



**Getting Healed from a Globalised Age:**  
*A Study of the New Age Movement in  
Taiwan*

by

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## List of Abbreviations

ACIL	A Course in Light
ACILIC	A Course in Light Information Centre
ACIM	A Course in Miracles
BL	Buddhist Life
CAM	Complementary and Alternative Medicine
CNAS	Chinese New Age Society
CWG	Conversations with God
CBACIM	Chinese Branch for A Course in Miracles
DW	Divine Will
FACIM	Foundation for A Course in Miracles
FIP	Foundation for Inner Peace
GLC	Garden of Light Carrier
HHM	Holistic Health Movement
HLS	Himalaya Living Space
HPM	Human Potential Movement
HR	Human Resources
HT	Humanity's Team
MIC	Miracle Information Center
NAM	New Age Movement
NAMOs	New Age Movement Organisations
NAMPs	New Age Movement Participants
NANC	New Age Network China
NRMs	New Religious Movements
NSM&C	New Spirituality Movements and Culture
RM	Rajneesh Movement
SM	Social Movements
SMI	Social Movement Industries
SMOs	Social Movement Organisations
SMS	Social Movement Sector
SPIN	Segmented Polycentric Integrated Network
TRCRA	Taiwan Reiki Culture Research Association

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## Summary

The aim of this qualitative study of the New Age Movement (NAM) in Taiwan was to test the ideas about ‘self-religion’, ‘reflexive modernisation’ and ‘globalisation’ that underlie many sociological accounts of New Age phenomena. It also explored the neglected issues of emotions and embodiment in New Age practices. By means of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 40 participants in New Age activities, participant observation in two New Age courses about healing and documentary analysis, my project produced the following four conclusions.

First, the characteristics of New Age spiritualities in Taiwan, such as ‘spiritual but not religious’ and ‘transformational but not salvational’, differ from those of the country’s main religions and new religious groups. But many people in the NAM seek a new balance between ‘tradition and modernity’ or ‘new age spiritualities and “old age” religions’.

Second, changes in emotional states are critical for participants in New Age activities in terms of ‘being healed’ through a process of self-transformation. Participants experience emotional identification, display and experience, whilst also internalising a set of feeling rules based on the ‘emotion ideology’ of New Age spiritualities.

Third, analysis of interviewees’ biographical reconstructions of their experiences shows that the New Age can be regarded as an integral part of late modern society in Taiwan. Not only is the NAM mainly about self-reflexivity but it also influences the life politics of its followers. It can therefore serve as a source of ‘alternative’ expert knowledge in late-modern society.

Fourth, the structure of the NAM in Taiwan can be described as a loose, web-like network. Furthermore, the globalised aspects of the movement cannot be regarded simply as an expression of ‘Westernisation’ or ‘Americanisation’, but should be properly understood as a process of ‘parallel globalization’.

This thesis is an original combination of conceptual analysis, theoretical ideas and empirical investigation. Its main contributions are, on the one hand, to have integrated the New Age in Taiwan into theorising about late-modernity and globalisation and, on the other, to have placed emotions and healing at the center of the study of New Age activities.

Part I

**Establishing Theoretical Frameworks  
and Methodology**

# Chapter 1

## **Introduction**

This thesis is a report of a qualitative sociological study of the New Age Movement (NAM) in Taiwan<sup>1</sup>. The title of the thesis mimics the title of Steven Tipton's study of new religious movements in the USA in the 1960s, *Getting Saved from the Sixties* (1982a). This was a study of how some young people resolved ethical dilemmas that arose from the clash between the 'counter-culture' and mainstream American morals by adopting new religious ideas. The NAM in the West was a part of counter-culture movements from the beginning of the 1960s, being one among others such as the ecology, hippie, and commune movements. Even today, the participants in the NAM still preserve attitudes of cultural criticism to some degree (Höllinger, 2006).

My study is designed to examine the ways in which some people in Taiwan, similarly, use 'New Age' beliefs and practices in order to respond to the challenges of life in a rapidly changing world. Nevertheless, I will show later in the thesis that the emergence and the development of the NAM in Taiwan has never really developed as part of a counter-culture movement, in spite of its 'western' origins. The study is based primarily upon in-depth interviews with forty participants in New Age activities in North Taiwan who have become strongly involved in the Movement, and partly upon participant observation of two New Age groups that focus on healing.

The question of what counts as the 'New Age' will be discussed at various points in this thesis – particularly in Chapter 2 – but it must be stressed

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<sup>1</sup> The meanings attributed to the term 'New Age Movement' will be analysed at length in Chapter 2.

that there is no unanimity among scholars about the term's meaning. In fact, debates about its meaning are extensive and contentious. Virtually every contribution to the literature on the New Age offers its own definition. But Peter Clarke (2006, p. 26, 34) is correct to argue that, among all the competing definitions, there is a measure of agreement on the centrality of concern with 'the transformation of human consciousness' and 'a new way of being spiritual'. My thesis will offer empirical support for the view that 'the NAM has clearly acted as a catalyst in changing the way spirituality has come to be understood and practised' (Clarke 2006, p. 40) on an increasingly global scale.

This first chapter of the thesis presents the background and rationale of the study, specifies its research problem and research questions, presents the methodology used, and gives an outline of the thesis.

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

The issue of religion, with special reference to new religions, has been one of my intellectual interests since I was an undergraduate in Sociology in 1989. My Master's study of the Japanese new religion, Soka Gakkai, further strengthened my interest in the development of non-native, or 'newly-introduced', religions in Taiwan, which led me to become aware of the issue of the New Age.

My original motivation for doing this research came from my occasional participation in, and observation of, New Age activities in Taiwan between 1996 and 2001. My first encounter with the NAM dates back to 1996, when I worked for publishing companies. That period also gave me the opportunity to meet five or six prominent people who had encountered the Movement

abroad before returning to Taiwan, where they had been promoting the idea of New Age by setting up groups, conducting workshops and disseminating information about this new spirituality.<sup>2</sup> ‘You Create Your Own Reality,’ the slogan marked on the cover of each book published under the pioneer book series about the *New Age* in the Fine Press, attracted many readers who later joined the Movement. I then discovered that the idea of the New Age had been introduced from the USA in the early 1980s, and that it had subsequently developed into a spiritual social movement. Although debates over the term ‘New Age’ or ‘New Age Movement’ are controversial and ambiguous in the West, as readers will see in my Chapter 2, the term is more consistently used and accepted by participants of the Movement in Taiwan.

The NAM in the West has its historical roots in the counter-culture of the 1960s, and it achieved popularity in Europe and the USA during the 1980s (Hanegraaff, 2002). In fact, the ‘birth’ of the idea of the New Age could be traced back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Western esotericism became secularised. In this regard, the historian of religious ideas, Wouter Hanegraaff, offers us rich documentary sources, historical evidence and detailed explanations relating to the development, trends, structure and cultural significance of the New Age in the West (Hanegraaff, 1998, 1999, 2002). Hanegraaff also argues that there is a difference between ‘New Age religion’ and the ‘NAM’ when considered from the perspective of the history of religious ideas. New Age religion is defined as ‘a form of secularised esotericism; it is rooted in Western esoteric traditions which can be traced back to the early Renaissance, but which underwent a thorough process of

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<sup>2</sup> Here the word ‘new’ is relative to other spiritualities/religions that have developed and occupied a place in the spiritual/religious marketplace in Taiwan.

secularisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century' (Hanegraaff, 1999, p. 146). The NAM refers to 'a social phenomenon, which has emerged during the 1970s and which has adopted and further developed a secularised esoteric belief system' (Hanegraaff, 1999, p. 146). For Hanegraaff, the New Age can be considered as a form of cultural criticism based on secularised esotericism; it combines traditional esotericism and modern science, spirituality and rationality. In addition, holism, as the most central concern of the NAM, is opposed to dualism and reductionism, which are the characteristics of both dogmatic Christianity and Cartesian philosophy (Hanegraaff, 1998, pp. 388-396, pp. 514-524).

Hanegraaff's analysis provides us with background knowledge of the New Age in the West. However, his approach is largely confined to ideas and theology. The sociological literature on the New Age is limited, but useful ideas can be gleaned from several theoretical frameworks that have become influential in recent years. In particular, the theoretical frameworks devised by Paul Heelas, Anthony Giddens, and Roland Robertson offer interesting, but oblique, insights into New Age phenomena. My research, therefore, aims to expand and to build on their arguments in two major respects. The first is to examine the development of the NAM in Taiwan as a non-grass roots spiritual movement, with special reference to its implications for participants' emotions and their sense of healing. The second is to analyse how well these healing experiences can be understood as 'late modern' phenomena, to use Giddens's phrase.

Social research has shown that in the last two to three decades the NAM has expanded into other areas of the world outside the West, such as Brazil,

Hong Kong, Japan, Nigeria, Singapore, and South Africa (Hackett, 1992; Mullins, 1992; Oosthuizen, 1992; Heelas, 1996, p.8; Shimazono, 1999, 2004; Introvigne, 2001; Clarke, 2006). This trend shows that the development of the NAM is not only limited to the West but has also occurred in other regions of the world. The issue of globalisation<sup>3</sup> and debates over ‘Westernisation, Imperialism, or Americanisation’ are therefore also raised in the study of the NAM (Frisk, 2001; Hanegraaff, 2001; Introvigne, 2001). However, empirical research on the NAM in non-west areas is still relatively limited, compared to the large amounts of research results in the West. Therefore, my research on the NAM in Taiwan also pays attention to the issue of globalisation in order to resolve the puzzle of ‘universalism vs. particularisation’. As a non-native, newly introduced spirituality that emphasises individualism or the idea of a ‘self-reflexive self’, the NAM is different from the traditional diffused religions, Buddhism, Taoism and other new religions (native and non-native) in Taiwan. In one sense the dynamics of rapid social, political and cultural changes in Taiwan provide the environment for the emergence and development of the NAM in the religious/spiritual fields. In another sense, the NAM might be viewed as part of the growing trend of globalisation in Taiwan.

The rationale for this research arose from my preliminary fieldwork,<sup>4</sup> which revealed two points that are related to the issue of healing in the NAM in

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<sup>3</sup> For the sake of consistency, in the thesis I will spell globalisation with the letter ‘s’, except in quotations when the author uses the letter ‘z’.

<sup>4</sup> This includes 1) participant observation in ‘*A Course in Light*’ for three months, a workshop and one session of Aura Soma therapy, a tarot course for half a year, crystal meditation, ‘Conversation With God’ study group for one month, Orin & DaBen meditation, activities in the Chinese New Age Society, user groups on the Internet, etc.; 2) informal interviews with 11 people [teachers, healers, organisers]. These observations and interviews were conducted between 1998 and 2001. This period of exploration helped me get a rough picture of the Movement and related groups, including user groups on the Internet.

Taiwan. First, experiences of bodily and emotional transformation (especially healing experiences) are particularly important for 'New Agers' in Taiwan. Different kinds of healing or self-healing messages are provided at New Age centres, workshops, lectures, courses or user-groups on the Internet. Various practices related to therapies or healing are active in New Age circles, such as Aura Soma therapy, Reiki healing, Massage therapy, A Course in Light, Orin & DaBen meditation (Divine Will, Light Body), Bach Flower Remedies, Bodywork and Yoga. This observation is in accordance with findings in related social science research which show that healing phenomena in the NAM are not only significant but have also flourished since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ellwood and Partin 1988; McGuire 1988; Albanese 1992; Bowman 1999; Crowley 2000; Sutcliffe, 2003a, pp.174-194). Second, New Age leaders in Taiwan report that they have been healed themselves either by spiritual practices or by healing at times of crisis in their lives. In addition, the idea of the New Age gives New Agers an awareness of their problems and opens a channel for them to heal themselves. This means that New Agers have become accustomed to the idea of the New Age by diagnosing their problems and relying on various therapies or forms of healing to heal their physical or emotional problems. In short, the rationale for my doctoral research is that I wanted to understand the sociological forces at work in these developments and to locate these forces in theoretical frameworks that could make sense of them.

Therefore, the two main aims of this research project are (a) to explore the development of the NAM in Taiwan in sociological terms with special reference to physical and emotional healing, and (b) to examine the usefulness



of theoretical ideas about ‘self-religion’, ‘reflexive modernisation’ and ‘globalisation’ that underlie many sociological accounts of the New Age phenomena and late modernity. The purpose of these two main aims of the research project is to fill important gaps in the existing literature relating to the NAM that will be revealed in Chapter 2.

My research is original in the sense that I test three theoretical ideas in this project that have never been methodically examined in the study of New Age phenomena in Taiwan. Moreover, no research on the NAM either in the West or in Taiwan<sup>5</sup> has empirically investigated in depth the issue of emotion or its connection with personal transformation, although most of researchers have noted that transformational experiences are the most important characteristic of the Movement.

## 1.2 Research Problem and Questions

The general problem to which my research will propose solutions is how to understand in sociological terms the significance of New Age beliefs, practices and organisations in Taiwan. I explore why there are a number of people in Taiwan who advocate the idea of New Age and participate in a movement which promotes a newly-introduced, foreign spirituality centred on the ‘Self.’

A small number of specific research questions will enable me to focus my research on topics that derive from influential theoretical ideas about the New Age and late modernity, which will be discussed in greater detail in

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<sup>5</sup> Currently, the only PhD thesis in Taiwan that explored the NAM in this country (Chia-Luen Chen, 2002) does not discuss either the issues of emotions or transformation but focuses on the movement’s overall development as well as the characteristics of study groups.

Chapter 3. These questions fall into the following four categories:

1. Self-religion

To what extent is New Age practice a matter of learning to align oneself with a source of authority?

What is the relationship between freedom and discipline in the New Age?

2. Reflexive Modernisation

To what extent can New Age practices be considered as applications of expert knowledge?

What is the relationship between the reconstruction of self-identity and risk in New Age circles?

How far does the New Age, as a new form of spirituality, have a place in life politics? To what extent, and in what way, does the NAM represent 'a return of the repressed' in late modernity?

3. Emotions and Embodiment

How do participants deal with the issues of emotions in New Age practices?

Are there 'feeling rules' in New Age practices? If so, how do New Agers express the feeling rules?

What are the relationships between the self, emotions and healing in New Age practices?

4. Globalisation

How do New Age teachers or organisations in Taiwan interact with New Age organisations abroad?

How far do local leaders adapt global material for teaching at the local level; and how far do they 'package' local material for consumption at the

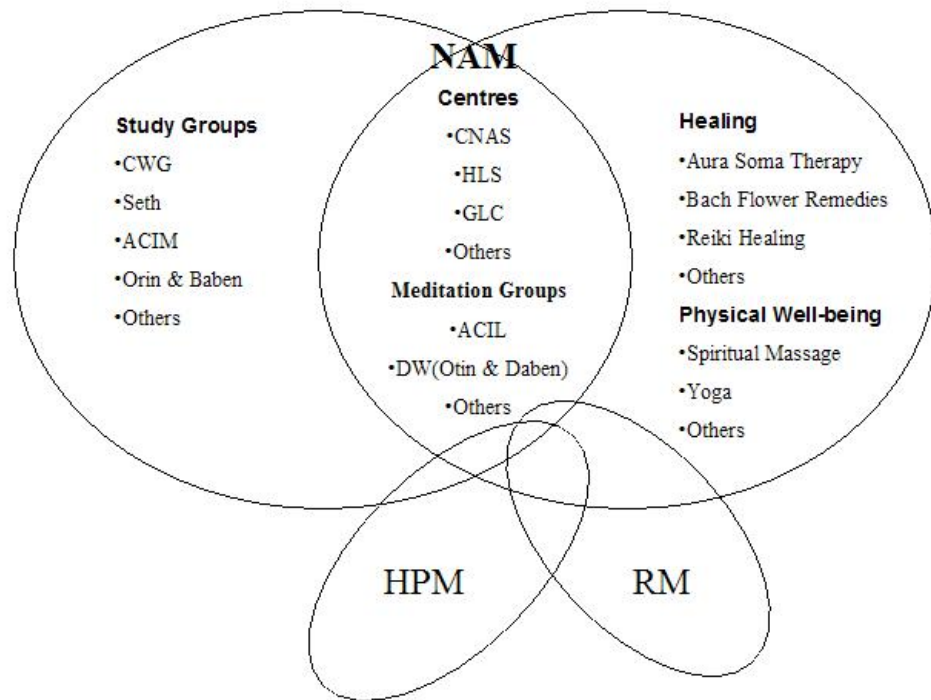
global level?

