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Global Religious Changes and Civil Life in Two Chinese Societies: A Comparison of Jiangsu and Taiwan

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The twentieth century brought several new developments that affected religious life around the world and that continue to have important impacts today. In particular, this paper discusses four of the most important global trends as they were accommodated, adjusted, and transformed on both sides of the Taiwan Strait: the removal of religion from politics (secularization), the attempt to confine it to a purely religious sphere (religionization), the increased interest in textual authority and religious self-consciousness (rationalization), and an increase in the direct physical manifestations of belief through unmediated physical experience (embodiment).

All four processes are visible in both the regions this paper discusses – Taiwan and southern Jiangsu – in spite of very different political systems and religious climates since the Japanese took political control of Taiwan in 1895. The current similarities, I will argue, show the relative importance of shared cultural traditions and shared global influences over differing forms of political control. Nevertheless, some significant differences have also appeared in the religious ecology of the two places, especially in the relative importance of local temple worship, Buddhism, and Christianity. The concluding section will suggest some possible explanations and explore some of the implications for civil life.

China's regions vary enormously in religious, social, and economic life. For that reason, it makes sense to compare Taiwan just to southern Jiangsu because they resemble each other much more in size, population, income, and educational levels than they resemble many other parts of China. While hardly a perfect laboratory, such a regional comparison highlights the political differences that have characterized Taiwan and mainland China for almost the entire period since Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895, while roughly controlling for other variables.[1]

Secularization and Religionization

The term "secularization" covers a wide and sometimes contradictory set of usages, only some of which will be discussed here. The "secularization theory" of the 1960s and 1970s generally used the concept to mean the weakening and perhaps eventual loss of all forms of religion with modernity.[2] While this continues to be one of the most common-sense uses of the term, it has not stood up well empirically. There seems to be little or no decline in religiosity in North America, and an apparent increase in many other parts of the world with new conversions especially to Islam and Christianity, and an intensification of religious belief across almost the entire world religious spectrum (Berger 1999). For these reasons, this article will not use secularization to mean a loss of religion.

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[1] Research in Taiwan draws especially on work in the town of Lukang in 2006 (funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation), and in Nanjing and other cities of southern Jiangsu in 2013-2014 (funded with Fulbright and Guggenheim grants). I am grateful to the funders for making the research possible, and to scholars at Nanjing University, East China Normal University, Beijing Normal University, UCLA, and Gordon College, where I delivered versions of this material and received very helpful feedback.

[2] For an overview and early critique, see Martin (1979).

It focuses instead on what Jose Casanova calls the central thesis of secularization: "the process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres – primarily the state, the economy, and science – from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere" (Casanova 1994, 19). That is, religion that had been deeply embedded in the social, economic, and political lives of people is separated out so that we now have a newly defined religious world that has been pulled out of everyday life.

In Asia this occurred most clearly as a state-led project beginning in the early twentieth century, especially as new modern constitutions were being adapted from Western precursors. There was not simply one Western model of how to secularize in this sense. France, for instance, instituted a radical separation of church and state in the early twentieth century. Turkey and Mexico adopted comparable policies, and the Guomindang in China took a similar approach after the 1911 Revolution. On the other hand, several northern European countries maintained a closer relationship, as in Holland's "pillar system," where tax money supported religions, which were given important welfare responsibilities. This recognition of one or more official churches fit more closely with Japan's approach in the twentieth century, and thus helped shape developments in Taiwan.

Several studies have documented this process on the mainland during the Republican period (Goossaert and Palmer 2011; Nedostup 2010). An example from the Taiwanese town of Lukang (鹿港) shows the same process as it happened under colonial rule. During the late Qing Dynasty and the early decades of the Japanese

colonial government, most social organizations of every kind in Taiwan were legally organized as god-worshipping societies (神明会) (Sangren 1984). In 1923 the state conducted a census of all of these groups. In a town with a population of about 20,000, they counted 66 god-worshipping societies. These included trade groups, businesses like the coffin-makers, and social organizations like neighborhood associations and kinship groups. Each of these groups centered on a ritual altar at which they worshipped their patron gods. They called their leaders incense-pot masters (爐主), the same title held by leaders of popular temples. Almost all of these groups also conducted many other kinds of activities, from settling trade disputes to helping disaster victims. Religion was thus intimately tied to other aspects of life, and not yet functionally separated from economy and society more broadly.

