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From July 30th to August 3rd, 2018, Dr. Barend J. ter Haar, the Run Run Shaw Professor of Chinese at the University of Oxford's Faculty of Oriental Studies, delivered a lecture series about re-reading sources on Lord Guan (Guan Yu, a famous god in China). Professor ter Haar's lectures were featured as a segment of the International and Intensive Program on Buddhism at the University of British Columbia, which took place from July 28th to August 13th, 2018.

Primary sources in Religious Studies are valuable records that convey first-hand experiences of a historical event, a religious figure, or a time period. Professor ter Haar introduced the different kinds of sources he has used to study Guan Yu, including Buddhist sources, Daoist sources, regular temple inscriptions, anecdotes, local gazetteers, morality books, and Jade Emperor texts. He also discussed reading strategies, textual problems, and other issues related to using primary sources.

Professor ter Haar started his talk by noting several important factors that scholars should consider when dealing with these sources, including: the provenance of the information; the author's identity; the author's intended audience; the rhetorical aim of the text; the nature of the content that was omitted; and the changes the text underwent as it was transmitted.

As Professor ter Haar contended, there are many different definitions and discourses regarding the word "religion" in China and certainly in the West. Religious Studies scholars need to pay attention to these diverse discourses. To illustrate this viewpoint, he noted that in China the official expression of "witch" varies greatly from its folk definition.

During his lecture series, Professor ter Haar introduced some Buddhist sources and Daoist sources concerning Lord Guan, and he led the junior scholars in looking at a variety of sources such as biographies, miracle stories, inscriptions, and ritual texts from the Daoist canon, as well as texts produced through spirit writing. According to Professor ter Haar, regular temple inscriptions as well as miracle stories could be pivotal materials in the field of Religious Studies, because they may include information that can teach us about religious culture, and not just religious doctrine. As an example, Professor ter Haar discussed some less obvious sources of information on religious life from an early Qing Buddhist collection of miracle stories *Xianguo suilu* 現果隨錄 (*Cursory Notes on the Manifestations of Karma*), as well as some non-devotional collections.

In his fifth lecture, which took place on the morning of August 2nd, Professor ter Haar also briefly introduced local gazetteers. He emphasized that these sources allow us to do something we often overlook: they enable us to establish a geographic distribution of differences in religious culture. He quoted sections from *Wucheng xianzhi* 烏程縣志 (*Wucheng County Annals*), *Yongqing xianzhi* 永清縣志 (*Yongqing County An-*

nals), and *Qita sizhi* 七塔寺志 (*Qita Temple Annals*), all of which contained information about Lord Guan as an object of worship. Professor ter Haar then shifted his focus to morality books (*shanshu* 善書) and texts revealed through spirit writing about this deity becoming the new Jade Emperor. All of the materials Professor ter Haar introduced were scanned fragments from ancient books and records, with little or no punctuation. These texts require high levels of reading and understanding of Classical Chinese.

Towards the end of his talk, Professor ter Haar again highlighted the important role of different sources in the field of Religious Studies, and shared with the students how he was trained to read Chinese classical texts. He also noted that he does not advocate for the exclusive use of textual analysis, because although the ancient books and records are interesting, scholars should also interpret the social background and cultural information that is contained in their sources. Here, even fieldwork on the modern situation can be helpful in assisting us to fill in the many gaps in our sources, even though the situation has undoubtedly changed over time.

Research on Chinese religion has to be more connected to its social background. Those who study Buddhism, Daoism, and other forms of religious expression should not be constrained by the doctrinal viewpoints expressed in religious texts. It is also important to pursue an understanding of ordinary people's views and attitudes toward Buddhism and Daoism.