In what ways does the documentation produced by local groups relate to literature distributed globally?

### 1.3 Overview of the Research Methodology

I employ a qualitative approach to the research project. In order to comprehensively understand the situation of the NAM in Taiwan, I focus my investigations on representative centres, groups, teachers and active participants. A diagrammatic scheme of the NAM in Taiwan is shown in *Figure 1.1*. Two other movements that overlap with the NAM are also shown in the figure: one is the Human Potential Movement (HPM); the other is the Rajeneesh Movement (RM). The diagram is merely a rough indication of the extent to which study groups, centres and healing activities overlap with each other as well as with the HPM and the RM (or Osho). This means that some individuals are active in more than one type of New Age activity; it also means that, in some cases, there are formal or informal relations between the leaders of various activities and organisations.

**Figure 1.1 The Diagrammatic Scheme of the NAM in Taiwan**



It is suggested that one of the goals of research is to extend and improve existing theories based on an awareness of features of the empirical world that are not explicable by current theories. The process of doing research in order to reach a goal can be called ‘theory reconstruction’ (Burawoy et al. 1991). In my research, the features of the NAM in Taiwan are to be examined in order to discover to what extent the current theories explain the ‘empirical world’, and to expand current scholarly explanations if these theories are not sufficient to cover the case of Taiwan. The process involves mutual interaction between theories and data (Esterberg, 2002, pp.5-10).

In methodology, Silverman (2005) has suggested that there are two models in qualitative research and that each model has a different focus, aim, and preferred data. The emotionalist model focuses on the perceptions,

meanings and emotions of the research subjects. The aim is to obtain authentic insights. The method of data collection for this model is open-ended interviews. By contrast, the constructionist model focuses on the interactions and behaviour of research subjects. It aims to examine how phenomena are constructed; data such as observation, texts, and tapes are preferred (pp. 10-11). This thesis is a combination of the two models because it looks at both the meaning of the NAM to its participants and at their social interactions.

The principal methods of research for data collection include the following:

(1) Collection and analysis of relevant literature, such as academic studies, New Age books, newsletters, advertisements and information on the Internet;

(2) Participant observation on a regular basis in New Age activities, especially healing sessions;

(3) Interviews with leading representatives of New Age centres, organisations and groups;

(4) Interviews with active participants who have experienced transformation through healing;

(5) Taking digital photos while engaging in participant observation.

The two most important modes of empirical data-gathering in this thesis are interviews and participant observations. In this regard, forty in-depth interviews were conducted and recorded by digital recorder in order to collect information about participants' experiences of New Age practices and their opinions of the Movement. In addition, I participated in two New Age groups

— *A Course in Light* (ACIL) and *Divine Will* (DW) — in order to observe the way in which participants dealt with the issue of emotions and the way in which feeling rules were constructed and negotiated. The following sections describe in detail the methods of interviewing and participant observation for this research.

### 1.3.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews (semi-structured interviews) are less rigid than structured interviews. This method allows interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words. As Esterberg suggests, although researchers typically commence with an idea about what the interview will cover, the interviewee's responses 'shape the order and structure of the interview' (Esterberg, 2002, p.87). Therefore, the process of interviewing permits a more flexible exchange between interviewer and interviewee. I use semi-structured in-depth interviews in my research because they enabled my interviewees and me to explore topics in detail.

In the selection of interviewees, I took account of their experience of New Age activities, their knowledge of New Age ideas and their willingness to incorporate them into their 'life politics'. The aim was to concentrate on relatively experienced participants. Interviewees came from the following sources:

- (1) participants who reported themselves as strongly involved in one, or more than one, New Age practice;
- (2) participants who supported the idea of the New Age and/or identified themselves as New Agers.

As the network of the Movement is fluid and most groups/organisations

are loose structures or without physical centres, it is difficult to place a clear boundary around the Movement geographically when locating participants. Therefore, I adopted two strategies in order to include participants in as many different New Age groups as possible in my interviews. First, an introduction letter about my research together with a few questions (see Appendix 1) was sent to New Age groups and several mailing lists by email in August 2003, one month before I went back to Taiwan for fieldwork. This letter was designed as a pilot exercise, which aimed to generate some basic information about the range and extent of New Age activities in Taiwan. Another purpose of the letter was to explore the possibility of interviewing people who were strongly involved in the Movement. I received thirty-one email replies to my letter, from which I found ten interviewees and established three 'field informants'.<sup>6</sup>

Second, during my fieldwork between September 2003 and February 2004, I visited several representative New Age centres and organisations, attending some activities and workshops in order to reach participants from different groups. As there is no published or publicly available list which might be used as a sampling frame for the NAM, I used the method of 'network or snowball sampling' to find the rest of the thirty interviewees during my fieldwork. In this regard, snowball sampling is useful because it involves 'contacting a member of the population to be studied and asking him or her whether they know anyone else with the required characteristics' (Arber, 2001, p.63). In the process of snowball sampling I also met another eight people whom I regarded as field informants.

Forty interviews were conducted during the following three periods:

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<sup>6</sup> Field informants are those who provided useful information but did not want to be formally interviewed. These people have strong involvement and good connections in the Movement.

September 2003 to February 2004, July to August 2004, and January 2005. Interviewees include pioneers, leaders of important New Age organisations (including centres and groups), organisers of New Age websites, individual practitioners, and ordinary participants. The social background of the interviewees is analysed and discussed in Chapter 4. A list of the interviewees is attached as Appendix 2.

Each interview was digitally recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The length of each interview varied from person to person. Some interviewees were very articulate; in this case, it usually took more than three hours to complete an interview. By contrast, some interviewees, especially males, responded to questions with short but precise sentences; therefore, these only took about one hour. However, the average length of one interview lasted two hours. In addition to the background information about interviewees, the interview questions (see Appendix 3) included three other aspects: (1) personal experiences of New Age/spiritual practices; (2) personal assessment of the connection between New Age practices and social life, and (3) personal assessment of New Age spirituality, the transcendental worlds, and religions.

Most interviews were conducted in Taipei. Some interviews were conducted in other cities such as Hsinchu, and Taoyuan in North Taiwan. A few interviews were conducted in Taichung, in central Taiwan. Therefore, the research setting of the study was primarily based in North Taiwan. There are two reasons for this setting. First, most representative New Age groups and organisations were first established and developed in Taipei City, the capital of Taiwan. Therefore, Taipei is regarded as the major and the most important



place for the emergence and the development of the NAM in this country.

Second, Taipei is my hometown, and therefore it was more accessible and more convenient for me to do the fieldwork there in terms of time management and resources.

### 1.3.2 Participant Observation

I employed the method of participant observation mainly in order to explore the issue of emotions in the NAM. The first step in this regard was to choose an appropriate site. I selected *Buddhist Life* (BL) as the site for participating in two New Age groups relating to healing. BL is a distribution centre for religious and spiritual products such as crystals, stones, incense, rosaries, artwork, books and audio materials. The reasons for selecting BL as my research setting for participant observation were as follows:

- (1) It was regarded as one of the earliest sites for New Age activities;
- (2) The site owner had good connections with several New Age groups and organisations which I regarded as resourceful informants;
- (3) The location was more accessible to me than other New Age centres for regular visits.

I participated in two New Age groups (ACIL and DW) operating at BL. The two groups focus on healing by means of meditation. Participants in each group meet once a week at meeting rooms in BL. I participated in ACIL from November to December 2003, in the second level of the basic lessons entitled 'emotional body', and then for another five sessions of the 'Planetary lessons'<sup>7</sup> in the following fieldwork from July to August 2004. As for DW, I followed Part II, composed of twelve sessions from November 2003 to February 2004.

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<sup>7</sup> The 'advanced' series of ACIL includes 9 levels called the 'Planetary lessons'.

My participant observation of the two groups was mainly overt. For both of the groups, I explained the main purpose of my participation to the group teachers in advance before I joined the groups. Then, during my participation in the first session in each of the groups, I waited until the group teachers introduced me to group members to reveal the purpose of my participation. In both cases, my identity was not explained to members until a short break during the first session of each group. This is because, according to the group teachers, I was a part of the groups once I had joined in, no matter what my main purpose of participation was. In addition, they expected that I would follow the dynamic of the groups but not break it.

### *A Course in Light (ACIL)*

Negotiating was the first step when gaining access to ACIL. The person whom I needed to ask for formal permission was the ‘gatekeeper’, that is, the ACIL teacher. During my interview with the teacher on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2003, I explained my experiences of practising the basic level of ACIL in 2000 as well as my wish to join her group for the purpose of research. The teacher was pleased and welcomed me to join the group meeting from November 2003 when the group would move to practise the second level of the Course, lessons for the emotional body.<sup>8</sup> In addition, I negotiated with the teacher about the possibility of recording sessions and taking digital photos during my participation in the group in order to observe emotional expression and embodiment among participants. The teacher supported my requests.

In my participation in the first session, however, one of the participants prevented me from recording the session and taking photos. It then became

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<sup>8</sup> ACIL is a long-term practice in the NAM, and it takes almost one year to finish the basic four levels of the Course. I will describe ACIL practice in detail in Chapter 5.

difficult for me to observe and to make notes during the session because my every move was ‘watched’ by this particular participant. Therefore, I focused more on participating than observing in the first three sessions in order to develop relationships with group members. This was because I was aware that the main task in the early stage of participant observation is to gain trust and develop relationships with the people in the setting (Esterberg, 2001, p.69). Focusing on participating rather than observing in the first few sessions also helped me become familiar with the setting, which further improved my understanding of the emotions of myself and the participants during the practice. However, once I had left the centre, I immediately made brief notes about what I felt and what had occurred during the sessions, including the events, the setting, and the participants.

Since there were no recording or photos taken during my participation in the eight sessions of ACIL about the emotional body, but only a few field notes, I decided to participate in the same group again in my follow-up fieldwork in the summer of 2004. This time, the group had moved to the advanced level, the planetary level 1. This level was covered from July 2004 to 5<sup>th</sup> August with five sessions.<sup>9</sup> I noticed that a few former participants had left and new participants had joined the group. In the first session, the teacher briefly introduced me to group members and asked if they agreed that I could record sessions and take one or two digital photos of each session. Each of them expressed their opinion about my participation as a researcher. To my surprise, none of them rejected my suggestions about recording sessions and taking photos. The recorded sessions and photos were thus useful to my

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<sup>9</sup> When I joined the group for practising the planetary level 1, it had already moved to lesson 8. Therefore, I participated the rest of five sessions from lesson 8 to lesson 12.

exploration and analysis of the issue of emotions. My observation and analysis of ACIL will constitute an important part of Chapter 5.

### ***Divine Will (DW)***

DW is another practice that I chose to participate in in order to examine the issue of emotions in New Age practice. I participated in a group from mid-October 2003 when they were studying a book entitled, *Healing Yourself with Light*, before they moved on to practise DW. The four-week study sessions helped me build a trusting relationship with the teacher and participants.<sup>10</sup> The first session of DW was held on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2003. I was openly welcomed by the teacher as well as the participants to record sessions during my participation in the 12 sessions. In fact, sometimes a few participants also recorded a specific session for those who were not able to attend for personal reasons. Although my purpose in participating in DW was to collect data, once I joined the group I was also regarded as one of them. Therefore, I also volunteered to host one of the sessions on emotions (the details are described in Chapter 5). Such a ‘give-and-take’ interaction in the research setting enhanced feelings of trust and indebtedness (Esterberg, 2002, pp.69-70), which in turn more facilitated my participant observation of the group.

### ***Photos***

I regard the taking of photos as a part of data collection during my fieldwork. I took digital photos of every occasion that I attended, such as sessions, workshops, meetings and parties. These photos were taken with the agreement of the organisers of events as well as the persons concerned.

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<sup>10</sup> About 5 of the attendees in the study group are regular clients of the teacher.

Hundreds of digital photos were taken during my fieldwork. These photos are not used as objects for analysis but as visual materials to illustrate my arguments and my descriptions of the NAM in Taiwan. A selection of these photos will be presented later in the thesis. Some of them will be presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7; the others will be attached as Appendix 4.

### 1.3.3 Data Analysis

#### ***Ethical Practice***

The ethical guidelines, which apply not only to data collection during the fieldwork but also to data analysis for the thesis, primarily respect the principles of anonymity and confidentiality. It is a part of the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice, as well as other academic bodies in social research, that

*Sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy. (BSA 2002, cited in Payne, 2004, p.68)*

Therefore, I will not reveal all the features of my informants' identities, such as names or contextual clues involving their privacy, when using interview materials in the thesis. The same policy applies to the names of people or religious groups that were mentioned by interviewees. Only the names of a few New Age leaders are disclosed in the thesis for the purpose of contextual clarification. All the interviewees are indicated by numbers in the thesis after the letter 'P' for 'participant' when I refer to them (i.e. P1, P2, P3 and so on).

### *Transcription and Coding with Atlas.ti*

Each digitally-recorded interview analysed in this thesis is transcribed verbatim in Chinese. Ideally, I would have translated the transcripts of the forty interviews into English before analysing the data. However, the length of each interview transcript is between 8500 (interviews of one hour) and 36,000 words (interviews of 3.5 hours) in Chinese, depending on the duration of each interview. The huge amount of interview data made full translation of each interview impossible in terms of time management. Therefore, the coding of interview data was carried out on the Chinese transcripts. Selected extracts were then translated into English for presentation in the thesis.

It is inevitable that some problems of translation arose in this research. Most importantly, there are some Chinese terms that have no English equivalents. In these cases, I use the Pin-Yin system<sup>11</sup> to transliterate the Chinese characters into Roman script according to their sound (see Appendix 5 for the list), and I use quotation marks following Chinese characters to indicate the translated meaning. For example, 'Qi-Xie' (氣血) is a term in Chinese medicine, which combines the ideas of energy and physical blood circulation. However, there are organisations and people that use other, specific systems for spelling, such as Wade-Gilos. In this case, I follow their system, and not the Pin-Yin system. In addition, there are some Chinese terms that are able to carry more than one meaning, and hence they can be translated into English in different ways. For example, the word 'Fa' (發) can mean 'send out', 'show', and 'cleanse'. In such a case, I will choose the translation that best matches

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<sup>11</sup> In practice there is more than one system of spelling. I have tried to be as consistent as possible in the thesis.

the specific context of communication. Accordingly, in the process of analysis, careful attention needs to be paid to the precise implications of such terms.

In qualitative data analysis, computer assistance, especially using a particular group of software packages, the 'code-based theory builders', is useful in managing and interrogating large volumes of data (Lewins, 2001, pp.202-203). Therefore, my interview transcripts are coded with the aid of the software package, Atlas.ti. Codes are essentially divided into categories that emerge from prior theory. They are more deductive than inductive, and they have the specific purpose of labelling segments of text for retrieval (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Codes are 'retrieval and organizing devices that allow the analyst to spot quickly, pull out, then cluster all the segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept, or theme' (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 56). In this regard, I categorised my interview data into the four themes (theoretical codes) of self-religion, reflexive modernisation, globalisation and transformation, each derived from the theoretical frameworks, and assigned codes to them. In addition, new ideas emerged while I was reading and re-reading my interview texts. Codes are also assigned to these ideas for analysis. The coding approach in this research considers both the deductive and inductive dimensions.

To conclude the discussion of the methodology and methods used in this research, I have sought to explain the main research tasks and the choices that I have made. I adopted a dual research methodology, based on both constructionist and emotionalist models, because it facilitated the selection, collection and analysis of data in a way that enabled me to answer the research questions.