Immediately after that census, however, the colonial government announced that it would no longer recognize god-worshipping associations as legal forms of social organization (Xu 2000, 211–242). As a government project, at least, religion was to occupy the sphere of the spiritual alone, and not leak over into business, politics, and social services. The disembedding of religion from social life had begun through a separation of the secular and the religious.[3]

Sorting religion out from the realms of society, economics, and especially politics creates a secular world, but the same process also creates "religion" itself. When religious activity is truly embedded in all aspects of life – as with the god-

[3] A later attempt to create Shinto parishes throughout the island never proceeded far because of the war.

worshipping societies – there is no need even for the concept of religion. In places like India or China, where much religion remained embedded in daily life, there was thus no obvious translation for the English term "religion." Hinduism in India was constructed to fit the category of religion only under British colonial rule (Frykenberg 1993).

In China, the modern term for religion (宗教) was coined only in the twentieth century, as one of many terms borrowed from Japanese translations of Western philosophical concepts. The two characters of the term existed separately, but each had meanings that were both religious and secular (literally a lineage of teachings). This new term determined a concept that was strongly influenced by Protestant conceptions of religion. "Religion" as all the relevant states (Republican, Communist, and Japanese colonial) defined it is based around a set of beliefs (rather than ritual practices), which are set out in sacred texts, guided by trained clergy, and chosen voluntarily by the believers. Thus the concept of a separate sphere of religion, understood in basically Protestant terms, developed in tandem with the project of secularization.

Such a definition was not completely inappropriate to the practice of Buddhism and Daoism in China, although the idea of a congregation of believers did not fit very well. It did not work at all, however, for Confucianism, leading to anachronistic arguments about whether Confucianism should count as a religion; such arguments continue even today. And it does not at all fit the popular practice of burning incense in local temples and home altars. Unlike India, where the equivalent ritualized local practices became religionized as "Hinduism," in China

local worship traditions were denied the status of religion and were instead branded with another neologism: superstition (迷信).[4] All of the relevant twentieth-century governments had clearly unfriendly policies toward Chinese indigenous worship traditions. At the same time, they tried to fit Buddhism and Daoism into the new mold of "religion."

It is thus no coincidence that three important changes occurred roughly at the same time in the early twentieth century. First were the attempts to secularize – to remove the religious aspects from economic, social and political life. Second was the creation of the category of "religion." Third was the development of large institutionalized religious organizations intended to unify diverse religious traditions into structures with which the state could easily interact and which could distance themselves from more embedded and traditional practices – "religionization." These eventually developed into China's five (or Taiwan's ten) officially recognized religions. It is important to remember that these changes were primarily government-led projects. As such, they had enormous influence, but also did not fully succeed. As the examples discussed below will show, some aspects of religiosity continue to be embedded in everyday life (or have become re-embedded) and various forms of religion have more or less avoided the official structures of control. Nevertheless, these projects have transformed the religious ecology as a whole.

[4] See Goossaert and Palmer (2011) for a more detailed discussion of this process.

Rationalization and Embodiment

Max Weber focused sociological attention on processes of rationalization, in which people push to make their ideas and actions consistent, integrated, systematic, and efficient. In his work on religion, he argued that many world religions had developed strongly rationalized tendencies, but that Protestantism took that process in a new direction – away from the extra-worldly rationalization of the monastery and into a this-worldly process of making everyone's actions consistent with rationalized beliefs (Weber 2010; Swidler 1973).

