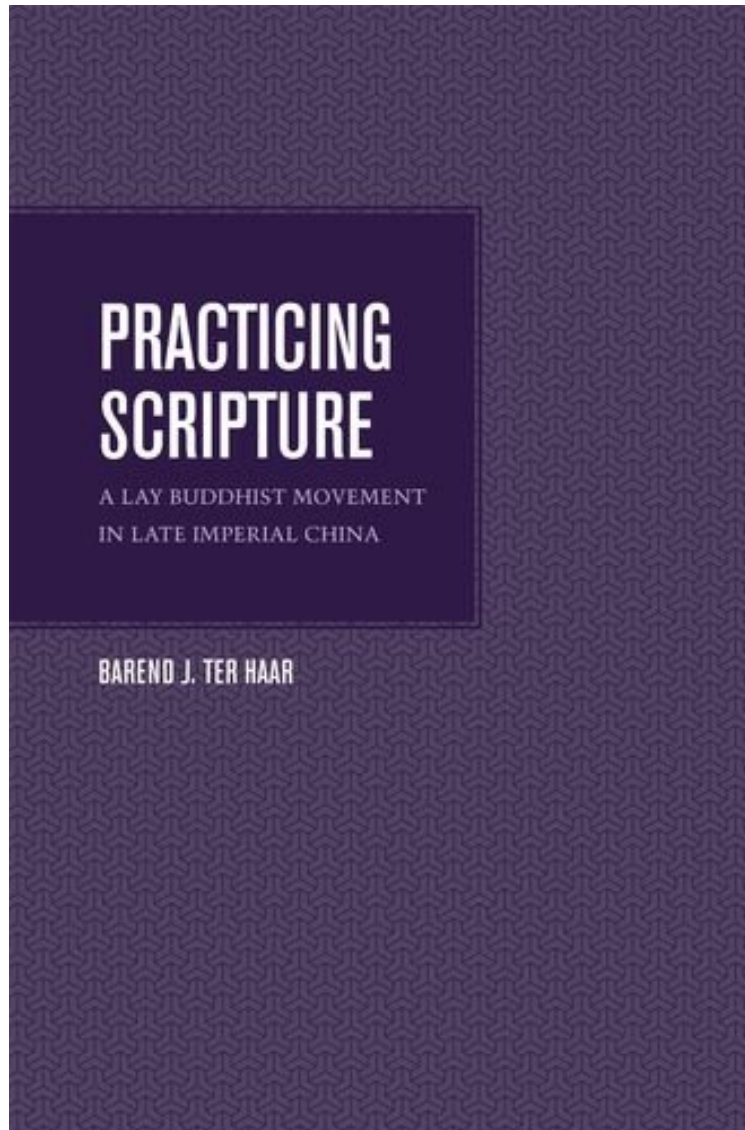


(Download free pdf) Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China

# Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China

*Barend ter Haar*

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**Barend ter Haar : Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Practicing Scripture: A Lay Buddhist Movement in Late Imperial China:

Practicing Scripture is an original and detailed history of one of the most successful religious movements of late imperial China, the Non-Action Teachings, or Wuweijiao, from its beginnings in the late sixteenth century in the prefectures of southern Zhejiang to the middle of the twentieth century, when communist repression dealt it a crippling blow. Uncovering important data on its beliefs and practices, Barend ter Haar paints a wholly new picture of the group, which, despite its Daoist-sounding name, was a deeply devout lay Buddhist movement whose adherents rejected the worship of statues and ancestors while venerating the writings of Patriarch Luo (fl. early sixteenth century), a soldier-turned-lay-Buddhist. The texts, written in vernacular Chinese and known as the Five Books in Six Volumes, mix personal experiences, religious views, and a wealth of quotations from the Buddhist canon. Ter Haar convincingly demonstrates that the Non-Action Teachings was not messianic or millenarian in orientation and had nothing to do with other new religious groups and networks traditionally labelled as White Lotus Teachings. It combined Chan and Pure Land practices with a strong self-identity and vegetarianism and actively insisted on the right of free practice. Members of the movement created a foundation myth in which Ming (1368-1644) emperor Zhengde bestowed the right upon their mythical forefather. In addition, they produced an imperial proclamation whereby Emperor Kangxi of the Qing (1645-1911) granted the group similar privileges. Thanks to its expert handling of a great number and variety of extant sources, Practicing Scripture depicts one of the few lay movements in traditional China that can be understood in some depth, both in terms of its religious content and history and its social environment. The work will be welcomed by China specialists in religious and Buddhist studies and social history.

This is an excellent book, the most detailed study ever in a Western language of the history and teachings of a Chinese popular religious sect, the Wu-wei jiao . . . In sum, this is a fine study, richly documented.-- "Journal of Chinese Studies" Practicing Scripture is essential reading for those interested in religion in late-imperial and modern China. I really hope that scholars in Buddhist Studies read the book too, because it vividly demonstrates some profitable directions for research beyond institutional Buddhism, and shows that 'popular Buddhism' is not doctrinally incoherent and is much more than just a debased form of the high tradition.-- "Studies in Chinese Religions" In sum, Barend J. ter Haar has produced an admirable study, demonstrating how to make the limited sources on popular religious movements of the late imperial period go a long way by using a finely calibrated text-critical approach. . . . In addition to introducing to us the Wuweijiao and making insightful contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the roles of charisma, scripture reading and recitation, local networks, and more in Chinese religions, ter Haar's Practicing Scripture has much to teach us about the historian of religion's craft as applied to late imperial China.-- "T'oung Pao" This is an excellent book, the most detailed study ever in a Western language of the history and teachings of a Chinese popular religious sect, the Wu-wei jiao . . . In sum, this is a fine study, richly documented. (Journal of Chinese Studies) Practicing Scripture is essential reading for those interested in religion in late-imperial and modern China. I really hope that scholars in Buddhist Studies read the book too, because it vividly demonstrates some profitable directions for research beyond institutional Buddhism, and shows that popular Buddhism is not doctrinally incoherent and is much more than just a debased form of the high tradition. (Studies in Chinese Religions) In sum, Barend J. ter Haar has produced an admirable study, demonstrating how to make the limited sources on popular religious movements of the late imperial period go a long way by using a finely calibrated text-critical approach. . . . In addition to introducing to us the Wuweijiao and making insightful contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the roles of charisma, scripture reading and recitation, local networks, and more in Chinese religions, ter Haars Practicing Scripture has much to teach us about the historian of religions craft as applied to late imperial China. (Toung Pao) About the Author Barend J. ter Haar was trained at Leiden University, the Netherlands, Liaoning University, China, Osaka Foreign Languages University, Japan, and Kyushu University, Japan. He has previously taught at the universities of Leiden and Heidelberg, Germany. Since 2013 he has held the Run Run Shaw Chair of Chinese at the University of Oxford, UK.