## 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is composed of eight chapters and arranged in three parts. Part I (Chapter 1 to Chapter 3) provides background knowledge and outlines the research design of the overall thesis, including the theoretical frameworks and methodology. Chapter 1 introduces the project's rationale, research strategies, research questions, methods and the outline of the thesis. Chapter 2 deals with the concept 'New Age', which has been the subject of intense debate among scholars in recent years with regard to its theoretical and empirical significance. The chapter begins by categorising various investigations of the NAM. In addition, I argue that the ambiguity or controversy among scholars about the NAM is not necessarily due to the diversity of the phenomena. Instead, the point that the term 'movement' has not been properly examined and defined in most research on the New Age deserves to be addressed. Therefore, an analytic framework of the NAM in Taiwan is then proposed as a way of presenting it as a fluid spiritual social movement, after comparison with other social movements. Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical framework of this thesis on the basis of three main theoretical ideas ('self-religion', 'reflexive modernisation' and 'globalisation'): each of them has a bearing on the NAM in Taiwan in different ways. The main research questions of this project are derived from a critical analysis of these theoretical ideas with a view to placing the NAM within a global social context. In addition, the issue of emotions is highlighted as a closely related and important aspect of the NAM that has been largely ignored by scholars in this field.

Part II (Chapter 4 to Chapter 7) is an empirical examination of the NAM



in Taiwan based on the findings of my fieldwork. Chapter 4 presents the range of the NAM in Taiwan, including the history of the Movement, the social and economic characteristics of the interviewees, and their previous religious backgrounds. The characteristics of their spirituality are analysed in the light of the interview materials in order to examine the usefulness of the idea of 'self-religion'. Chapter 5 analyses and discusses the issue of emotions with regard to self-transformation in New Age practices. It aims to explain the way in which participants transform their emotions at two levels: at the personal level, by means of reflexivity; and at the interaction level, by 'feeling rules'. Chapter 6 deals with the reflexive project of the self for New Agers. It aims to examine how self-identity is reconstructed in the process of self-transformation, and to elaborate how the New Age spirituality that supports self-transformation can be regarded as an 'alternative' form of expert knowledge. Chapter 7 examines the structural dimension of the NAM in Taiwan. It looks at the organisations and network structure of the NAM in terms of the ambiguous concept of globalisation. It concludes that the globalised dimension of the NAM in Taiwan cannot simply be regarded as an expression of 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation' but is properly understood as a process that I have labelled 'parallel glocalization'.

Part III (Chapter 8) seeks to draw a number of conclusions from the examination of this research on Taiwan's NAM. It provides a summary of the main issues discussed in previous chapters and of answers to the main research questions. It also reflects critically on the relative weaknesses of the entire project, in order to identify some possibilities for fruitful research in the future.

## Chapter 2

### **The Concept of 'New Age'**

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the term New Age/New Age movement, which has been hotly debated among scholars in recent years regarding its theoretical significance and the related empirical evidence. Scholars in the field of New Age studies are aware of the controversy surrounding the concept, and therefore aim to propose definitions and explanations that are more conclusive, comprehensive and feasible; they are from different disciplines such as anthropology, history, religious studies and sociology. However, issues about the use of the term New Age, and about whether or not it is useful in describing some of the alternative spiritual phenomena of the modern arena still remain uncertain.

My discussions in this chapter will focus on various meanings and dimensions of the term. My intention is not to introduce all research on New Age but to categorise several important perspectives on the New Age among scholars, from which I will derive my analytical framework of the NAM in Taiwan. In the first section I will review work which describes and defines the New Age as a one whole movement.

Next, I will deal with specific aspects of the concept of New Age, relating to the connections between the New Age and other movements. In my review of the literature on the New Age, I found that the phenomenon is often discussed together with and compared with other movements, such as

New Religious Movements (NRMs), the Neo-pagan movement, the Human Potential Movement (HPM) and the Holistic Health Movement (HHM). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the differences between the New Age and related religious/social movements in order to identify the boundaries of the New Age. In addition, from my review of the research on New Age and other religious/social movements, I found that the healing phenomena in the New Age have been regarded as highly significant in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, I will outline these discussions about the relationship between the New Age and healing in the third section.

Since some scholars also try to theorise the New Age from specific points of view, I will also examine these arguments in Sections Four, Five and Six. Section Four deals with the perspective of the history of religious ideas relating to the New Age by Hanegraaff. Section Five looks at Sutcliffe's ideas of the New Age as a popular religion. In Section Six I will examine Shimazono's ideas of the New Age in Japan. After an overview of the scholarly discussions of the term 'New Age', the final section will set out my analytical framework of the NAM in Taiwan, which is based on a 'fluid perspective' (Gusfield, 1981) of social movements.

The purpose of this chapter is not to propose an approach to replace the widely accepted explanations for the New Age. By contrast, it is to show the diversity of the use of the term among scholars reflecting their different assumptions in their research. Most importantly, my overview of research on the New Age and my discussions of the term 'New Age' support the argument that the term 'New Age Movement' is appropriate when examining the phenomenon in Taiwan, according to my particular analytical framework, and

that the NAM in Taiwan can be understood as a loose network at three levels.

## 2.1 New Age: One Whole Movement?

The following two definitions of the New Age Movement (NAM) both emphasise the theme of transformation. First of all, the *Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements* states that:

*The New Age Movement taken as a whole is more a vision than a coherent system of beliefs and practices. As a movement it is an acephalous movement though... the opinions of a number of its exponents, among them those of Baba Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), are widely respected and have acquired a form of scriptural authority – and a highly decentralised movement. It is also a decentralised movement though there are New Age communities with their own clearly defined beliefs and practices built [sic]. What more than anything else gives a degree of unity to the New Age Movement is the goal aspired to by all participants, transformation of consciousness. (Kemp, 2004, p. 4 cited in Clarke 2005)*

Second, explanations for the theme of transformation can be found in the *New Age Encyclopedia* (Melton et al. 1990). The term ‘New Age’ is described as a possible ‘imminent’ transformation of culture and of humanity itself when people experience personal transformations. It also addresses a specific timeframe for the NAM, defining the NAM as:

*An international social movement which emerged in Western society in the late 1960s and which, during the 1980s, has showed itself to be an important new force in the development of the ever-changing Western culture. As a movement it is quite recent, but it has emerged from older movements and has integrated long-standing ideas and trends in the West. While freely accepting new perspectives from the East, the movement has deep roots in Western*

*philosophy and life. The New Age Movement can be defined by its primal experience of transformation. ...Having experienced a personal transformation, New Agers project the possibility of the transformation ... of the culture and of humanity itself... the New Age's imminence gives the movement its name. (Melton et al. 1990, p.xiii)*

The idea of the New Age as a whole movement, in which the focus is on the idea of transformation, is also found in J. Gordon Melton's work (1991; 1992; 1995; 1998; Melton et al. 1990). According to Melton, the NAM, as a type of NRM, is a new social and religious movement, which, to a large extent, represents the metaphysical/occult phase of the spread of NRMs during the 1980s. In addition, Melton indicates that the theme of transformation in the NAM is a new version that was developed in the late 1980s in place of the millennial version, which is a former vision of the New Age in the 1960s.

In order to set a boundary for the NAM, Melton et al. (1990, p.xxii) suggest that it is better to trace it back to 1971 when 'eastern religion and transpersonal psychology had achieved a level of popularity, and metaphysical leaders could begin to articulate New Age vision'. According to Melton (1992, 1998), the historical roots of this version of a new age were derived from the Arcane School in connection with a theosophical world-view; the School was founded in the 1920s by the British theosophist Alice A. Bailey (see also Clarke, 2006, pp.28-29). The version of a coming New Age was developed into a self-conscious network during the 1960s, when the so-called the 'New Age Movement' was formed. At that time it emphasised a new millennial vision, sometimes called the Aquarian Age. This millennial version was spread by primarily British metaphysical teachers throughout Great Britain, North America, continental Europe, South Africa, and Australia.

It flowered into a broad social movement during the 1980s. By the late 1980s, however, the millennial version of the New Age was abandoned by its advocates such as David Spangler, the early New Age prophet, who announced changes in his thinking. Instead, Spangler focused on the symbolic meaning of the 'New Age', which emphasised visions of transformation, both in society and in individuals. They argued that personal transformation is the first step to social transformation. Since then, the meaning of the 'New Age' has been transformed from a millennial vision to a vision of transformation at social and individual levels.

Melton's version of the New Age locates the NAM in the context of NRMs; in the next section I will show that the NAM also has connections with other movements in addition to NRMs.

Two main conclusions emerge from this discussion. The first is that it makes good sense to think in terms of the New Age as a broad spiritual movement with a core of shared beliefs. The second conclusion is more important. It insists that the NAM contains an extremely wide diversity of beliefs, practices and organisations and, as such, constitutes an interesting challenge for sociological analysis. In common with some other researchers, I shall therefore emphasise the NAM's 'reticulate' or net-like characteristics. In particular, I shall stress the 'imbrication' or partial overlap within the NAM of many closely related forms of spirituality.

## 2.2 Network or Milieu?

Debates about connections and overlaps between the NAM and other movements such as other NRMs, the Neo-pagan movement, the HHM, and the

HPM, also have a bearing on the concept of New Age. First of all, there are scholars who regard both the NAM and NRMs as movements which emerged from the counter-cultural ferment in the USA and Western Europe in the 1960s; but the relationship between the two movements is interpreted differently among scholars. For example, Melton views the NAM, as a part of the broad category of NRMs, as I have showed in the previous section, while Paul Heelas tends to include the latter in the former (Heelas, 1996, p.9). According to Heelas, all new spiritualities, new cults and new religions which have emerged since the 1960s are covered by the label 'New Age', which is also known as the 'Age of Aquarius' and grew out of the counter-culture in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Therefore, the Japanese new religion Soka Gakkai is included in the category of the New Age (Heelas, 1993, p.107; 1996). Although Heelas is aware of the various usages of the term 'New Age' in the media, he suggests that it can be identified as a relatively distinctive concept by using it to designate people who maintain an 'inner spirituality' which emphasises that the 'Self' is sacred. However, Kemp (2004) indicates that there are similarities between the ideals of the New Age and the ideals of the counter-cultural trend of the 1960s. These ideals promote an alternative lifestyle and reject mainstream culture, and they 'involve, inter alia, Eastern religion and other non-conventional philosophies, radical politics, peace campaigning, feminism, "coming out" and civil rights' (p.32).

With regard to the connections between the NAM and the Neo-pagan movement, Michael York (1995) discusses the differences, similarities and overlaps between these two Movements, and suggests that both of them can be regarded as a part of the broader explosion of NRMs. According to York

(1995, p.33, pp.145-177), both New Age and Neo-paganism are manifestations of the Western occult tradition, particularly the American metaphysical tradition which includes Spiritualism, Theosophy, the Arcane School, Astarta, New Thought, the Divine Science Church, the Church of Religious Science, the Unity School of Christianity, Christian Science, the Association for Research and Enlightenment and the Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship. In addition, both of them can be regarded as expressions of the 'cultic milieu', which is a term originally proposed by Colin Campbell (1972), to designate 'all deviant belief-systems and their associated practices' and 'unorthodox science, alien and heretical religion, deviant medicine, ...the collectivities, institutions, individuals and media of communication associated with these beliefs' (p. 122). Therefore, the Euro-American metaphysical tradition and the counterculture of the 1960s together constitute the occult underground of the cultic milieu. York suggests that New Age fits into the category of 'cultic milieu' because it is a 'blend of pagan religions, Eastern philosophies, and occult-psychic phenomena' (York, 1995, p.34). However, almost ten years after his major work on the NAM was published in 1995, York revised his opinion of the connection between the NAM and Neo-paganism:

*My current way of thinking is now to see New Age thought as a sub-sect of pluralistic paganism. ...The two spiritualities share an emphasis on self-determination, possess an inclination toward appropriation of ideas and practices from other religions, are anti-bureaucratic and institutional, seek spiritual restoration, the experience of enchantment and exploration of innovative practices, and, increasingly, an enhanced cherishing of ecological recovery and balance. ...Furthermore, the two orientations are together united in their quest for recognition and survival vis-à-vis both traditional mainstream Christianity and any tendency toward a scientific*



*monopoly. (York, 2005, p. 32)*

On the other hand, in accordance with the perspective of the cultic milieu, Steve Bruce (1996a) argues that New Age is organised around ‘client cults’ and ‘audience cults’, which are terms proposed by Stark and Bainbridge (1985) in their examination of religious movements. According to Stark and Bainbridge, client and audience cults promote ‘novel beliefs and practices’ but are far less organised (Bainbridge, 2004, p. 381):

*An audience cult may have no discernable organization at all, consisting, for example, of an audience that reads books or watches television programs about novel beliefs and the authors of those books and programs who may have little or no contact with each other or with their audiences. A client cult has rudimentary organization, in that individual practitioners serve a clientele, such as astrologers casting horoscopes or mediums staging séances.*

Therefore, in Bruce’s analysis, client cults are structured around individual relationships between consumers and providers. This category includes, for example, alternative therapists who advertise their services in appropriate media and provide individuals with consultations for a fixed fee (Bruce, 1996a, p.197). On the other hand, audience cults are structured around the mass distribution of the word, spoken and printed. Therefore, this category refers to the distribution systems of the New Age, such as books, magazines, audiocassettes and public lectures (p.198). As for the main themes of the New Age, Bruce refers to a summary by William Bloom, one of the movement’s spokespersons, that New Science, New Ecology, New Psychology, and New Spirituality constitute New Age thought (pp.204-212).

However, for Bruce (1998), the weakening of the social order is regarded as one of the social factors that causes belief in the New Age (p.30). New

Agers stress individualism and the inner 'divine', and therefore reject the imposition of social order and depend on cosmic consciousness to provide meaning and regularity. Bruce comments that New Age practices are 'bad sociology', in the sense that such a cosmic consciousness cannot provide New Agers with a way to order their lives. As a result, it cannot resolve the problems of the modern world. In other words, although New Agers reject the existence of the social order, they cannot provide an alternative 'feasible' resolution in Bruce's opinion.

There are also overlaps between the NAM and the HPM, the history of which can be track back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The work of the psychologist, William James, was regarded as a "precursor in the three areas of human potential" – the study of paranormal psychology, the existence of altered states of consciousness, and the documentation and investigation of incidences of human potentialities' – even though the Movement was not fully developed until the late 1960s and early 1970s (Rose, 2005, p.61). The father of the HPM is Abraham Maslow; and his humanistic psychology and transpersonal psychology became the primary schools of the HPM. Rose describes the direction of the influence of the HPM on the NAM as follows:

*Although the [human potential] Movement itself and humanistic psychology generally may have declined in their importance to the New Age, many of their ideas and activities remain as significant tools. These have been described as 'psychotechnologies', that is, 'systems for a deliberate change in consciousness' (Rose, 2005, p.62).*

The HHM is another phenomenon that overlaps in part with the NAM. Emerging in the 1960s, the HHM stresses that 'the individual is responsible for her/his own actions, well-being, and quality of life and for discovering the path

toward complete self-realisation' (Clarke, 2006, p.31). One of the basic beliefs in the HHM is that a human being is regarded as a total system of the body, mind and spirit in terms of holism. It promotes natural treatments, based on a belief that the universal life force is the healing energy. In this regard, Melton et al. (1990) argue that since the core element of the NAM is New Ager's experiences of transformation, notably in the form of healing, especially with alternative medicines, the development of the NAM during the 1970s merged with the HHM to the extent that it is difficult to differentiate them from each other (pp. xiii-xx).

English-Lueck (1990) also indicates that the values and beliefs in the logic of holistic health are part of the NAM (p.4). She suggests that two interconnected aspects constitute the HHM:

*Holistic health is a symbol, containing moral codes – values referring to what life should be. The valued states include freedom from pain, passion, and selfishness, and a state of serenity, honesty, and creativity. There is also a commitment to 'wellness', meaning spiritual attunement with natural and social environments, as well as physical health. (p.16)*

William Bloom further suggests that the two terms, 'holistic' and 'New Age', are interchangeable, because they refer to the same general phenomenon. Bloom even predicts that the use of the former will replace the latter in the long term when New Age is no longer 'new' in terms of culture (Kemp, 2004, p.30 cited in Bloom, 2001).