Whatever the merits of Weber's specific historical argument about how this-worldly rationalization related to capitalism, by the twentieth century many religions had moved in a similar direction. We see this in Islam, for instance, in what some scholars call a process of Islamization that has swept the world. They are not referring to Islamic conversion, but to the process through which people who had always thought of themselves as Muslims have begun to think self-consciously about what it means to be a Muslim. This worldwide movement has led to significant changes in practice. Among Jews, it is evident in a change from generations of traditional practice to the adoption of much more text-based practice in the twentieth century (Soloveitchik 1994). Most "fundamentalisms" – Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim – are part of such movements, and I agree with those scholars who thus see them as distinctly modern movements (Eisenstadt 2000).

This move toward rationalization relates closely to the processes of secularization/religionization that I just discussed. It contributes to the extraction of religious belief from the general experience of daily life, to the change from a

taken-for-granted religiosity/life to a self-conscious and reflective "religion." Religion becomes something most clearly represented by its texts, rather than by the repetition of contextual practice.

A prototypical pattern of learning to deal with Chinese gods in a non-rationalized way is the common sight of a mother kneeling behind her little son and teaching him to worship by moving his hands up and down in an appropriate gesture. There are no texts for this; there is rarely even speech. Chinese temple worship in general has little rationalization. Most people have no explicit and self-conscious explanations, and have little interest in them.

At the other extreme are highly rationalized activities, like most of what occurs in the modern seminaries of all China's religious traditions, or in public lectures given by clergy. In contemporary China the physical, contextual practice of burning incense or paper money (for instance for the dead at the Chinese New Year) may not even count as religion any more even though it is widespread. Instead the rationalized practice of the seminary has become the prototypical definition of religion.

As the contemporary example of a child learning to burn incense implies, however, rationalization is not the only process at work. At the same time as there has been an increase in rationalized religion, there has also been an increase in embodied religion, including spirit possession, speaking in tongues, and healing, as well as the continuation of contextualized practice like burning incense. The idea of embodiment thus includes phenomena seen to come into the body from outside (like spirit possession), or to be cultivated from the inside (like reciting the

Buddha's name or Daoist circulation of *qi*), or simply to be performed in a certain way because that is the tradition (like burning incense). In a sense all ritual fits into this last type of embodiment because it involves primarily the performance of highly established and predictable actions, words, and movements. Sometimes people also have rationalized explanations for rituals, but not always. And with or without explanation, the performance of the ritual itself is completely embodied.

Embodied religion forges an experiential bridge over the sacred/secular divide while generally avoiding rationalizing issues of theology and philosophy. The causes of the growth in embodied religiosity are complex, but we can easily see the results over the twentieth century. They appear most obviously in the rapid and global expansion of Pentecostal practice among both existing Christians and new converts, which began at a revival meeting in Los Angeles in 1906 (Martin 2008). It is not just a Christian phenomenon, however, but can also be seen in the popularity of Santeria practice in North America or of witchcraft in Africa (Martin 2008; Geschiere 1997).

Embodiment reclaims the close ties between religion and the rest of social life, without addressing the theological categories that are part of the dynamic between state secularization and religious self-consciousness. Its survival and even increase in the twentieth century show the limits of the secularization project. Embodiment is not necessarily a rejection of rationalization, but it does provide an alternate and very different form of religiosity – one that is just as much part of the modernities of the twentieth century and beyond as religious rationalization. As we shall see, some groups in Jiangsu and Taiwan have moved strongly along the path of

rationalization, while others are almost completely embodied. Many, however, have pursued both directions at once and there is no fundamental contradiction between rationalization and embodiment.

Rationalization and Religionization in Jiangsu and Taiwan

Let me begin with some examples of the combination of rationalization and religionization in Taiwan and Jiangsu over the past few decades, and turn below to cases of embodiment. Perhaps the most obvious recent example is the growth of various new centers of humanistic (人间) Buddhism in Taiwan. The most important cases have been Tzu Chi (慈济), Buddha Light Mountain (佛光山), and Dharma Drum Mountain (法鼓山), although other groups have also contributed. All these groups trace an intellectual lineage back to Taixu and other reformist monks of the 1930s, although they did not really become prominent until the 1980s in Taiwan, and somewhat later as global movements.

