

Peter van der Veer "Smash Temples, Burn Books." *The World Religious Cultures* (a journal of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), No.73, Spring 2012, pp.17-26. Introduction in Chinese by Dr. Dan Smyer Yu (MPI).

Abstract Smash temples, Burn Books

This paper argues that secularisms in India and China are a product of the Imperial Encounter. That encounter is crucial and it is fundamentally different in India and China. In India the colonial state has to perform a certain secular neutrality towards religion because of its colonial nature. It avoids an outright attack on the beliefs and customs of the natives, while masking its fundamental interventions in society by cloaking it in neutrality. In China reformers within the Qing dynasty and later in the Republic do not have to perform this neutrality while introducing Western notions and enforcing them in society. Chinese reformers can therefore call for the destruction of temples, whereas Indian reformers call for open access to temples for untouchables in Temple Entry Agitation and burn books to challenge Brahman hegemony. The Indian discussion then is primarily about reforming Indian traditions, not about destroying them.



Dir./Professor Peter van der Veer with Dr. Jin Ze, Associate Director of the Institute of World Religions of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Editor in Chief of *The World Religious Cultures* (a journal of CASS), and Dr. Dan Smyer Yu (MPI), Beijing, March 2012