” which has no meaning whatsoever as far as ordinations are concerned. Moreover, the difference between Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* could not lie within the question of celibacy versus married life. Most Qingwei Lingbao *daoshi* were actually *huoju*; although some of them did live celibate lives (*chujia*) in cloisters,⁵⁷ others abode by monastic rules for limited periods while on a formative stay within a community, and others still kept their homes in temples.

From the little evidence presented in official texts, it would seem that distinctions between Taoist terms were too far-fetched, and that magistrates did not go in for such subtleties. To be sure, the state did not explain clearly what its own interpretation of these canonical terms was, yet the 1736 decree implies that all Qingwei Lingbao Taoists had to live in temples (*wu jiashi shixin zhumiao fenxiu*)⁵⁸ to be recognized as such. This would make better sense of the term *huoju* thus becoming its opposite. Of course, taking Qingwei Lingbao as meaning “a married Taoist living in a temple” is awkward, but after all the late imperial state had a history of imposing exonyms on religious institutions.⁵⁹ If our interpretation is correct, the *huoju daoshi* are to be understood in the 1736–1739 official context as Taoists who, although working in temples, did not live in them.⁶⁰ This does not exclude, in purely Taoist terms, the possibility that they were actually also Qingwei Lingbao Taoists.

⁵⁶ Rules (*gui*) should be distinguished from precepts (*jie*), that engage the adept privately towards the gods, and are therefore not liable to enforcement.

⁵⁷ They then received celibate precepts very similar to those of the Quanzhen, and those living in convents also obeyed the rules of their convent. Lou Jinyuan himself was *chujia*.

⁵⁸ *Da Qing huidian shili* 501.3b xia; *Longhu shan zhi* 8.35b–37b.

⁵⁹ ter Haar 1992, chapter 6 “Label and pseudo-autonym,” 196–246.

⁶⁰ It should also be noted that, already in the early Ming, “Taoists called Lingbao and *huoju*” were outlawed; *Libu zhigao* 89.14b.

It is not altogether impossible that the bipartition was originally intended to separate Taoists belonging to the grand Qingwei Lingbao tradition and the masters of the purely local schools (such as Lüshan or Meishan), and that it turned practically into a more secular divide between the well-connected Taoists of the major temples and the rural masters. However, there was another consequence of the somewhat complex distinction between the Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* types of *daoshi*. The magistrates probably lacked the means of sorting out these distinctions by themselves, and enjoyed the liberty to interpret them as they saw fit. Whatever their exact difference in theory, the two categories seem to have been blurred by magistrates in charge of the census. Many, indeed, chose to gather all the non-Quanzhen into one of the two categories while ignoring the other one. The numbers of registered Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* Taoists are negatively correlated. It would seem that a magistrate could grant either of the two types of licenses to a non-Quanzhen Taoist and, in some areas, one type was preferred. For instance, Anhui had 1518 Qingwei Lingbao and 0 *huoju*; Hunan had 371 and 0; at the other extreme, Guangdong had respectively 7 and 787. Very rarely are both categories registered in the same county. This is all the more confusing, since Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* licenses were not equally desirable; the first could be transmitted to one's disciple but not the second.

In summary, awarding Qingwei Lingbao and *huoju* licenses to the non-Quanzhen Taoists was motivated by a desire to devise a distinction between an acceptable lifestyle and a barely tolerable one (living in a temple vs. at home), as well as the urge to give partial recognition to the non-Quanzhen Taoists without referring to the Heavenly Master. These complex considerations were not clearly stated, nor, it seems, universally understood. Married Taoists were obviously the part of the clergy about which officials had the most confused conceptions. It was accordingly the least accurately and least consistently registered category.

Part 2. An analysis of the Geographical Repartition of the Clergy

The 1736–39 census of the Chinese clergy studied in this article has two facets. The political one, discussed above, is a case of misinterpreted intentions and ultimately wasted efforts. However, the census-taking itself proved to be quite efficient, for within three years, the Board of Rites managed to compile a nation-wide register of more than 300,000 clerics. This document, unique for its comprehensiveness and geographical detail, deserves its own attention. Although its interpretation calls for caution, for reasons already explained above, the numbers reflect the existence of a very large officially-registered clergy, well identified in terms of place of residence and religious affiliation.

清微靈寶

300 000 clerics!

// estimation France XVIIIe

Le total des clercs, toutes catégories confondues – séculiers, religieux et nonnes –, aurait été de 180 000 en 1747 et de 142 241 en 1787. <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=effectifs+clerg%C3%A9+18e+si%C3%A8cle>

<https://books.openedition.org/pur/8327?lang=en>