They differ significantly from each other, but all share an interest in a more rationalized form of Buddhism. Shengyan's appeal through Dharma Drum Mountain, for example, has particularly attracted intellectuals for the self-conscious way it puts Buddhism in conversation with modern life. Tzu Chi from the beginning was explicit in its rejection of the more embodied forms of traditional Buddhism. One of their earliest principles was that they would not earn money by performing rituals for people, but instead support themselves through handicraft production. All donated money would be used instead for charity. Not all ritual has disappeared – they still perform standard Buddhist morning and evening liturgies, for instance.

Nevertheless, much of their time is devoted instead to rationalizing and self-conscious discourse, including both preaching by Zhengyan and a constant stream of testimonials by followers.

Embodiment is not irrelevant to this group, although it takes a very different form from more traditional Buddhist embodied practice like repeating the Buddha's name or reciting sutras. Instead, followers are expected to become personally involved in charity – organizing clinics, delivering food aid, ministering to the sick, and so on. Even this, however, is typically converted into rationalized experience because followers constantly narrate the significance of their experience (Huang 2009).

Jiangsu does not yet have any Buddhist leaders who can compare to the global influence of the Taiwanese groups. Nevertheless, there is a wide range of Buddhist activity of all kinds, including both embodied and rationalized forms of religion. Tzu Chi itself now has several branches in Jiangsu, including its mainland headquarters in Suzhou. Many local Buddhist leaders are currently also increasingly active in developing their own discursive approaches to Buddhism, which can be seen especially clearly in the regular postings that many of them make on Chinese social media like Weibo and Weixin. Nanjing's Jiming Si, for example, posts daily messages, many of which instruct followers on how to incorporate Buddhism into their daily lives. In April 2014, to choose an arbitrary example, posts included topics like "Why Does Buddhism Teach That 'Life is Bitterness?'" and "What Is the Difference Between Self-Cultivation and Cultivation for the Public

Good?" Others comment on the history of the temple, or explain particular sutras, or suggest vegetarian recipes.

Many lay Buddhists are also attracted specifically to this more rationalized side of Buddhism (Jones 2010; Fisher 2014), and it is quite common to hear followers discuss how Buddhism is the one religion with no superstition, or how closely it relates to science. Several important monasteries have also opened Buddhist seminaries (primarily for the training of clergy); in the Chinese context these specialize above all in rationalized approaches to the religion.

This is not just a Buddhist phenomenon. Most "mainstream" forms of Protestantism in both Taiwan and Jiangsu (and the United States) also downplay ritual and charisma in favor of the explication of texts and the narration of personal experience in religious terms – rationalization within the religionized niche that China makes available. The European origins of Protestantism were strongly anti-ritual in intention, destroying sacred works of art and reducing Catholic ritual life to almost nothing (Seligman et al. 2008). Taiwan's Presbyterian Church, which is by far the largest Christian denomination there, is very much in this rationalized tradition.

So too is the Three Self Patriotic Movement – the officially sanctioned Protestant church in mainland China. Their services feature simple hymns with clear pedagogical content, non-charismatic prayers led by the clergy, and long periods of preaching on the meaning of Biblical texts. This is consistent with what Cao Nanlai 曹南来 reports from Wenzhou "boss Christians," who also strongly promote the idea of Christianity as the most rational of belief systems (Cao 2011).

The embodied side of religion has been reduced to a minimum, and the experience for churchgoers resembles sitting in class more than the charismatic participation of some other kinds of congregations. Nevertheless, churchgoers I have seen clearly seem to enjoy to experience.

The general success of this kind of rationalizing and pedagogical Christianity has led some Buddhist clergy to emulate aspects of this mode of religion, even in more traditional forms of Buddhism. For instance, some temples now offer Sunday study groups for followers who have undertaken a Buddhist refuge (皈依) ceremony to become formal followers of Buddhism; in others a monk will offer lectures to such people on the first and fifteenth of each lunar month. Many of these activities are directly rationalizing in the sense of encouraging followers to think self-consciously about what it means to be a Buddhist, and to find ways to live all aspects of their lives in a Buddhist way.

