

The project “Religious Text Production and Identity Formation in China, 17th to 21st Centuries” has been funded by the DFG and ANR (German and French research agencies), in a scheme for bilateral cooperation for the period July 2023-June 2026. The two PIs are Prof. Philip Clart (Leipzig U) and Vincent Goossaert (EPHE, PSL).

The project is now welcoming applications for two positions for the duration of the project: one doctoral student, based in Leipzig, and one postdoctoral researcher, based in Paris.

The two positions are independent, but will work in coordination with each other.

## **BRIEF PROJECT OUTLINE**

This project is based on the massive production of religious texts in the modern (1600-1900) and contemporary (post-1900) Chinese world, which is now largely available but unexplored. Tens of thousands of religious books printed in late imperial and modern China have become available over the last twenty years through voluminous collections of reprints, as well as through libraries around the globe digitizing their collections, but they have so far have been employed as primary sources by scholars to a limited extent only. This textual production continues unabated in the present, albeit in vastly different political, social, and technological settings. The impact of digital text production and dissemination on these textual cultures has barely been begun to be studied.

This project uses a broad definition of religious texts: it includes not only doctrinal, hagiographical, and ritual material written or edited by Buddhists, Daoists, Confucians, and other religious figures, but also other genres that are not associated with any institution, yet circulate widely, such as: morality books; stories about gods, heroes, and miracles; self-cultivation manuals; and, since the late 19th century, periodicals and new media. These texts deal with all aspects of social and cultural life and are a major element in the production of cultural values and worldviews.

We now have a tool for identifying and documenting this literature: [https://cрта.info/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://cрта.info/wiki/Main_Page), an international collaborative project, in which the two PIs are core founders. This wiki-based open-access database maps all Chinese religious texts; data input by collaborators is growing daily. We are now at the stage of using it for producing knowledge; specifically, the present project will use it to understand the contours, contents, and impact on society of this literature. To that end, we need a more comprehensive understanding of the various religious groups and traditions advocating their worldview and identity through printed and digital material.

Our fundamental research question is: How do the modern and contemporary Chinese texts define religious identities and affiliations (Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, sectarian, and various emic terms) and how do these identities evolve and relate to each other between 1600 and the present? The research programme of the project comprises a collaborative aspect (CRTA) and four tasks assigned to each of the project participants (the two PIs, the postdoc, and the doctoral student). The French team will focus on historical aspects and the production of religious texts in late imperial times, while the German team will focus on the contemporary digital production, but because so many texts and ideas are found in both contexts, they will work closely together. We hope that this cooperation will enable us to answer central questions of textual continuity and innovation in religious identity formation from the age of print to the digital age.

## POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER POSITION

- Based in Paris, 1 year (renewable twice up to a total of 3 years), starting July 1, 2023.
- Monthly salary, gross (before taxes) in the range of 2,600-2,800 euros, includes health insurance. Extra funding for conference participation and data-gathering visits in East Asia will be available.
- Required degree: a PhD in the fields of Chinese religions or Chinese history with a religious dimension.
- Languages: the candidate will have full working mastery of written and spoken Chinese (including reading classical Chinese) and English. Knowledge of French is not a condition, but if the selected candidate has no knowledge of French, they will be expected to acquire some during the three-year period.
- Research task: Closely related to the CRTA database, to which they will become a regular contributor and editor, the postdoctoral researcher in charge of this task will explore and analyse the massive corpus of available printed religious literature from the perspective of the presses – including traditional “morality books presses” (shanshujū), “scripture shops” (jingfang) attached to monasteries, and 20th-c. Buddhist and Redemptive society presses. The core corpus (the editions already entered in the CRTA database) number about 4,000 and this should be expanded with available library collections to reach a total of between 6,000-7,000. It will allow us to understand which types of presses printed which types of texts, and whenever possible, gather data on distribution (print runs, costs). This task will produce a list of all institutions that published at least one known religious text and the publications and other activities documented for each, and map them in time and space. Checking catalogues of religious presses against available corpora of texts, and mining the texts themselves for names of persons and institutions, it will build a comprehensive view of the impact of religious literature in modern China from the supply-side perspective; this will significantly refine our understanding of the processes of knowledge production in modern China. We will also be able to overcome boundaries between specific traditions and understand how and why certain persons and institutions published at the same time Buddhist scriptures, divine revelations, performance texts (such as baojuan or theatre), and sectarian tracts.
- Duties: Besides following their own personal research project, the postdoctoral fellow will continuously assist the PIs in the organization of the project (regular workshops) and in contributing to the CRTA database. They will be expected to submit two articles to international journals.

## PHD CANDIDATE POSITION

- Based in Leipzig, 3 years, starting July 1, 2023.
- Monthly salary: German public service salary category E13 (65%). Extra funding for conference participation and data-gathering visits in East Asia will be available.
- Required degree: a master's degree in the fields of Chinese religions or Chinese Studies with a religious dimension.
- Languages: the candidate will have full working mastery of written and spoken Chinese (including reading classical Chinese) and English. Knowledge of German is not required, though obviously useful when living in Germany.
- Research task: A survey of the digital textual production and dissemination of religious organisations and individuals in China, Taiwan, and the larger Sinosphere, with particular attention to the actors' identity constructions and interactions within and between traditions. The width- rather than depth-oriented survey is to be complemented by one to (maximally) three case-studies, preferably located in Taiwan. The choice of case studies will depend on the research background and interests of the selected doctoral student.
- Duties: Besides following their own personal research project, the doctoral student will continuously assist the PIs in the organization of the project (regular workshops) and in contributing to the CRTA database.

## SCHEDULE

**Deadline for applications: March 20, 2023**

**Online interviews, final decision: late March – early April 2023**

**Starting date: July 1, 2023**

### Procedure

Email to both PIs (<[clart@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:clart@uni-leipzig.de)> and <[vincent.goossaert@ephe.psl.eu](mailto:vincent.goossaert@ephe.psl.eu)>) with

- A letter of application with reasons explaining their interest in the project
- A writing sample (published article, paper, dissertation, or MA thesis)
- A simple research proposal (ca. 2 pages) addressing the research framework outlined above.
- A CV including list of publications.
- Scan of most recent academic degree certificate and transcripts.