The debate about the relative merits of calling the NAM a 'network' or a 'milieu' will no doubt continue for some time. My contribution has been to show that both terms have strengths and weaknesses and that neither of them is entirely capable of capturing the sociological configuration of New Age

activities without major modification. I also believe that the imbrication of New Age and other forms of spirituality deserves closer examination. The partial overlap with alternative healing is important enough to receive separate discussion in the next section.

## 2.3 New Age and Alternative Healing

Social research on the New Age has shown that healing phenomena have not only become significant in the NAM but have even flourished since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ellwood and Partin, 1988; McGuire, 1988; Albanese, 1992; Bowman, 1999; Crowley, 2000; Sutcliffe, 2003a; Rose, 2005). Also, Hanegraaff points out that healing, together with personal growth, is one of five trends in the NAM (Hanegraaff, 1998, pp.42-61). In addition, Dominic Corrywright (2004a) indicates that the growth in Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is strongly connected to the growth in interest in New Age and Alternative spiritualities, and that the idea of healing is central to the spiritual practices of New Agers. He argues that these practices are supported by a holistic philosophy, which has also been analysed in many related pieces of research (Beckford, 1984, 1992, 2003; English-Lueck, 1990; Fuller, 1989, 2001; Gilhus, 2001; Hanegraaff, 1999; Hedges and Beckford, 2000; Kyle, 1995; Levin and Coreil 1986; McGuire 1988; Melton, 1992; O'Connor, 1995; Rose 2005; Sutcliffe 2003a, b; Whorton, 1999). Furthermore, Rose suggests that the healing domain of New Age incorporates a very wide variety of practices:

*These healing practices can be regarded as both the most visible 'face' of the New Age and the most adopted out of all of its ideas and activities – in fact, certain of these therapies have been embraced by*

*the medical mainstream both as complementary to its normal practices and, in a few cases, as alternative to them. (Rose, 2005, p.183)*

Rose (2005) argues that the domain of the healing practices in the New Age seems to be closely connected to the domain of spiritual empowerment. The differences between them are that the former is 'predominantly to do with the health and well-being of the whole person, whereas the nature of spiritual empowerment is more to do with individuals seeking to transform or develop themselves through an educative or experiential process' (p.184). Rose also indicates that many forms of New Age healing are actually 'not new and not necessarily specific to the New Age' (p.188). Many traditional rituals and systems have been brought into healing practices in the New Age: shamanistic techniques; Asian systems of medicine such as Ayurveda from India; acupuncture, shiatsu, and herbology from China; Aromatherapy from Egypt; and Avicenna's idea of a system of healing from the Middle East (pp. 188-189).

As a result, discussions about the connections among such phenomena as the HHM, CAM and the New Age lead to questions such as, What is New Age healing? And what is the difference between New Age healing and alternative healing (non-biomedical healing)? In this regard, it is important to look at the work of Levin and Coreil (1986), which endeavours to clarify the term conceptually and empirically by exploring New Age healing in the U.S.

First, Levin and Coreil (1986) explore New Age phenomena in terms of medical, spiritual, and socio-cultural developments in the U.S., and indicate that the phrase 'New Age' has entered the domain of popular culture. In addition, the fact that the New Age has penetrated into popular culture in

America<sup>12</sup> has also left its mark on health and related institutions, and has become blended with various non-allopathic ways of healing (pp. 889-890). They also find that members of the multiplicity of health belief systems that comprise the New Age healing movement are largely the college-educated middle-class in the U.S.

The forms of New Age healing, according to Levin and Coreil (1986), share some common characteristics in spite of their extensive diversity. One characteristic is the premise shared among proponents of New Age healing that ‘mankind, the planet Earth, our solar system, or perhaps even the entire Universe has somehow found itself in a special place in time: at the cutting edge of our moment into a new age’ (p.891). Another common characteristic is that the belief systems of New Age healing are holistic. This point corresponds to other research on healing in the New Age, as I argued earlier. One final feature is that the difference between New Age healing and other holistic forms of healing is that its belief system is a ‘new vessel for the ancient wisdom’, to use Robert Ellwood’s phrase (cited in Levin and Coreil, 1986, p.891). In this regard, Levin and Coreil find that it is difficult to locate New Age healing in existing schemata of healing. Therefore, by using an inductive approach (minus the factor analysis) on both primary and secondary data sources on 81 healing systems or techniques identifying themselves with the New Age, they generate a typology of new age healing. The typology includes three modes, each with its own primary emphasis and characteristics: 1) mental or physical self-betterment: the primary emphasis is on the body, and the characteristic of the mode of healing is ‘secular, western, not supernaturally

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<sup>12</sup> The authors refer to the term ‘paradigmatic retransformation’ from the book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* by Marilyn Ferguson [1987]

oriented'; 2) esoteric teachings: the primary emphasis is on mind, and their characteristics are mostly western, supernaturally oriented, not ritualistic; and 3) contemplative practice: the primary emphasis is on soul, and its characteristic is religious, eastern, mostly ritualistic, mostly supernaturally oriented.

However, the authors also remind us that the differences between the three kinds of healing must be viewed as a matter of the degree of emphasis assigned to the means for reaching or restoring health and well-being (p.895).

This section has again emphasised the need to consider the NAM as a loose network of partially overlapping spiritualities, among which New Age healing occupies a central position. It is a point in common – and a point of convergence – between differing New Age ideas and practices. But the question of the origins and historical development of New Age ideas remains to be considered. The next section will summarise the most authoritative response to this question.

## 2.4 New Age Religion and the New Age Movement

Perhaps the most detailed analysis of the New Age as a religion and as a movement, including the relationship between the two categories in terms of the history of religious ideas, arises from Hanegraaff's works (1998, 1999, 2001, 2002). According to Hanegraaff (1998), the New Age as a religion emerged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reached maturity around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, whilst the New Age considered as a whole did not constitute a movement until the second half of the 1970s (p.522).

For Hanegraaff, the foundation for the emergence of New Age religion is the process of the secularisation of western esotericism during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and

19<sup>th</sup> centuries. New Age religion is a form of western culture criticism that is opposed to dualism and reductionism, which are perceived as characteristic of rationalist philosophy, science and dogmatic Christianity. In particular, holism as the core element of New Age religion is in opposition to dominant Christianity and rationalistic ideology (Hanegraaff, 1998, pp.515-516). In addition, he argues that New Age religion is not the product of an 'oriental renaissance':

*Oriental ideas and concepts have, almost without exception, been adopted only in so far as they could be assimilated into already-existing western frameworks. This has been the pattern in western esotericism since the beginning, and I know of no evidence which suggests that the New Age movement has brought a fundamental change. ...Both in esotericism generally and in the New Age movement particularly, the Orient has functioned mainly as a symbol of 'true spirituality' and as a repository of exotic terminology; its ideas have not fundamentally changed those of western recipients. (1998, p.517)*

Although many concepts and ideas are borrowed from Eastern religions, according to Hanegraaff, the basic structures of New Age religion are derived from the traditions of Western esotericism. These traditions underwent a crucial reinterpretation in the late-18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as a response to the secularising forces of modernity, and this was especially manifested in two broad movements: Romanticism and Occultism. Romanticism historicized the esoteric cosmology; Occultism more radically reinterpreted the esoteric cosmology in terms of the secularised worldview of 19<sup>th</sup> century science and philosophy. It is from the process of the 'secularisation of esotericism' during this period that New Age religion emerged (pp.406-410).

New Age religion, Hanegraaff states:



*consists of a complex of spiritualities which are no longer embedded in any religion...but directly in secular culture itself.... New Age religion (spiritualities)...is based upon the individual manipulation of religious as well as non-religious symbolic systems...in order to fill these symbols with new religious meaning' (Hanegraaff, 1999, p.152).*

For Hanegraaff, New Age religion can be regarded as a religious individualism because the Self — the most individualistic concept — is seen as ‘the symbolic centre of New Age religion’ (Hanegraaff, 1999, p.154). As for the development of the New Age in contemporary society, that is, its development in the later 1970s after having originally been part of a cultic milieu, Hanegraaff suggests that the individualistic characteristic of the Movement in the 1980s and 1990s has made it ‘the representative par excellence of the contemporary “spirituality of the market”’ (Hanegraaff, 2002, p.259).

In short, Hanegraaff (1999) views New Age religion as a form of secularised esotericism, which is rooted in western esoteric traditions that can be traced back to the early Renaissance, but which underwent a thorough process of secularisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Hanegraaff regards the NAM as ‘a social phenomenon, which has emerged during the 1970s and which has adopted and further developed a secularised esoteric belief system’ (p.146).

In addition to the valuable contribution of Hanegraaff’s work towards an understanding of the long historical process whereby New Age ideas progressively lost their religious significance, his work also offers an unusual perspective on the sense in which the New Age can be considered as a movement today. The implication of his reasoning is that the New Age only became a movement when it ceased to be an integral part of religion. This is

a provocative idea, which displays some similarity with Shimazono's (2004) argument about the shift from salvation to spirituality. But it runs the risk of neglecting to take proper account of the extent to which the category of religion has always contained movements – either in the mainstream or on the margins. The next section will suggest that some New Age ideas and practices have long been a feature of religion – but mainly on the fringes of 'official' religion (Towler, 1974; Hornsby-Smith, Lee & Reilly, 1985) and possibly in a form that is not appropriately termed a 'movement'.

## 2.5 New Age as 'Popular Religion'

Recently, Steve Sutcliffe (2003a,b; 2004) has questioned the consensus view that the 'New Age'<sup>13</sup> is a social or religious movement. He criticises most scholars of New Age studies (especially in the literature written in English between 1984 and 1996), who accept that there is 'an identifiable, replicable and falsifiable social or religious movement known as the "New Age" or the "New Age Movement"' (2003b, p. 8). Sutcliffe argues that such accounts assume 'the existence of some kind of movement associated with "New Age"' (2003b, p.10), and that therefore the task for scholars is to identify 'the kind or genre of movement at stake, whether NRM, NSM or simply sui generis' (2003b, p.10). Sutcliffe argues that Hans Sebald, Gordon Melton, Michael York, Paul Heelas, and Wouter Hanegraaff all share such a point of view in their works (2003b, pp.8-12), and he labels them as the 'first wave of New Age studies' (2003b, p.12). He argues that this 'first wave' of studies in

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<sup>13</sup> Sutcliffe uses inverted commas in his article (2003b) around the term 'New Age' and 'New Age Movement' to emphasise his constant concern with the problematic nature of this category.

this field lacks a consistent use of the label 'New Age' or the 'New Age Movement' but shares a broad consensus that, beneath an outward display of diversity, there is an enduring substantive core:

*What can we make of this brief illustrative profile of the 'first wave' of 'New Age' studies? ...Melton and York represent this underlying homogeneity largely in terms of a family of networks; Heelas via a dynamic but ambiguous relationship with the values of modernity; and Hanegraaff in terms of a Lovejovian history of ideas. The sum is a complex overview, strong on textual beliefs and ideas but less sure, even contradictory, on ethnography, genealogy, history, practices and structures. (Sutcliffe, 2003b, p.12)*

It can be seen from the above extract that Sutcliffe criticises the first wave of New Age studies for omitting the historical and cultural contexts of the particular groups of people and for not theorising related practices and interpretations. For Sutcliffe, these researches on the New Age (movement) are a kind of 'meta-narrative in operation' in which 'the empirical footprint of "New Age" is compromised' (2003b: 11). He rejects explicitly ideas of regarding the New Age as a movement and as a historical period, because the former is an 'inadequate category' and the latter merely reflects practitioners' agendas, 'astrological, millennialistic and utopian'. He concludes:

*The sum is that I reject the consensus of the secondary literature, outlined earlier, that 'New Age' is a 'movement' of some kind. ...I also question the covert metaphysic informing the expression 'The New Age', which homogenizes and periodises phenomena by assigning them to an emergent 'new order' or astrological era, the 'Age of Aquarius'. ...Represented as a 'movement', 'New Age' is an "inadequate category"; represented as an historical period, the formulation 'The New Age' simply assimilates practitioners' agendas: astrological, millennialistic and utopian. (2003b, p.13)*

In addition, Sutcliffe indicates that those people who become involved in activities and practices which have been categorised by scholars as the ‘NAM’, do not explicitly identify the ‘NAM’ or describe themselves as ‘New Agers’. Moreover, he finds that there are radical differences between two periods of the ‘NAM’ in these analyses: the earlier currents (between the 1930s and the 1960s) tend to be ‘ascetic, puritanical, and “other-worldly”’ while the later period (post-1970s) promotes ‘emotionally expressive, humanistic and firmly “this worldly” practices and beliefs’ (2003b, p.7). Therefore, the movement as a ‘singular, homogenous collectivity’ that is implied by most research on New Age does not exist in reality in Sutcliffe’s genealogical reconstruction.

Instead, Sutcliffe supports an emerging ‘second wave’ of ‘New Age’ studies that explore the precise form and location in time and space of ‘New Age’, and which extend and challenge existing scholarship (2003b, p.8). For Sutcliffe, this can complement the several theories of the ‘New Age’ that are not able to ‘theorise sustainedly the practices and interpretations of particular groups of people in localized historical and cultural contexts’ (2003a, p.6).

In his research, Sutcliffe adopts a Foucauldian genealogy and taxonomy of cultural studies in which he reconstructs the ‘New Age’ in Anglo-Americanised culture. He aims to depict the various practices and interpretations that are included in the label ‘New Age’ but are not clarified by scholars. He explores two organisations that spread a ‘New Age’ discourse between the 1930s and the 1980s: Alice Bailey’s Lucis Trust and the Findhorn Foundation. By reviewing Alice Bailey’s New Age discourse and Findhorn’s ‘New Age’ colony, Sutcliffe finds that the ideology of a ‘New’ or an ‘Aquarian’ age that was popular in the 1930s is derived from the writings of Alice Bailey,

and that Findhorn represents a growing trend of searching for new spiritual syncretism. As a result, two additional 'New Age' currents are revealed when he further explores the 'New Age' discourse from the 1970s onwards. In the first current, the pre-1970s, seekers treat 'New Age' as 'the emblem of an imminent apocalypse' (2003a, p.223). By contrast, in the second current (the post-1970s) the term has increasingly become a code for a spiritual idiom (2003a, p.29). Therefore, Sutcliffe argues, the 'New Age' cannot be regarded as a homogeneous cultural or astrological era or as a 'movement' because 'New Age' currents radically mutate, and the concept is 'inherently unstable' (2003a, p.224).

Being a part of the 'second wave' of New Age studies, Sutcliffe further develops his view<sup>14</sup> of 'theorising "New Age" as popular religion'. According to Sutcliffe (2004a), 'New Age' is not a new or alternative form of religion but something much more conservative, local and familiar. It is better represented as a contemporary expression of a broader historical phenomenon in the west: 'popular religion'. Sutcliffe defines popular religion as 'a mode of "doing religion" that operates across the spectrum of religious discourses and institutions' (2004a, p4). 'New Age' religion can be regarded as 'an episode in the history and anthropology of certain "local" and "popular" ways of doing religion' (p.2). It is especially a "'western", middle-class version of popular religion' (p.2). Sutcliffe complains that the fact that 'New Age' is strongly influenced by local western Christianity tends to be ignored. Therefore, he suggests that 'New Age' is better regarded as a prime signifier of a diffuse post-Christian popular religion, rather than an arena of the spectacular

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<sup>14</sup> He presented a paper entitled 'Theorising "New Age" as Popular Religion' at the 50th BASR conference in September 2004.

and the exotic (2004a, p.9).

Sutcliffe also refuses to view the New Age as a movement, and his reasons for this objection are based on his assumptions relating to the term 'movement', although it must be recognised that he does not clarify his definition of a 'movement' in his analysis. His idea of a 'movement' seems to refer to the idea of being 'homogeneous', 'a form of organisation'. But this is only one of the dimensions in the definition of social movement organisations (SMOs). I will argue in the final section of this chapter, adopting Gusfield's fluid perspective on social movements, that there are different SMOs within the movement of 'New Age' in which the common belief is a preference for change.