Various forms of redemptive societies also pioneered new forms of religion in Taiwan and mainland China beginning in the early twentieth century, often reflecting both global trends toward rationalization and embodiment (Duara 2004; Goossaert and Palmer 2011; Jordan and Overmyer 1986). These groups were influenced both by older sectarian traditions in China and by new religious developments in Japan at the time. Many of these sects featured both religious embodiment – especially through the practice of spirit writing – and a great interest in explicitly spelling out religious principles and moral worlds.

The best known and most successful of these groups today is probably the Way of Unity (一貫道), a salvationist and syncretic sect that first thrived in

Republican-era China (Lu 2008). It eventually became illegal under both Communist and Republican governments because of its secret activities and suspected collaboration with the Japanese occupation (Jordan and Overmyer 1986, 216–218). Nevertheless, it blossomed in Taiwan, where it was finally legalized in 1987. It has spread out among Chinese communities globally from there. The group claims about two million followers, although this number is surely generous.

Like some similar groups in China and Taiwan, the Way of Unity expects its members to give a thorough moral accounting of their lives. These groups typically require the active management of moral capital, with an emphasis on self-discipline, work, and the good management of property and relationships.[5] While the Way of Unity stresses its retention of conservative Confucian values, it places them always in the context of practical concerns, especially health and wealth. Its meetings stress lectures on morality and behavior, generally rooted in classical texts. In this, it resembles the return to text that has been occurring among many Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist believers in recent decades. In many ways these meetings look and feel very much like Bible study classes popular among many Christians, or like some of the more recent Buddhist innovations in China.

Redemptive societies developed in a kind of dialogue with the state secularization/religionization project. As semi-underground organizations, they often spread into areas that were no longer as open to more public kinds of religious groups. Under the Japanese, for example, they were strong promoters of cures for opium addiction. That is, they took on some of the philanthropic functions that

[5] For an earlier historical example of such a group, see Berling (1985, 208–218).

other forms of religion did less after they were disembedded from much of social life. In addition, as Goossaert and Palmer describe (for the mainland), many of them conceived of themselves directly as parts of the national/secular project (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 108). They imagined themselves, in brief, as religions of modernity that maintained their Chinese roots – self-conscious Chinese answers to the self-consciousness of mainstream Christianity.

Embodiment and the Secular/Religious Split

The physical acts of worship – burning incense, offering food, and so forth – are the most widespread examples of embodied religion throughout the Chinese world. Many people in both Jiangsu and Taiwan, for instance, make offerings of food, incense, and paper money at the graves of their ancestors during the Qingming 清明 festival. The fact that people in Taiwan usually think of this as religion, while people in Jiangsu usually deny that it is religion, stems from different ways the category of "religion" was sculpted in the two places during the twentieth century. Some people in both places believe that they are honoring real spirits, and others simply that they are memorializing the dead. The key issue, however, is not what people believe or whether they believe. The physical performance of the ritual act is instead the crucial thing. It is not unusual when interviewing informants in China or Taiwan about why they perform rituals in a certain way – why stick a knife in the back of the neck of a sacrificial pig? – to receive a response like "because we are Chinese" or "because our ancestors did it this way" or simply "because it looks better like that." Such responses are a clear sign that the behavior is not strongly

rationalized: people have little interest in theological or symbolic explanations of their actions. The key thing is the embodiment of ritual performance.

Such practice occurs on an especially large scale during temple festivals (庙会), often held on the birthday of the local god. These occasions have become especially large and elaborate at the half-dozen Mazu temples that now dominate the religious landscape in Taiwan. Even on ordinary days these temples host a constant stream of visitors. When I lived across from the important Mazu temple in Lukang in 2006, every morning brought a combination of locals coming to pay their respects or ask for favors, pilgrims making the rounds of the island's most important temples, and gods visiting from other temples, with their images carried in sedan chairs and accompanied by costumed and often possessed religious performers.

