

VIDEO DOCUMENTARY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“A QUESTION OF BALANCE – TAIWAN” (BBC)

Introduction

1. What does Ron Eyre find so challenging about about Chinese religion? How does Chinese religion challenge his Western (European) assumptions?
2. How does Linda Wu explain the movement from chaos to order, and the yin-yang?
3. According to Linda Wu, what does a balance and imbalance of yin-yang mean? How is this different from the classical Western understanding of good and evil?

In Mei-nong (southern Taiwan)

4. Who is the Earth God (*Tudigong*)? What is his role in the Chinese popular religion?
5. Who is the Jade emperor?
6. What happens when an earth god fails to do his duty? What does this say about how the Chinese emphasis on efficacy and reciprocity?

At the Chinese Medicine Shop

7. According to the traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, what is wrong with the patient?
8. How does Ron Eyre perceive “religion” in the Chinese context? Why does Ron Eyre think that Western definition of “religion” is problematic in the Chinese context?

At the Guanmiao temple near Tainan

9. What kind of temple is the Guanmiao? Why is it being renovated?
10. What is the purpose of the television in the temple? What does this tell you about Chinese perceptions of their gods?
11. The three gods of longevity, prosperity and posterity, are they exclusively Buddhist, Daoist or Confucian?
12. What is the purpose of the séance ceremony involving the medium and the sedan chair?
13. What are oracle blocks? What are they used for?
14. According to Ron Eyre, what does becoming a god mean? Who has “god material”? How do ghosts become gods?

At the Mazu Temple in Tainan

15. What is the purpose of pilgrims bringing their Mazu images and statues?
16. What is the significance of the wall-painting depicting Confucius and Laozi?
17. What is the meaning of the painting depicting a Daoist, a Confucian scholar and a Buddhist monk?

At the Qingming Festival

18. How does Ron Eyre explain Confucius and Confucianism?
19. What is the purpose of the annual cleaning of the graves? What does it renew?
20. Why does Ron Eyre call this cleaning of graves, “Confucianism in action”?
21. What is the significance of the relationship between living family members to their ancestors?

At the opera performance

22. Who are invited to attend the opera performance? How is this expressed ritually?
23. How would you respond to Ron Eyre’s question on how long can this “wise, gentle ritual last”?

At the Daoist funeral

24. How is a Daoist priest different from his Christian counterpart?
25. How long is the period of mourning?
26. What are the paper objects meant for?
27. What is the significance of death? What does the Daoist funerary ritual seek to do?
28. What are the roles played by the Daoist priest and his acolytes?
29. What is the practice of the proper orientation of graves called? What is its main purpose?

Taiji Practice

30. What is the Dao? What is the relationship between the Dao and Taiji practice?
31. What is wu-wei?
32. How does Ron Eyre explain the growing interest in Daoism in the West?