In short, Sutcliffe's highly critical assessment of much scholarship on the NAM is refreshing and challenging. His claim that the movement is really an aspect of popular religion rather than a radically new form of spirituality in itself resonates with some of the findings from Taiwan that I shall discuss in Chapter 4. But Sutcliffe's reservations about the term 'NAM' reflect a poor grasp of the variety and subtlety of sociological insights into the meaning of 'movement'. Earlier sections of the current chapter have hinted at some of these meanings; a later section will substantiate the reasons for retaining the use of 'movement'; and Chapter 7 will discuss empirical evidence from Taiwan to support the usefulness of a refined notion of the New Age as a movement. Support has also come from recent conceptual and empirical investigations conducted in Japan.

## 2.6 New Age as 'New Spirituality Movements and Culture'

My arguments have been mainly about the New Age or the NAM in the West, but Susumu Shimazono (1999, 2004) notes that a phenomenon which is similar to the NAM in North America and Europe was also emerging in Japan in the late 1980s. He argues that the the 'NAM' is not a proper academic term and proposes, instead, an alternative term, 'New Spirituality Movements and Culture' (NSM&C).

Shimazono begins by pointing out that the term 'NAM' is seldom used in Japan, and that 'World of the Spiritual' is the preferred alternative.

Publications exhibited in bookstores in Japan about this phenomenon include topics on healing, self-transformation, reincarnation and karma, near-death experiences, *qi qiao*, yoga, meditation, shamanism, animism, evolution of consciousness, occult experiences, transpersonal psychology, holistic medicine, 'new science', etc.. In addition, those who are interested in these topics are people who themselves are on a quest for something spiritual or healing.

According to Shimazono, the term 'World of the Spiritual' implies not only a new form of a revived ancient spiritual tradition but also a brand-new world, which has evolved from a combination of traditional religious systems and modern rationalism. Therefore, the "World of the Spiritual" represents the civilisation of a new age which will follow the current "modern" age' (Shimazono, 1999, p.124). In addition, the 'World of the Spiritual' in Japan is not equivalent to the NAM in the US. The two phenomena are similar but have their own distinctiveness, in addition to elements that overlap. However, just like the term 'New Age', the 'World of the Spiritual' can also be regarded as being a problematic term for academic purposes. The denotation of the

term is ambiguous; and people who are involved in the phenomena do not like to be regarded as participants.

According to Shimazono (1999), the reasons for arguing that the term 'NSM&C' is more appropriate than 'the NAM' include the following: first of all, he insists on using 'movements' in the plural because the term includes various types of 'New Age' and 'World of the Spiritual' groups. Moreover, many people involved in these movements consider that they belong to a new age of 'spirituality', which follows the end of the age of 'religion'. Here, Shimazono suggests that spirituality 'in a broad sense implies religiousness, but it does not mean organised religion or doctrine. Rather, it is used to mean the religious nature expressed by an individual's thoughts and actions' (Shimazono, 1999, p.125). As for using 'Movements and Culture' rather than merely 'Movement', Shimazono says (1999, p.125):

*It is often believed that the accumulation of many individuals' transformations in consciousness will automatically lead to a transformation in consciousness for all human beings. This individualistic inclination with little joint activity suggests a classification as a 'culture' rather than a 'movement'. 'Culture' here means aspects of the production or consumption of culture, rather than active individual practices. As the phenomenon has facets of both 'movement' and 'culture', it is appropriate to call it 'New Spirituality Movements and Culture'.*

Shimazono (1999) adds that people who participate in NSM&C are individualistic and less willing to participate in collective actions. As a result, the phenomena are more appropriately designated as a 'culture' than a 'movement' (p. 125). At the same time, he also differentiates the NSM&C from NRMs (Shimazono, 1999, pp.126-127). He points out that the NSM&C



lack the basic characteristics of NRMs, such as a clear system of ideas, practices and religious organisations — although some groups among the NSM&C do have a specific system of theory and practice, which is the part of the overlap between these two categories.

One of the most important differences between the NSM&C and NRMs concerns the concept of salvation (Shimazono, 1999, p.126). Shimazono argues that, unlike members of NRMs who seek to overcome the limitations of human beings by following such principles as the disciplines, rules, values of the religion they advocate, participants in the NSM&C are inclined to avoid any idea that could be considered as a precondition of salvation, such as discipline, obedience, obligation, service or solidarity (p.127).

In discussing the characteristics of the NSM&C, Shimazono (1999, pp.128-129) compares them to salvation religions and concludes that the NSM&C have no concept of human suffering or personified agents such as God, gods and the sacred Other, which are found in salvation religions. The NSM&C aim at self-transformation; the worldview they manifest represents a new movement or culture that seeks to overcome the effects of both traditional religions and rationalist modern science (p.127).

Finally, Shimazono indicates that there is an increasing volume of information and culture shared globally, which has spread rapidly across national boundaries. The development of high-tech communication and media also influence people in the NSM&C in terms of globalisation. The NSM&C are regarded as a part of global information and culture, with many centres and facets. However, he emphasises that the influence of NSM&C on the world is different from that of the NAM in the West. For example, one of

the elements in the NSM&C, the presence of a nationalist inclination, such as animism or *qui qiao*, functions to inspire a form of pride in the common traditions of East Asian nations (Shimazono, 1999, p.131). Therefore, Shimazono suggests that our understanding of the strong individualistic nature of the phenomena should be modified. In this regard, he also reminds us that this individualistic nature is closely associated with its global, multi-facted, multi-centred nature. However, Shimazono does not offer detailed explanations of the way in which the NSM&C participate in the world in this regard.

## 2.7 Analysing the New Age from a 'Fluid' Perspective on Social Movements

Most researchers attribute the controversy surrounding the terms 'New Age' and 'NAM' to the intrinsic nature of the phenomena. However, I would like to point out that many works on the New Age take the meaning of the concepts of 'religion' and 'movement' for granted, and are therefore ambiguous in themselves. Therefore, it is useful as well as necessary to clarify what is meant by 'religion' for the purpose of this thesis. In addition, to argue about whether the New Age is a movement, it is necessary to examine the meaning of the term 'movements', and to make a comparison between the NAM and other social movements.

### 2.7.1 Definition of Religion

Although there are many different definitions of religion in terms of different perspectives, I adopt the approach of social constructionism. A

social constructionist approach is useful in the sense that ‘the risk of absolute relativism and solipsism is strongly reduced’ (Beckford, 2003, p23).

Beckford suggests that ‘the meaning of religion is not given in itself; it has to be attributed by human beings and is therefore variable’ (p.23). Consequently, following the thinking of social constructionism, the sociological concept of religion is a second-order concept, which is a construction by researchers that ‘is supposedly based on the first-order beliefs, practices and experiences of human actors’ (p. 23). When my informants in New Age groups in Taiwan used the term ‘religion’ they – like many people in other countries – emphasised such characteristics as, on the one hand, obligatory belief in doctrines about transcendental divinities or powers and, on the other, social pressure to conform to the discipline of leaders in formal religious organisations. Some informants clearly had other things in mind when they referred to ‘religion’, but the main pattern of their language-use was one of contrast between the other-worldliness and external constraints of religion and the this-worldly, spiritual search for self-transformation and healing in the New Age. Admittedly, many questions can be asked about the precise implications of their contrast between ‘religion’ and New Age ‘spirituality’, but from a social constructionist perspective, the most important task is to study the ways in which informants use these terms in their everyday social interactions.

This approach helps us to locate the NAM in the religious and spiritual marketplace in which participants form a network based on their stated preference for change in themselves, their life or society, based on what they consider to be their higher purpose of spiritual growth.

## 2.7.2 Comparison between the New Age Movement and Other Social Movements

From a sociological point of view, social movements vary in such aspects as their components, structures, processes and goals (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Gusfield, 1981). For example, Gusfield (1981) describes and analyses two perspectives on social movements — the linear and the fluid — each of them focusing on different dimensions or features. The former approach pays attention to a discrete association of people whose activity makes instrumental use of certain means to achieve an identifiable end. It focuses on the public arena of collective action and phenomena such as dissidence, protest, rebellion or deviance. In addition, the object of the analysis is organisations and associations; therefore, there are sociological studies of movements which focus on specific organisations of a population, such as Hare Krishna, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, or the Students for a Democratic Society. In this regard, social movements are almost synonymous with their social movement organizations (SMOs): as Zald and Ash point out, 'social movements manifest themselves, in part, through a wide range of organizations' (Zald and Ash, 1996, cited in Gusfield, 1981, p.320).

On the other hand, a fluid perspective on social movements does not content itself with an analysis of SMOs or the extent to which they achieve their formal goals (i.e. 'linearity'). Instead, the focus is on all the ramifications of social movement activity, including the subtle changes of sensibility to the source of grievances. The fluid perspective takes discourse

and language-use seriously. It also examines the 'emotion culture' in some movements – as well as the selection of symbols that convey a movement's identity. In short, this approach focuses on the cultural side of movements, the transformations of meaning, or the less formally organised aspects of movements. The fluid perspective is especially suitable for analysing relatively diffuse contemporary movements such as feminism, environmentalism or human rights as well as understanding both social and cultural changes, compared with the linear perspective on SMOs (Gusfield, 1981, p.323). Therefore, as Beckford (2000) puts it, 'the fluid perspective on social movements...helps to trace their subtle influences on social relations and culture' (p. 170).

From the perspective of sociology, the NAM displays several characteristics which are common to other contemporary social movements. Firstly, there are people who participate in the NAM in order to explore alternatives to aspects of their life or their society with which they are not satisfied. Unlike the Hippy movement and the counter-culture movement in the 1960s, however, the NAM is not only a protest against some aspects of 'conventional' life but also an expression of a new, experimental life-style. New Agers may wish to protest against grievances, of course, but this aspect of the NAM is much weaker than the concern to cultivate tranquillity, balance, healing and harmony in their everyday life. Secondly, movements cultivate new sensibilities in their participants that often involve the expression of typical emotions, as with the case of anti-war movements, or various alternative healing groups in the New Age. Thirdly, movements encourage participants (and potential participants) to experiment with new ways of living,

as in the case of the Gay Rights movement (Gusfield, 1981, p.321) or Rajneesh Movement. Fourthly, movements try to re-define situations in new terms, which involves making claims about what is wrong with people themselves or the world and claims about how to solve these problems. Social movements such as vegetarianism, environmentalism and anti-war movements are relevant examples. In respect to the NAM, people who are involved in groups such as *A Course in Light* (ACIL), *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM), and the study group for Seth have learned new ways of redefining their self-identity and rebuilding their life by acknowledging ‘you are responsible for yourself, you create your own reality’.

We can see from the above comparison between the NAM and other social movements that, as a global spiritual social movement, the NAM is similar to other social movements when viewed in terms of Gusfield’s (1981) fluid perspective. However, the NAM also differs from certain other social movements in several ways, as follows. Firstly, many SMOs mobilise people’s resources such as money, time, labour and skills, and organise these resources in order to achieve their goals. Some New Age groups or associations such as the *Chinese New Age Society* (CNAS) do indeed mobilise participants’ resources, but this is a relatively insignificant aspect of their activities. Secondly, social movements usually try to cultivate a new sense of collective identity among their participants. The NAM also helps participants to cultivate a new sense of themselves, but seldom seeks to cultivate an explicit collective identity.<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, some social movements try

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<sup>15</sup> Data collected from my fieldwork reveal that participants are encouraged to know themselves and to cultivate or to reconstruct their self-identity in the process of participation. Collective identity, for example the label ‘New Age’, is acknowledged by most participants but not aggressively promoted.

to motivate participants to change and to persuade outsiders to share their point of view. But participants in the NAM in Taiwan are not very missionary, although some of them are enthusiastic about what they do. Fourthly, social movements permit people to participate in many different ways, such as devotees, clients, members, beginners, leaders or patrons. The forms of participation in the NAM are, however, less varied than in other social movements, because it is less organisation-orientated and not at all bureaucracy-orientated. For example, people who participate in the NAM as authorities, such as teachers, healers and spokespersons, do not necessarily possess more resources than other members and clients in terms of the ultimate goal of this movement - spiritual growth and personal transformation. Instead, they are regarded as a 'channel' that helps participants to cultivate a sense of their own authority. The connections among participants are created and sustained in self-study and self-healing groups, workshops, and other forms of communication. Fifthly, social movements are general expressions of a preference for change in society but they also contain particular 'movement organisations' that try to control resources, activities and power. Movement organisations in the New Age in Taiwan, however, are not very powerful or numerous. New Age Movement Organisations (NAMOs) such as the CNAS and the *Taiwan Reiki Cultural Research Association* (TRCRA) lack much formality or capacity to control what happens in the name of the New Age.

### 2.7.3 Analytical Framework for Exploring the NAM in Taiwan

My argument has been moving progressively towards the assertion that it is entirely appropriate (pace Sutcliffe, 2003a, b) to bundle all the ideas, activities and organisations associated with the New Age in Taiwan into the

category of a 'movement'. But at every stage I have insisted on the need for clarity about how the term 'movement' was being used here. It should be clear that my use of the term emphasises a general preference for change and a relatively informal mobilisation of people and other resources within loosely articulated and imbricated networks. The NAM in Taiwan is not so much a movement of collective protest as a cultivation of 'alternative' sensibilities and life-styles.

All these features of the NAM can be pulled together in an analytical framework that is selectively based on McCarthy and Zald's (1977) 'partial theory'. At the highest levels of abstraction are two concepts that have so little bearing on my work that I shall simply name them as the 'social movement sector' (SMS) (the area of society where social movement activities take place) and 'social movement industries' (SMI) (fields of grievance pursuit within the SMS, for example, peace, labour, human rights or feminisms). My own framework begins with the next lower level of McCarthy and Zald's abstractions: 'social movements' (SM). An SM can be defined as 'a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society' (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p.20). In the case of the NAM, this change also includes the self and the social aspects of the life of a participant.

The second level of my framework is composed of Social Movement Organisations (SMOs). They are formal organisations that aim to achieve goals congruent with the changes sought by social movements. SMOs mobilise the resources (human, intellectual and material) that are required for the achievement of their goals. New Age movement organisations (NAMOs)



such as the CNAS and the TRCRA have a set of goals and share the broadest preferences of the NAM. The third level of my framework consists of individual participants, whom I shall call New Age Movements Participants (NAMPs). This is a general category that includes a range of forms of participation. It ranges from high profile leaders of NAMOs, at one extreme, to the casual shopper for New Age products at the other. Finer distinctions between these various NAMPs will be made, strictly for analytical purposes, in the following chapters. The relationships among the three levels of my framework represent a fluid and loose structure that is best captured in the notion of a network.

The idea of network has already appeared in publications about the NAM, but my usage of this idea is original in so far as it presents the NAM in Taiwan as a network at three different analytical levels. For example, in the work of Michael York (1995) the 'evolution of technology' (telecommunication networks and information processing) is regarded as one of the four elements<sup>16</sup> of the NAM alongside its belief systems and organisation structure (pp. 88-89). In addition, York argues that SMOs in New Age, Neo-pagan, and similar non-institutional, boundary-indeterminate movements all conform to Gerlach and Hine's (1970) concept of the 'segmented, many-headed, and networked organisation' that they termed 'SPIN' (Segmented Polycentric Integrated Network). This approach threw helpful light on SMOs, but it is unclear how York understood the inter-relationships between the NAM, the NAMOs and the NAMPs.

York also points out that the network structures of New Age and Neo-pagan

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<sup>16</sup> The other three elements are the healing aspects, the inner divine and New Age holism (York, 1995, p. 88)

movements rest on five types of linkages: 1) ‘ties of kinship, friendship, social relationship, etc., or personal associations based on similar experiences of ideological interpretation among members of different groups’; 2) ‘intercell leadership exchange or personal, kinship, and social ties among leaders and others in autonomous cells — ones that are facilitated by telephone, letter, newsletters, etc’; 3) ‘the activities of travelling evangelists, spokespeople, ecoevangelists, evangelist-organizers, etc., as well as the movement of ordinary movement participants along the movement network’; 4) “‘in-gatherings” and large-scale demonstrations’; and 5) ‘the basic beliefs and ideological themes shared by travelling speakers, letters, word-of-mouth, discussions, lectures, workshops, individual and group interaction, publications, newsletters, books, and especially the increased communication system efficiency represented by desktop publishing’ (York, 1995, pp.326-327). While these linkages serve as important channels of communication, they all appear to operate at the same level. In other words, York’s analysis is an excellent starting point but it could have gone further if it had taken account of the three levels that structure my own framework. Such a move would have enabled him more easily to investigate relations of authority between the different components of the NAM. The next question is therefore how far the more recent work by Dominic Corrywright can also enhance the sociological understanding of the NAM’s reticulate character.