In the days surrounding Mazu's birthday, these numbers will grow from hundreds or thousands a day to tens of thousands and more. The streets are jam-packed with people and enormous jostling crowds make movement almost impossible around the temple or around the goddess herself when she tours her territory. The atmosphere is extremely "hot and noisy" (热闹), which is the sign of a successful ritual and an efficacious temple. The smell of incense and the acrid odor of burning paper money permeate everywhere. These events have very little in the way of theology or other self-conscious religious rationalization. People may know stories of miracles the goddess has performed, but not much else. They are there for the blessings (often vague and unspecified) that participation brings, and for the entertainment that has always been an important part of such festivals. This is

embodiment, and probably on a scale not seen in Chinese societies before the twentieth century. These particular Mazu temples certainly did not act on such a large scale before the last century.[6]

Such traditions also exist on the mainland, of course, though there is little comparable to the rise of the Mazu cult in Taiwan. Rural temples in southern Jiangsu now tend to be locked most days of the month (unlike their counterparts in Taiwan), which means the frequency of worship is less. Nevertheless, the embodied nature of the activity when it occurs (usually on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month) is very similar. Larger festival occasions attract big crowds, although nothing on the scale of the Mazu cult in Taiwan.

Taiwan's very lively embodied worship has also directly affected southern Jiangsu, and it may be that embodied practice will increase there as a result of this contact. For instance, there is an enormous new Mazu temple in Kunshan, built very much in the style of Taiwanese or southern Fujianese temples rather than Jiangsu. Kunshan is a major center for Taiwanese business people. The temple is built very much with the blessing of the local government, including the Religious Affairs Bureau. For them it is part of an economic strategy to keep the Taiwanese community investing, but the temple itself also attracts embodied worship from local people. I burnt incense there in 2014 together with a high Kunshan official who appeared to be quite devout through the process of working with Taiwan businessmen. Like temple festivals, this example shows how embodied religiosity

[6] Elana Chipman traces the change to the way one of these temples (the Ta-chia 大甲 Mazu) was able to take advantage of the new transportation system built under the Japanese (Chipman 2009).

can often refuse the discipline of the secular/religious split, instead implicated religion, social ties, and politics all at once.

Nanjing has two Mazu temples. Unlike the Kunshan temple, these both have long histories, one having started as the Fujian business association (会馆) and the other having been founded by the Ming Dynasty eunuch Zheng He to thank Mazu for her help after one of his naval voyages. Both have been reconstructed recently with strong support (including donations) from the state's chief religious offices – the Religious Affairs Bureau and United Front Work Department of the Communist Party – again primarily with Taiwan relations in mind. These officials allow temples and worship as a way of encouraging connections to Taiwan and attracting Taiwanese investment, but the process itself changes the religious landscape, encouraging an intensification of embodied practice, sometimes even among the officials themselves.

I will not attempt to cover the full range of embodied practice here, for example various forms of cultivation (修行), but it seems important to mention the classic case of bodies being possessed by external spirits. Spirit possession has a very long history in Chinese societies. In Taiwan, however, there has been a marked increase in spectacular public performances, often involving bloodshed as the mediums prove the genuineness of their trances by striking themselves with weapons like swords or balls of nails. This is probably the result of the increasing professionalization of mediumship there. The competition among groups of mediums for employment drives a constant escalation in the shock value of the

performance. As with other kinds of performance, Taiwan's economic success brought an increase in such embodied displays, not a decline.

Spirit mediumship has revived in Jiangsu (and elsewhere in China since the Cultural Revolution), although with none of Taiwan's bloody and public spectacles. Instead they focus primarily around healing (which is also common in Taiwan). One network in the suburbs of a medium-sized Jiangsu city has expanded from one very influential medium to a group that includes several dozen of his disciples, most of whom are possessed by deities, and who use that power to cure patients who are said to have been possessed by evil spirits.

This form of embodiment, where the body itself is the direct vehicle for the spirit world, is not limited to popular beliefs. Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, who have spread so rapidly around the world, also welcome the Holy Spirit into their bodies as they speak in tongues, see the future, and heal by laying on hands. Both Jiangsu and Taiwan have experienced this movement in various forms. One example in both places is the True Jesus Church (Lian 2010), which grew out of an indigenizing Chinese Christian movement in the early twentieth century. Their Nanjing branch was re-founded in 1993, and claims to have baptized close to 2,000 people since then. Their main church in Nanjing is usually full with over 400 people on Saturdays when they worship all morning. The most remarkable points of their services are the prayers, during which everyone drops to their knees and begins to speak in tongues (灵言), each making sounds that vary from babbling syllables to extended trills.