Dominic Corrywright (2003, 2004b) argues that his web model is a more appropriate scheme than a network structure for analysing alternative spiritualities or New Age spiritualities. Webs are multiple networks: the threads which are created by organisations and individuals’ activities and

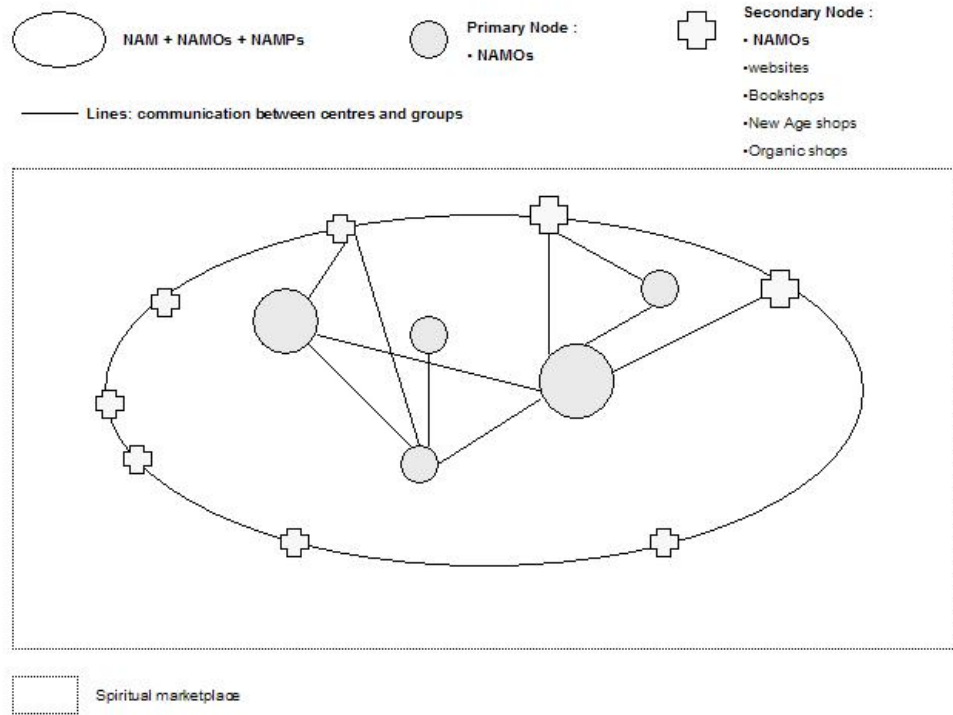
beliefs constitute a web (Corrywright, 2004b, p.315). The web in turn 'reflects the mobility of individuals' developing and changing practices and beliefs within New Age spiritualities' (Corrywright, 2003, p.10). Put differently, the concept of a web allows a 'flexible skeletal structure to define network connections and, as an organic form, allows for the limitless differentiations of the individual webs' (2004b, p.315).

Corrywright offers the findings of detailed, empirical research into the Schumacher Resurgence nexus to support his idea of a web model. However, there does not seem to be much difference between the concept of webs and networks. Indeed, York comments that 'Corrywright is interested in network spirituality and employs a "web model" to understand what elsewhere is more broadly formulated by Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine as the segmented-polycentric-integrated-network or SPIN' (York, 2005, p.28). In addition, the idea of 'threads' in the web model appears to be similar to 'lines' in a network structure. Corrywright also uses the idea of 'nodes' in his model, which is actually based on the idea of a network structure. The idea of nodes and lines was originally proposed by John Barnes (1954) in his net theory, in which he examined informal social relationships. In short, the idea of a social network can be as flexible and as 'organic' as Corrywright's idea of a web, but his model is noteworthy for stressing the multiplicity of 'threads' traced by individuals and groups as they communicate with each other. This strengthens the idea that social relationships can be highly variable and flexible even within a network structure.

The above review of recent research on the NAM in terms of 'network' or 'web' leads me to look for a better way of representing the components of

the NAM in Taiwan by enhancing the idea of a network. The network of the NAM is composed of nodes and lines. A line represents communication between centres and groups. A node is the point where the participants congregate for activities, or consume spiritual products; it may be a centre, a group, a site, a shop, or an organisation. A node may or may not be physical, therefore various virtual points such as websites, blogs, user groups, mailing lists that feature electronic communication all fall into this category. In addition, 'primary nodes' are points where only participants congregate while 'secondary nodes' such as bookstores and virtual centres are not limited to participants and may attract outsiders and potential participants. These 'secondary nodes' cross the boundaries between the spiritual marketplace and the network of the NAM. Figure 2.1 outlines an analytic framework of the network of the NAM in a general way. The Figure at this stage is only a sketch, and it cannot convey graphically the idea that the NAM, the NAMOs and the NAMPs are at three different levels of abstraction from the complexity of everyday reality. But my purpose at this point of the thesis is only to show how lines and nodes might connect to each other within a network. However, a more elaborate Figure that represents the network of the NAM in Taiwan based on my empirical data will be developed in Chapter 7.

**Figure 2.1 Analytic Framework of the Network of the NAM in Taiwan**



## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the concept of the New Age through an overview of scholarly research in this field. I discussed various meanings of, and arguments about, the terms New Age/New Age Movement, by grouping them in several categories, including:

- New Age as a one whole movement
- Network or Milieu
- New Age and Alternative Healing
- New Age Religion and the New Age Movement

- New Age as Popular Religion
- New Age as New Spirituality Movements and Culture

I concluded from the overview of these arguments that the reason for the ambiguity of the term in most research on the New Age or the NAM is that many works take the meaning of the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘movement’ for granted. Thus, I suggested that a social constructionist perspective on the concept of religion is a better way of proceeding when examining empirical phenomena. In addition, I examined the nature and the meaning of ‘movement’, including a comparison between the NAM and other social movements. Finally, I sketched an analytical, 3-level framework for examining the NAM in Taiwan within the ‘network’ and ‘web’ perspectives developed by York and Corrywright.

Having identified and criticised some of the most influential ideas about the NAM I now need to set out the theoretical ideas and research questions that shaped my own investigation of the NAM in Taiwan. This will be done in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

# **Theoretical Framework for the Analysis of the New Age Movement in Taiwan**

### Introduction

This chapter looks at three theoretical ideas that constitute an appropriate framework for the analysis of the New Age Movement in Taiwan. They are ‘Self-religion’ by Paul Heelas, reflexive modernisation by Anthony Giddens, and the theory of globalisation by Roland Robertson. In addition, ideas about emotions and embodiment have emerged from both my reflections on the theories of Heelas and Giddens and from my empirical data. Therefore, I should review the perspective of social constructionism on emotions in order to raise some research questions. I have selected these particular theoretical ideas because they give rise to interesting research questions.

Of course, there are many more theoretical perspectives on New Age phenomena — for example, anthropological, phenomenological, theological, philosophical, psychological — but, as my principal aim is to throw sociological light on the NAM in Taiwan, it is appropriate for me to select only those theoretical ideas that seem likely to make the most helpful contribution to analysis. I should add that my use of theoretical ideas is purely instrumental: I regard them as tools that help me to perform analytical tasks. In other words, they offer general accounts of social and cultural phenomena, the usefulness of which can be roughly gauged and, in some cases, improved by applying them

to the particular case of the NAM. It is definitely not my intention to develop a theory of the New Age.

This chapter's focus is entirely on theoretical ideas. As such, it paves the way for the more descriptive and analytical tasks of Chapters 4 to 7. The richness of New Age phenomena in Taiwan can only begin to emerge from these later chapters once the theoretical ideas have been put in place.

First, Heelas's arguments about self-religion are directly related to the issue of the New Age and modernity: his perspective offers one of the most important analyses of the New Age and therefore should be taken seriously. I employ the idea of self-religion to examine to what extent the concept explains the New Age spirituality in Taiwan. My main research questions in this respect are: To what extent is New Age practice a matter of learning to align oneself with a source of authority? What is the relationship between freedom and discipline in the New Age?

The next section is about Giddens's analysis of high or late modern society, in which issues of risk, expert knowledge and self-reflexivity are salient. I refer to Giddens's analysis of the reflexive self in 'high modernity' as a set of ideas that could be usefully applied to New Age practices relating to healing. My research questions relating to reflexive modernisation are: To what extent can New Age practices be considered as applications of expert knowledge? What is the relationship between the reconstruction of self-identity and risk in New Age circles? How far does the New Age, as a new form of spirituality, have a place in life politics? To what extent, and in what way, does the NAM represent the 'return of the repressed' in late modernity?



In the third section I discuss both self-religion and reflexive modernisation in relation to emotions and embodiment. I pay special attention to the issues of emotion in healing practices in terms of the perspective of social constructionism. This perspective casts particularly interesting light on the social processes of interaction and negotiation that generate 'feeling rules' – or understandings about the forms of emotional expression considered appropriate in New Age settings. My research questions are: How do participants deal with the issues of emotions in New Age practices? Are there feeling rules in New Age practices? If so, how do New Agers express these feeling rules? What are the relationships between the self, emotions and healing in New Age practices?

In the final section I refer to the scholarly discussions of globalisation and focus especially on Robertson's idea of 'glocalization'. Since the idea of the New Age has been imported from the West, especially the USA, to Taiwan, it is essential to examine the way in which global forces influence — and are refracted by — Taiwanese people. My research questions about globalisation are: How do New Age teachers or organisations in Taiwan interact with New Age organisations abroad? How far do local leaders adapt global material for teaching at the local level, and how far do they 'package' local material for consumption at the global level? In what ways does the documentation produced by local groups relate to the literature distributed globally?

The purpose of this chapter is to establish my framework of theoretical ideas for analysing the NAM in Taiwan in the next four chapters. My intention is not to describe those ideas in detail but to extract from them only the notions that I shall test. These theories are relevant to the context of

Taiwan in different ways, each of which provides different sociological angles and levels from which to assess the whole picture of the Movement in Taiwan: this includes the beliefs (spirituality), practices involving the reflexive self, forms of emotional expression, and the connection with late modern and globalised society. Each of the following chapters will focus, one by one, on these four topics.

### 3.1 Self-Religion

Paul Heelas's research on the NAM began in the early 1980s. His continuing concerns with the NAM from a broad point of view have produced abundant publications (1982; 1988; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 1999; 2002; 2005). In particular, he proposes several concepts, such as 'self-religion', the spirituality of life, and more recently, the 'holistic milieu', which are potentially useful ideas to be referred to and examined while doing empirical research on the NAM. In this section I will give an overview of his idea of 'self-religion'. It is the first component in the theoretical framework that I shall examine for its usefulness in explaining the NAM in Taiwan.

#### 3.1.1 The Basic Teaching: Self-spirituality

'Self-religion' is a term proposed by Paul Heelas in his analysis of the development and operations of New Age ideology and practice (Heelas 1988; 1993; 1996). Heelas (1996) regards New Age spirituality as an 'internalized form of religiosity' (p. 29), because the manifestations of spiritual wisdom for New Agers depend on 'going within' to find eternal truth. According to

Heelas, Self-spirituality as the basic teaching, is the heart of the New Age; it consists of the following three main elements (Heelas, 1996, pp. 18-20):

***1. 'Your lives do not work'***

This phrase 'your lives do not work' asserts that life is not what it should be. It explains that people malfunction because they are conditioned by mainstream society and culture to accept a set of ideas without questioning them. To live in terms of the mores of mainstream society is to prevent people from being authentically human. Therefore, Heelas (1996) indicates that people participating in New Age activities 'are given the opportunity to appreciate that all is far from well with their lives' (p. 18); an example in this regard is the words of one trainer in an 'est' event: 'the reason why your lives do not work is that you're all living mechanically in your belief systems instead of freshly in the world of actual experience' (p. 18).

***2. 'You are Gods and Goddesses in exile'***

The second element of self-spirituality, according to Heelas, is the phrase 'you are Gods and Goddesses in exile'. This is an account of what it means to find perfection. For a New Ager, perfection cannot be found in the socialised self but in one's inherent nature. People are essentially spiritual; therefore, to 'experience the "Self" itself is to experience "God", the "Goddess", the "Source", "Christ Consciousness", the "inner child", ... "inner spirituality"' (Heelas, 1996, p.19). Although the way in which New Agers portray the inner life is various, they 'invariably conceive their essence in spiritual terms' (Heelas, 1996, p.20).

### **3. *'Let go/drop it'***

'Let go/drop it' explains the way to salvation. Heelas (1996) points out that various New Age disciplines aim to liberate people from their ego and to help them obtain or realise their authentic Self. The ego represents an 'internalised mode of the traditions, parenting routines and all those other inputs which have constructed it' (p.20) and therefore must lose its hold to enable a new future.

These three elements constitute self-spirituality, the basic teaching of the New Age. The logic of self-spirituality in terms of the three elements is to teach people to believe that their lives do not work because they are conditioned by ego/traditions and ignore the truth (you are Gods) and/or ignore the authentic Self; therefore, to obtain salvation is to let go of all limitations which prevent people from assessing inner truth. However, there are two points in Heelas's idea of self-spirituality that are different from the reality of the NAM in Taiwan. First, the idea of salvation is absent in the spirituality of the NAM in Taiwan; second, ego/traditions and the Self do not necessarily exclude each other. I will explain this in Chapter 4.

#### 3.1.2 The characteristics of self-spirituality

In addition to the three main elements I have mentioned at 3.1.1, some other characteristics of the NAM concerning Heelas's idea of Self-spirituality deserve consideration. They are unmediated individualism, the 'Self-ethic', self-responsibility, freedom, and perennialism.

##### **1. *Unmediated individualism: 'I am my own authority'***

The first characteristic of Self-spirituality is 'unmediated individualism',

which is related to what New Agers think about the source of truth. In this regard, truth must come from one's own experience; any 'truth' that comes from beyond the Self cannot be relied upon (Heelas, 1996, p.21). This is the reason why Heelas suggests that much of the New Age is radically 'detraditionalized' or 'anti-authoritarian' (p.22). The former refers to 'rejecting voices of authority associated with established orders'; the latter is defined as 'rejecting voices of those exercising authority on their own, even rejecting "beliefs"' (p.22).

## **2. The 'Self-ethic'**

The second characteristic of Self-spirituality, according to Heelas, is the 'Self-ethic'. The 'Self-ethic' is different from 'normal' intellectual or rational operations, because it emphasises that the judgements, decisions, and choices required for everyday life are experienced by way of 'intuition', 'alignment' or an 'inner voice'. Heelas refers to a statement from the brochure of the Theosophical Society by the leader, Radha Burnier, to illustrate the nature of 'Self-ethic' (Heelas, 1996, p.23):

*Action is not made right by the rules of society or the codes of behaviours approved by convention. Right action issues from a mind which has discarded the notion of "i", the false personality, and shed the fetters forged by self-seeking.*

Heelas continues by giving several other examples extracted from New Age materials to illustrate the 'Self-ethic', such as: 'Within each one of us is the wisdom that, in essence knows the answers to all our questions'; 'To make wise and creative decisions requires that our rational and logical minds be balanced by our instinctive wisdom and our intuition'; 'Stop when you give up your control drama. As you fill with inner energy, other kinds of thoughts enter

your mind from a higher part of yourself. These are your intuitions. They feel different' (p.24).

### ***3. Self-responsibility***

The third extra characteristic of the New Age is 'self-responsibility', which is related to the 'Self-ethic'. According to Heelas, New Agers feel that they are responsible for their lives because the only source of authority for them is their inner wisdom. The first step to becoming self-responsible is to be aware that 'there is an alternative to the life of the ego and the strategy of blaming society for what is wrong with one's life' (Heelas, 1996, p.25). The action of being self-responsible is to endeavour to liberate oneself from social conditioning. However, there are variations relating to self-responsible behaviours among New Agers. One view considers that we are all autonomous, and that no individual should attempt to exercise responsibility for others. Another is that some New Agers feel they are profoundly responsible for others and the earth, because 'all is ultimately one' (Heelas, 1996, p.25). Moreover, some New Agers think that 'their own authority is all that counts, making them responsible for everything that takes place' (p.25), which can be regarded as the extreme exercise of self-responsibility.