This kind of embodied experience is almost the opposite of rationalized religion. The rationalization process is about crafting words, composing discursive worlds to explain religion. Speaking in tongues, however, is language that cannot be understood, and for that reason it is the only true language – the only language in which it is impossible to lie, and which must thus come directly as a gift from God. The True Jesus Church does not reject rationalization. Their preachers explain Biblical passages, for example, in ways very similar to what happens in non-charismatic churches. With True Jesus, however, the embodied side of religion plays a crucial role that it does not in many other forms of Christianity.

General Thoughts

Both Jiangsu and Taiwan have shared in and contributed to global religious trends that have been taking place over the past century. Both places have been home to state secularization and religionization projects. Both have been part of the trends toward rationalization and embodiment. These movements have taken place in spite of the powerful political differences that separated Taiwan and mainland China over the same period.

These changes crosscut religion as well as political regime, including Buddhism, Protestantism, and temple worship, as well as other traditions not discussed here. Thus, for example, we have the growth of both charismatic Christianity with its speaking in tongues and spiritual healing, and of more mainstream Protestantism similar to what Weber had discussed. Buddhists have seen an increase in embodied practices like reciting the Buddha's name while circling a temple or meditating. At the same time they have also greatly increased

rationalizing practices like the broadcast of commentaries on sutras or lectures on integrating Buddhism into daily life.

The reasons for the similarity are that both Taiwan and Jiangsu have been exposed to the same powerful global religious movements, and that both began with very similar cultural repertoires of religion and local practice. Another contributing factor is probably that Chinese religions (certainly including Taiwan) before the twentieth century had relatively low levels of institutionalization. Even for Buddhism and Daoism, some of whose clergy were enmeshed in monastic hierarchies, there was never an equivalent to the authority of the Pope or of a figure like the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. Furthermore, attempts to establish an official church in China had been largely abandoned after the Tang Dynasty. This means that it has been relatively easy for religion to evolve in response to a changing local and global environment. There is little structural impediment to change due to the lack of strong institutions of control.

The results of this are especially clear for temple worship, which was never regulated as religion by either the Republican or Communist governments. Both political systems were unfriendly toward temple worship, although Taiwan never took as extreme steps to stop it as happened on the mainland. Nevertheless, such practices remain robust in both places – whether or not they are given the name of "religion." This has been especially obvious in the great increase in the embodied rituals of village temples in Taiwan since the island grew wealthy beginning in 1970s. We see it in Jiangsu as well, however, for example in the spirit mediums discussed above, or in the tens of thousands of people who fill large urban Buddhist

temples to burn incense on Chinese New Year's Eve, or who make offerings at their ancestors' graves during the Qingming Festival. They may not conceive of this as "religion," but it grows out of the same move toward embodied practice that has affected rural temple religion.

Nevertheless, Taiwan and Jiangsu have also evolved some important differences, one of which directly involves the form of institutional control. Both the governments of Republican China and the People's Republic of China constructed new organizations intended to unify and standardize each of the officially recognized religions (although the list differed in the two cases). These were never as effective in Republican China (including post-1945 Taiwan) as in the People's Republic, and in Taiwan they have become largely inconsequential since the democratization process began formally in 1987. The success of those institutions on the mainland has meant that there has so far been less creativity among mainland Buddhists than in Taiwan. Large institutions tend to constrain creativity, and Jiangsu is only now beginning to develop more innovative Buddhist alternatives, something perhaps like the 1960s and 1970s in Taiwan, when the seeds that grew into huge globalized Buddhist movements first began to sprout.