### ***4. Freedom***

The fourth characteristic of Self-spirituality is freedom. Heelas (1996) suggests that freedom is one of the most important New Age values: 'liberation from the past, the traditional, and those internalised traditions, egos; and freedom to live a life expressing all that it is to be truly human' (p.26). Statements such as 'everyone is right, because everyone is a god who has the freedom to create his own truth'; 'you are free to be your truth'; 'being your own master'

are all expressions of this value (pp.26-27). The idea of freedom is also connected to the idea of 'choice': as William Bloom says, 'We're total 100 percent believers in the individual's choice of their own path' (cited in Heelas, 1996, p.26). In Heelas's analysis, this issue is also examined in terms of Weber's idea that modernity is regarded as an 'iron cage' (pp.139-140). In this respect, living in modern society is seen as being dominated by rules, routines of bureaucracy, and by the institutional order, which prevent people from taking control of their lives. Therefore, for New Agers, having freedom in modern society is something to do with 'seeking out ways of life which will sustain liberated identities and serve to enable them to take control of their lives' (p.139).

### ***5. Perennialism***

As far as the last characteristic, 'perennialism', is concerned, Heelas argues that New Agers are perennialists in the sense that, although they are against traditions, they continually draw on traditions (such as shamanism, Buddhism) in New Age practices. The perennialised nature of the New Age reveals that 'the same wisdom can be found at the heart of all religious traditions' (1996, p.29). Perennialism involves 'going beyond traditions as normally conceived, going beyond differences to find – by way of experience – the inner, esoteric core' (p.28). As a result, the adoption of traditions by New Agers does not impose limits on the authority of their Self since 'all religions are the expression of [the] same inner reality' (p.27), and 'the truths within the "traditions" and within the New Agers are the same' (p.28).

### 3.1.3 Variations in Self-spirituality

Although the teachings and the practices of the New Age are all about Self-spirituality, Heelas indicates that there are significant variations in the theme of Self-spirituality, including four different aspects. Each aspect represents a type of orientation to the world: the spiritually purist aspect, counter-cultural aspect, the harmonial aspect and the Self- or mainstream empowered aspect. The four aspects represent attitudes toward social life for New Agers that can be regarded as a continuous spectrum in terms of the framework 'world-rejecting vs. world-affirming'.

#### ***1. The Spiritually purist aspect of the New Age***

The Spiritually purist represents the extreme at one end of the spectrum, which is towards a world-rejecting attitude. What is rejected is capitalist modernity; instead, this attitude puts the emphasis on detachment. New Agers who belong to this category aim to experience the best of the inner world, that is, the domain of spirituality. Spirituality is regarded as an end in itself (Heelas, 1996, p.32). Therefore, 'the attainment of mundane psychological, sensory, or material conditions, ... has nothing to do with the inner quest' (p.30); the important goal is 'authentic spiritual transcendence or realization' (p.30).

#### ***2. The Counter-cultural aspect of the New Age***

The second aspect of the New Age is counter-cultural, which is less radical than the purist position; it puts the emphasis on self-actualisation, becoming a whole person. According to Heelas, counter-culturalists believe, 'To compete for the capitalistic externals of life is to enhance the



contaminations of the ego' (Heelas, 1996: 30). Therefore, counter-culturalists aim to be authentic, expressive persons, who are attached to psychological (or bodily) spirituality (Heelas, 1996: 31).

### ***3. The Harmonial aspect of the New Age***

The third aspect of the New Age is harmony, which is in connection with the path to self-actualisation where the spiritual combines with the personal. The values of the capitalistic mainstream and self-actualisation are not necessarily in conflict with each other, because 'one can liberate oneself from the baneful effects of modernity whilst living in terms of much of what the good life — as conventionally understood — has to offer' ( Heelas, 1996: 31). Heelas indicates that two strategies are emphasised in this aspect: mainstream-transformation and 'Self-enhancement'. The former idea is that 'the best of both worlds [the spiritual and the personal] comes about when participants learn to detach themselves from — whilst living within — the capitalistic mainstream' (Heelas, 1996: 31) and at the same time to transform the significance of mainstream effects. The latter idea tends to emphasize the intrinsic value of material prosperity (Heelas, 1996: 32).

### ***4. The Self- or mainstream empowered aspect of the New Age***

The fourth aspect, Self- or mainstream empowered, represents the extreme at the other end of the spectrum of spirituality, in which New Agers intend to be world-affirming; it puts the emphasis on empowerment and prosperity (Heelas, 1985; 1996; 1999). What they affirm is to become prosperous: in other words, New Agers who are attached to this aspect are 'deeply engaged with capitalism' (Heelas, 1996: 32). They aim to experience

the best of the outer world; inner spirituality is only regarded as a means to external ends. Evidence from research on prosperity of the New Age such as 'est' (Erhard Seminars Training) and Exegesis/Programmes support this aspect of the New Age (Tipton, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1988; Heelas, 1991). Participants in these two movements are trained and encouraged to pursue both prosperity and spirituality. Heelas comments on both movements (1991, p.38):

*...those at Programmes, deeply immersed in magicality and obtaining results, nevertheless know that magic cannot be employed in terms of mere career attachment or worldly ambition.*

*What needs to be emphasized is how transformed business bears on what counts as success, namely that work is valued as a means to both spiritual and 'capitalistic' ends. Unlike those eastern traditions, which only focus on the search within, the fact that the latter is an aspect of the perfection of being 'at cause', means that they can have the best of both worlds. ...since 'worldly' success is a spiritually significant 'goal' the (inner) search incorporates prosperity in the market place. ...And although participants might not be committed to making money, they have the power to make plenty of it. ...Erhard (the leader of 'est') teaches that success results when attachment to capitalistic goals is 'devalued', that is, treated in terms of the Self itself.*

Another related piece of research on work, capitalism and prosperity of the New Age is Richard Roberts's provocative examination of the uses of the New Age in companies for staff training. He shows that the New Age spirituality can be employed as a resource and tool in promoting organisational change (Roberts, 2002, pp. 62-85). In sum, prosperity-seekers in the New Age adopt an instrumentalised form of spirituality, because they are fully convinced that it is possible 'to seek the God within whilst enjoying the

benefits of what lies without' (Heelas, 1996: 32).

Heelas (1996) notes that although the four aspects of the New Age more or less co-exist, practices that emphasise prosperity were more obvious in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century than in the late 1960s (p. 68). In addition, the counter-cultural aspect of the 1960s is not what it was; its 'values and experiences...have increasingly come to be provided by what is the most rapidly growing sector of all...those activities offering Self-actualisation (largely) for those at work in the mainstream' (Heelas, 1996, p. 68). However, recent research indicates that the NAM in the West still remains a counter-cultural force (Höllinger, 2006). The question of whether the NAM in Taiwan is counter-cultural, therefore, will be examined in this thesis as well.

In recent years, the New Age has become one of the increasingly popular 'spiritualities of life', which is a term equivalent to 'self-spirituality' according to Heelas (2002), and is characterised by three themes: 'life lived out of the "ego" or "lower self" does not work', 'our true essence is of a spiritual nature since birth', and 'spiritual disciplines are the key to transformation'. Heelas suggests that this trend also reveals that the New Age in the West has become more mainstream. The key to the growth of the New Age is its connection with the mainstream, and this is manifested by the expansion of new spiritual outlets such as various practices, publications and companies (Heelas, 2002, pp. 362-369). All the evidence, according to Heelas, shows that 'new spiritualities of life have increasingly entered the very heartlands of capitalistic modernity, namely big business' (2002, p. 364). In addition, Heelas also observes that there is a growing trend towards 'holistic spirituality'<sup>17</sup> in the

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<sup>17</sup> He reminds readers that 'holistic spirituality' is 'sometimes still called "New Age"' (2005, p.x).

West. This observation emerges from his recent research findings from the Kendal project, which was designed to test the ‘spiritual revolution’ claim: are traditional forms of religion (especially Christianity) giving way to New Age (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005)? In this research Heelas seems to imply that the ‘holistic milieu’ is a better way of referring to the phenomena of the New Age nowadays. In this regard, as early as 1992 Beckford had noticed that ‘a relatively new sensibility to holistic considerations is working its way into organised religion and other social spheres’ (Beckford, 1992, p. 18), a process in which the New Age groups are included.

Although Heelas’s theory of self-religion proposes a rational framework for the consideration of the NAM in the West, criticisms of his work have taken a number of forms such as ‘unclear or too broad definitions’ (Frisk, 1998, p.199), and ‘extravagantly extending the boundaries of “New Age”’ (Sutcliffe, 2003b, p.23). Moreover, Corrywright indicates that the term ‘self-religions’ would be better described as ‘self-spiritualities’, because Heelas over-extends his definition of religion to organisations such as ‘est’ or ‘Exegesis’, which are more properly viewed as ‘psychologically based courses with a spiritual dimension’ (Corrywright, 2005, p.39). Sutcliffe (2003b, p.23) also comments critically on Heelas’s definition of the NAM:

*The problem is that there is no useful boundary to Heelas’s ‘New Age Movement’. He himself admits this when he writes that ‘the word “movement” should not be taken to imply that the New Age is in any sense an organised entity’, but his alternative definition — ‘the assumption that humanity is progressing into a new era’ — is not convincing, an ‘assumption’ being far too weak a term to evince a sociocultural movement. By uncritically adopting ‘New Age’ as an etic term, the very real emic career of the emblem is lost.*

### 3.1.4 The Connection Between the Self and Authority

It can be seen from the above summary of Heelas's idea of 'Self-religion' that 'Self-spirituality', which is the heart of the New Age, consists of three main elements and five characteristics. Heelas views the New Age as a spirituality of modernity in the sense that 'it provides a sacralized rendering of widely-held values (freedom, authenticity, self-responsibility, self-reliance, self-determination, equality, dignity, tranquillity, harmony, love, peace, creative expressivity, being positive and, above all, "the self" as a value in and of itself)' (1996, p.169). In addition, the appeal of the New Age is related to 'the culturally stimulated interest in the self, its value, capacities and problems' (p.173), and to the fact that '[the New Age] is positioned to handle identity problems generated by conventional forms of life' (p.174).

Heelas's theory of 'Self-religion' also brings out the issue of the connection between the 'self' and 'authority'. However, I would like to suggest that the relation between the 'self' and 'tradition' (external sources of authority) is not as clear as it should be in Heelas's argument. First, the cultivation of the self in the New Age usually relies on 'traditions'; in other words, New Agers learn about the Self from external authorities – such as gurus, teachers, healers or books. Second, they are following their 'inner voice' because they believe that their 'inner Self' is in alignment with an external authority. New Agers choose to do so, but their choice is to submit themselves to the external authority that they follow. This submission requires discipline in spiritual practices. Last but not least, the New Age encourages people to reflect upon their identities continually, but each identity remains a combination of self and authority.

In short, my discussion of Heelas's arguments about the NAM has been necessary preparation for the design of my research questions relating to his notion of self-religion: To what extent do Taiwanese people accept the idea of self-spirituality? What is their attitude toward social life? To what extent is New Age practice a matter of learning to align oneself with a source of authority? And what is the relationship between freedom and discipline in the New Age? My answers to these questions in Chapter 4 will generate information that will improve my comprehension of the NAM in Taiwan as well as refine Heelas's theory.

### 3.2 Reflexive Modernisation

Heelas (1996) examines New Age phenomena in relation to theories of modernity and asserts that one of the major problems derived from modernity is the problem of identity since this may cause some people to isolate themselves from modernity and choose to embrace the New Age (pp.137-138). As an extension of this reasoning, an analysis of late modernity by Anthony Giddens (1990; 1991) offers a more in-depth examination of the issue of identity which is helpful in identifying the role that the New Age phenomenon plays within the context of modern societies.

According to Giddens, the reorganisation of time and space as well as the expansion of disembedding mechanisms in high modernity transform the content and nature of day-to-day social life. He argues that this brings people more uncertainty and choices, reducing risks but producing new risks that are still beyond the control of the sciences (Giddens, 1991, pp.2-3). As the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self (p.32), 'the

construction of the self' (self-identity) as a 'reflexive project' has become one of the most significant phenomena of modern life. The reflexive project of the self involves 'the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' (p.244). In other words, self-identity is 'the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography' (p.244; Bendle, 2002, p.7)

In his analysis of late-modern society, Giddens indicates that this issue of self-identity is one of the existential dimensions of ontological security. Ontological security refers to 'a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual (Giddens, 1991, p.243); it is 'an acceptance of the reality of things and of others' (p.54). An early sense of ontological security built on basic trust is normally acquired during infancy, which is regarded as a 'protective cocoon' to protect the self from the dangers of the external world. In addition, Giddens suggests that being ontologically secure is to acquire answers to four fundamental existential questions that concern existence itself, the relations between the external world and human life, the existence of other persons, and self-identity (pp.47-53).

The argument goes on to suggest that modern social orders are based on expert systems and trust relations that are vested in abstract systems, in which the awareness of risk permeates the actions of everyone in daily life in order to reduce danger and insecurity. However, Giddens indicates, there are three dimensions in the environment of risk in the modern world that could jeopardise ontological security: 1) threats and dangers emanating from the reflexivity of modernity; 2) the threat of human violence from the

industrialisation of war; and 3) the threat of personal meaninglessness ('the feeling that life has nothing worthwhile to offer' [p.9]) deriving from the reflexivity of modernity as applied to the self (1990, pp. 100-111). The third dimension of risk – 'the threat of personal meaninglessness' – directly relates to the issue of the self. In this respect, Giddens (1991, p.9) indicates that personal meaninglessness becomes a fundamental psychological problem, as existential issues have been institutionally excluded or 'sequestered' in late modern society:

*Personal meaninglessness — the feeling that life has nothing worthwhile to offer — becomes a fundamental psychic problem in circumstances of late modernity. We should understand this phenomenon in terms of a repression of moral questions which day-to-day life poses, but which are denied answers. 'Existential isolation' is not so much a separation of individuals from others as a separation from the moral resources necessary to live a full and satisfying existence. The reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualisation and mastery. But as long as these possibilities are understood largely as a matter of the extension of the control systems of modernity to the self, they lack moral meaning.*

Modernity, according to Giddens, is a risk culture, in which the reflexive project of the self involves becoming increasingly conscious of the environment of risks, and of how people make risk assessments. In the process of the construction of the self, risk awareness induces anxieties in the self that motivate it to colonise, or seek to control, the future ('life plan'). In other words, risk awareness becomes a medium for colonising the future; and risk assessment helps people to assess the possible outcomes of their 'self-reflexive project'. The positive consequence of the construction of the self for individuals is the emergence of 'life politics'. Life politics is a politics of life



decisions; people have to develop ethics concerning the issues about how they should live. In other words, people have to ask themselves questions about ‘What are these decisions and how should I seek to conceptualise them?’, and self-identity is affected by these questions (Giddens, 1991, p.215).

Giddens (1991) defines life politics as ‘the politics of self actualisation, in the context of the dialectic of the local and global and the emergence of the internally referential systems of modernity’ (p.243). It ‘concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies’ (p.214). In other words, life politics is a ‘politics of choice’ (p.214), a ‘politics of life decisions’ (p.215). The most important ‘life decisions’ are those affecting self-identity itself. Giddens uses the case of a feminist, Betty Friedan, to illustrate that the politics of ‘choice’ (‘life decisions’, or ‘self-actualisation’) involves a reflexivity of the self, in which the person concerned thinks about the question of self-identity, and makes choices in terms of a balance between opportunity and risk (pp.216-217):

*Having just graduated from college, she (Friedan) felt she had many options open to her, including that of following a professional career as a psychologist. Yet...she abandoned that possible career without really knowing why. She married, had children and lived as a suburban housewife – all the while suppressing her qualms about her lack of purpose in life. In the end, she broke away by acknowledging and facing up to the question of her self-identity, coming to see that she needed self-fulfilment elsewhere.*

*...Friedan’s deep disquiet about personal identity...only came about because there were now more options available for women.... modern culture does not ‘gratify their basic need to grow and fulfil*

*their potentialities as human beings' ... Her book concluded with a discussion of life-planning, the means of helping women create new self-identities in the previously unexplored public domain. ...The new life-plan involved a commitment to personal growth, a rethinking and reconstruction of the past – by rejecting the 'feminine mystique' – and the recognition of risk.*

Giddens's use of the terms 'life politics' and 'self-actualisation' is not very easy to adopt in the analysis of the New Age, because his focus is on the rational dimension of social life. However, his analysis of 'life politics' in relation to personal identity can be borrowed and can be adapted to New Age spirituality, in which the sense of 'self actualisation' to New Agers is full of the meaning of spiritual growth, as we will see in Chapter 6.