This brings us to an unexpected finding in the comparison between Taiwan and Jiangsu: the religious landscape in Taiwan appears to have moved these global trends in a more indigenous direction than in Jiangsu or anywhere else on the mainland. This can be seen largely in three phenomena: differences in the growth of Buddhism, in the liveliness of popular worship, and in the prominence of Christianity. As I have just discussed, Taiwan has witnessed a much more rapid and

creative growth of Buddhism, and this is the result in part of the different institutional structures and their relations to the state. Buddhism of course is not indigenous in the strictest sense of the term, but nevertheless succeeded so rapidly in Taiwan partly because people view it as a culturally Chinese rather than an imported way of living in the modern world.

The situation for popular worship is different; it has no large regulatory organizations in either Taiwan or Jiangsu. Nevertheless, its infrastructure of temples and images was destroyed on the mainland and only began to recover on a large scale in the 1980s. Its redevelopment across China has been uneven. Southern Jiangsu has not been one of the areas where it has grown rapidly, and rapid urbanization and urban renewal have created new kinds of problems for community-based temple worship. It thus appears to have a less lively popular worship life than Taiwan, even though southern Jiangsu resembles Taiwan on indicators like income and education much more than most other places on the mainland. Thus here again Taiwan's lively popular worship sector appears to have allowed a blossoming of indigenous religious resources. It draws on (and contributes to) the same global trends that are influencing Jiangsu, but it is using many more uniquely Chinese resources in doing so.

This brings us to the final difference, the much more rapid growth of Christianity in Jiangsu (northern Jiangsu much more than southern, but to some extent everywhere in China) than in Taiwan. A look at history and policy might lead us to expect exactly the opposite. The Guomindang had always treated Christianity with a much more relaxed attitude than any other religion; the Communists in

contrast greatly increased control over its practice. Large numbers of foreign missionaries entered Taiwan after 1949, but they largely disappeared from the mainland. Nevertheless, Taiwan has seen only very slight increases in the percentage of Christians, while all agree that the number has gone up very rapidly in Jiangsu and beyond. That is, the mainland is directly taking part in the largest global trend carrying the new forms of embodied and rationalized religion: the spread of Protestantism. Taiwan, however, has instead been adapting those forms to indigenous religious resources, rather than following the move to Protestant conversion.

The reasons are complex, but include the greater destruction of indigenous religious alternatives on the mainland, the continuing difficulties that popular temples face because they are not recognized as religion, and the tighter institutional control over religion, which Christians have ignored enough to be able to expand underground. Christians in Jiangsu and elsewhere on the mainland have also been able to position themselves as the religion most compatible with modernity, while in Taiwan Buddhists have been able to occupy this position. All of this can still change. The reconstruction of Mazu temples in southern Jiangsu could become a catalyst, and in principle so could rural migration to cities. Yet we also need to recognize that the religious ecologies of the two places are already different. Religion continues to evolve rapidly in both Jiangsu and Taiwan, but it will not necessarily change in the same direction.

I have argued elsewhere that the social ties created through religion during Taiwan's authoritarian period became important resources for the consolidation of

democracy after 1987 (Weller 1999; see also Madsen 2007). Could the same thing happen on the mainland? Certainly the religious situation on the mainland today bears some resemblance to Taiwan in the years before its democratic transition. While the regulatory system remains restrictive, much religious life on the ground is booming, and in the process creating social worlds that owe little to officially sanctioned state structures. These are exactly the kinds of resources that a successful transition will need. On the other hand, as I have argued here, the religious ecologies of the two places are now different in important ways (as the broader political ecologies too, of course) and I would thus not suggest that Taiwan's religious evolution is a simple path that the People's Republic is emulating several decades later.

I have compared Jiangsu and Taiwan in part to make a point about variation within Chinese societies. The obviously different political histories of Taiwan and mainland China over the past century in some ways create less variation than we might imagine. For religion, that is why both places fit fairly well with the broad global religious trends toward state secularization, religionization, rationalization and embodiment. On the other hand, significant religious differences characterize all the regions of China. Much of Fujian looks more like Taiwan than Jiangsu. Henan is different again. Even the religious ecologies of southern and northern Jiangsu are quite different from each other. In the end we have to attend carefully to the unique histories of specific places, in all their richness and complexities.

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