In addition, since everyone living in the late modern world faces various options in life, according to Giddens, and has to make decisions by themselves, expert knowledge is regarded as an important source of guidance. It is especially at fateful moments that threaten ontological securities and involve a new life-plan, when people supposedly refer to expertise to make choices. According to Giddens (1991), people encounter expert systems such as counselling or therapy when the decisions taken at fateful moments are highly consequential (p.143):

*Fateful moments are transition points which have major implications not just for the circumstances of an individual's future conduct, but for self-identity. For consequential decisions, once taken, will reshape the reflexive project of identity through the lifestyle consequences which ensue.*

*Hence it is not surprising that at fateful moments individuals are today likely to encounter expert systems which precisely focus on the reconstruction of self-identity: counselling or therapy. At the same*

*time, it is important to add, such a decision is not different in nature from other lifestyle decisions made in the settings of modernity.*

Three salient points can be concluded from my discussion of Giddens's analysis: 1) modernity has an impact on people's daily lives and creates problems with regard to self-identity, therefore exposing the pressing need for expert systems such as therapy; 2) various types of therapy are prevalent in late modern society; and 3) therapy can be used as a means for people to reconstruct or strengthen their self-identity.

However, Giddens limits therapy in late modernity to 'psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, self-help and counselling', so holistic healing is not included (Hedges and Beckford, 1999, p.174). In addition, 'new forms of religion and spirituality' for Giddens seem have no place in life politics and represent 'a return of the repressed' (Giddens, 1991, p.207). Therefore, my point is that Giddens's arguments omit an important aspect of late modernity, namely, the New Age. The emergence of the New Age and its development cannot simply be categorised as 'a return of the repressed'. Nevertheless, the New Age should be placed in the context which Giddens names 'late modernity' for examination in terms of two points: one is related to the connection between the New Age and modern society; the other is related to the way in which the NAM emerges as one form of the embodiment of reflexive modernisation.

The New Age represents both a reaction to western culture and an expression of the very same culture. The NAM in some ways is an expression of capitalism, because one of the aspects of this spirituality is towards world-affirmation and the promotion of prosperity, as we have seen in Heelas's research (Heelas, 1996b). In addition, Roberts's ethnographic study of a group of elite management consultants (2002, pp.62-85) reveals the way in

which New Age spirituality can be cooperated into management in business organisations, which is another example of this phenomenon.

Since both the development and the expression of the NAM are very much to do with late modernity, they should not be omitted or ignored in any theoretical construction. Beckford (2003) points out that ‘religious self-reflexivity can take new forms that are not easily understandable in “old” theoretical terms’ (p.199), and the findings of research on New Age spirituality and new religions can be used as good examples. Therefore, just as Beckford suggests, it is an advantage for researchers on social theory and on religions to bring the phenomena into sharper focus (p.199). Secondly, the New Age is all about self-reflexivity, because it teaches people how to be themselves, how to identify themselves and to deal with their problems. In this regard, the New Age can function as an expert knowledge for New Agers. It can be regarded as an alternative expert system, because it involves a spirituality that is beyond characteristics such as rationality and calculability in expert systems. However, it is notable that if the New Age functions as an alternative expert system for its followers, some alternative therapies such as Reiki or Bach Flower Remedies might become a competitive force to orthodox expert knowledge (for example, biomedicine). If problems occur around the alternative therapies, some governments might want to control the practice and training of New Age healers.

On the other hand, it is clear from Giddens’s analysis (1991; 1992) that he mentions the issue of emotions but pays little attention to it. He notices the phenomenon that emotions are an important element in communication, commitment and cooperation with others when he analyses the trials and

tribulations of sexuality and intimacy in late modernity (Williams, 2001, p.11). However, his discussion of emotions in late modernity is focused on the negative side: emotional problems such as shame, guilt, and anxiety about the self. Giddens's emphasis on negative emotions in society is also obviously reflected in social science research on emotions, where the focus has been mainly on 'pathological manifestations of emotions which have destructive consequences' (Barbalet, 1998, p.3).

By contrast, the New Age could be seen as a response to the problems of high modernity as it helps the self to focus on the positive side of emotions such as love, hope and tranquillity; it emphasises the value of harmony and situates the self in the cosmos; and it shows respect for the environment instead of mere consumerism. Since New Age can be regarded as an expression of self-reflexivity in modernity, the body and emotions which are centred on the embodiment of the 'self' have therefore become a focus for New Agers. My discussion and analysis relating to this point is in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

### 3.3 Emotions and Embodiment in Self-Religion and Reflexive Modernisation

This section is an extension of my discussion of the issues of self-religion and reflexive modernisation. My discussion of emotions and embodiment arises from the work of Paul Heelas and Anthony Giddens, because they note the issue of emotions in late-modernity but do not pay enough attention to it. My observations and discussions of emotions and embodiment in New Age practices are related to their theories, but in a way that is also an extension of self-religion. Therefore, I need to make a

connection back to my discussion in the first section of this chapter with regard to Heelas's analysis of self-spirituality, especially the issue of healing in New Age practices.

In his analysis of New Age practices, Heelas (1996) indicates that 'in a general sense of the term, the entire New Age has to do with healing' (p.81). First, Heelas suggests that healing is regarded as one of the alternative forms (the other is educational) in New Age practices which focus on 'bringing about a New Age for the person' (p.76). Second, the 'classic' New Age healing in Heelas's view is something to do with inner spirituality that comes from 'the authority shift'—from without to within (p.81-82). It is noted that Heelas's analysis of healing phenomena centres on two concepts: self-spirituality and anti-'authority' (in a traditional sense). In addition, Heelas concludes that the dimensions of healing in the New Age include: healing the earth, healing the dis-eases of the capitalistic workplace, healing the person, and healing disease and/or illness (p.81). It is the latter two dimensions of healing — involving the state of the body and emotions — that concentrate on the self, which shifts the focus to the issues of emotions and embodiment while exploring New Age practices regarding healing.

Heelas (1996) suggests that emotions are socially constructed when he discusses the way in which participants interpret their own spiritual experiences. However, he only concentrates on psychological processes — the cognitive construction of emotions — such as the examples of 'est' training and drugs used (pp.191-192). He does not offer empirical examples or evidence of how emotions in other New Age practices are socially constructed. In addition, although Heelas suggests that healing practices in the New Age seek to 'rectify

physical and emotional ills' (p.81), and 'the Self has a key role in healing the self' (p.82), he does not pay enough attention to the body and emotional issues, which are most clearly related to the theme of the 'self' in New Age healing. Therefore, the following questions still remain unexplored: how do participants learn to be 'Self-as-healer' (p.84)? What kinds of emotions are constructed, encouraged, and provoked in New Age practices? How does the state of the body and emotions in practices influence the perception of the self? And what are the connections between the body, emotions and the inner/Self-spirituality in practices? These questions need to be further explored in order to understand the place of emotions and embodiment in the New Age in modern society. A useful approach to these questions is social constructionism, which is regarded as one of the major approaches to emotions in the humanities and social sciences.

The social constructionist approach to emotions focuses on the following aspects (Harre, 1986, p.13; Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p.135): 1) the repertoire of public language games available in any given culture; 2) the moral order within which the moral appraisals that control both the meaning and use of emotional terminologies are themselves meaningful; 3) the social functions that particular emotions display; 4) the narrative forms that the unfolding of the situations revealed in the first three points realise; and 5) the system of rules by which these complex forms of social/emotional action are maintained, accounted for, taught and changed. Emotions, from the perspective of social constructionism, are regarded as learnt rather than inherited behaviours or responses. Social constructionists tend to identify and trace the ways in which norms and expectations relating to the emotions are engendered,

reproduced and managed in specific sociocultural settings, and the implications for selfhood and social relations of emotional experience and expression (Lupton, 1998, p.15). In sum, social constructionists view emotions as conceptually constituted by language, beliefs and social rules, which is quite different from traditional theories of emotions, which tend to regard them as natural phenomena (Armon-Jones, 1986, pp.32-33).

Therefore, the first step in approaching emotions, in terms of the perspective of social constructionism, is to obtain a proper understanding of how various emotion-related vocabularies are used in different cultures (Harre, 1986, p. 5). In other words, emotion vocabularies are thought to give cultural meaning to emotional states, and therefore, to dictate what we are to feel in certain cultural or social contexts. In addition, the interactive dimensions of social life should be considered when examining emotions and embodiment. Lyon and Barbalet (1994) argue that emotions are dynamic, making the body become active, and are also communicative expressions of the self. They further note that emotion is not only embodied but also fundamentally social — not an inner thing but a ‘relational process’, because many emotions can exist only in the reciprocal exchanges of a social encounter (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994; McGuire, 1996, p.110). In this regard, the theory of ‘emotion work’ by Hochschild (1979) is regarded as a major perspective in the interactionist accounts of emotions, and this enables us to examine the relationship among the issues of feeling rules, ideology and social structure (Williams & Bendelow, 1998, p.140).

According to Hochschild (1979), ‘emotion work’ refers to ‘the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling’ (p.561). It often



becomes an object of awareness when people's feelings do not fit into a situation (p. 563). Lupton indicates that Hochschild's idea of emotion work is not only about smothering or suppressing feeling, but also about constituting feeling, bringing it into being in response to an awareness of social norms about what one should be feeling (Lupton, 1998, p.19). In addition, emotion work functions through 'feeling rules'. Feeling rules are the public side of ideology based on social rules or norms that deal with the affective dimensions of social life. People are expected to express proper emotions in certain situations according to relevant rules. Emotion work, in this regard, is a type of 'emotion management' that people undertake to cope with feeling rules. In addition, Hochschild distinguishes 'surface acting' from 'deep acting': the former involves a strategy of pretence, whereas the latter requires a control of the 'levers of feeling production' in order to really change what we feel. In Hochschild's analysis, it is especially 'deep acting' that involves emotion management; that is, to work on a feeling or emotion (Williams and Bendelow, 1998, p.140).

In her research on workers as flight attendants, prostitutes, social workers, debt collectors and sales workers in modern society, Hochschild (1983) concludes that the management of the emotions has become increasingly commercialised, and thus the number of 'emotion workers' has been rising since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hochschild regards the phenomenon as 'the commercial distortion of the managed heart' (p.22). Lupton indicates that Hochschild's arguments in this respect imply that the less emotions are controlled by social norms, the better: 'there is a more "real" or "true" self that needs to be freed from the imperatives of the labour market, so that what she

sees to be more “authentic” emotional responses may be experienced and expressed’ (1998, p.20).

Therefore, in my view, from the perspective of social constructionism the spiritualities that support New Age practices include beliefs that offer participants ‘feeling rules’ to ‘manage’ their emotions in their interactions with others. However, I also note that one of the goals of New Age activities for adherents is to free themselves from the limitations of traditions and thus to live the ‘real self’, which is opposite to the case of managing hearts in labour markets. Therefore, by exploring the way in which New Age participants manage their emotions and what feeling rules they learn in the process of practices will provide new insights into the issues relating to, as well as connections between, ‘authentic’ emotions and ‘managing’ emotions.

As an extension of the theory of Self-religion, my discussions of the issues of emotions and embodiment lead to the following research questions: How do participants deal with the issues of emotions in New Age practices? Are there feeling rules in New Age practices? If so, how do New Agers express these feeling rules? What are the relationships between the self, emotions and healing in New Age practices? I will answer these research questions in Chapter 5.

### 3.4 Globalisation and ‘Glocalization’

In the 1960s, McLuhan (1960) employed the concept of the ‘global village’ to indicate the way in which the development of communications technology had impacted on the world. Since then, a revolutionary trend of increasing global consciousness has accelerated around the world, reflecting a

growing correlation and interdependence among the various parts of the modern world system. Although one of the best-known social theories about the construction of the world system is Wallerstein's (1987) world system theory, his virtually exclusive emphasis on the economic elements turns cultures into a peripheral element preventing the collapse of the system. His theory not only fails to explain the phenomena of religious and spiritual revitalisation in the contemporary world but also ignores the 'micro/individual' level of the interdependent global system (Shu-Chuan Chen, 1996, p.73).

Giddens indicates that in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the characteristics of high modernity such as disembeddedness and self-reflexivity promoted the development of globalisation in the sense of time-space distancing (Giddens, 1991, p.21). Disembedding mechanisms cause many changes in the lives of individuals in high (late) modernity. The dynamics between the local and global influence one's self-identity and life choices. In this regard, it is useful to refer to Roland Robertson's (1991, 1992) analysis of the globalisation process, because he emphasises the cultural elements of globalisation as well as explaining the important position of religions and quasi-religions in the modern global field.

According to Robertson, one of the main assumptions behind the construction of a theory of globalisation is that the world is increasingly experienced as a whole. Therefore, globalisation refers to 'the process of the formation of the world as a whole'. The completion of globalisation involves two elements: global consciousness (of the world as a whole) and global order.

First, global circumstances stimulate the emergence of a global consciousness. According to Robertson, these circumstances (seen as the

socio-cultural systems) are formed by the interactions of four major components of the global field: individuals, national societies, the relationships between national societies, and humankind (Robertson, 1992, p.25).

Secondly, the construction of the global order is based on the spread of global consciousness in the global field. For Robertson, this can be accomplished through the web of four dimensions: global internationalisation (the expansion and consolidation of the international system), global societalisation (the global generalisation of a particular conception of the modern form of society), global individualisation (the global generalisation of a conception of the modern person), and global humanisation (the global diffusion of a conception of a homogeneous, but gender-distinguished, humankind). The four dimensions are regarded as relatively autonomous but also as highly interdependent. However, the variety of the intensity and the directional flow between and among them depends on their empirical relationships (Robertson, 1991, pp.282-3).

On the other hand, from the view point of the actor, globalisation involves a process of internalisation, through which people (collectively or individually) internalise a specific global consciousness and respond to it. Hence, during the process of globalisation, in addition to the formation of global consciousness, the differences between categories (societies, ethnicities, communities and individuals, etc.) are also strengthened. Moreover, within the above-mentioned four dimensions of the global field, both global societalisation and global individualisation reveal that particularism and localism are synchronised with universalism and cosmopolitanism (Robertson, 1991, p.283; 1992, p.178).

It is important to note that globalisation involves a dynamic interrelationship between the universal and the particular (Robertson, 1997, p.222, 225). In other words, the ‘universalisation of particularism’ is combined with the ‘particularisation of universalism’ (Robertson, 1991: 283; 1992, p.178). The former signifies how ‘the trend of an idea or a model of behaviour that belongs to a specific local area is influenced by globality’, while the latter refers to how ‘the process of something global is adapted to local circumstances’ (Shu-Chuan Chen, 1996, p.75). Robertson uses the term ‘glocalization’ (meaning ‘global localization’, which is based on the Japanese notion of ‘*dochakuka*’) to refer to the simultaneity of universalising and particularizing tendencies (Robertson, 1992, pp.173-174; 1997, p.221). Although Robertson only uses a few paragraphs to discuss the idea of ‘glocalization’ in his work, it reminds us that globalisation is not a one-dimensional process but involves mutual interactions between the global and the local. And he criticises the fact that the observations of some journalists and broadcasters are still based on the discourse of a ‘localism-globalism’ opposition when they comment on the phenomena of globalisation. Robertson states (1992, pp.173-174):

*We must thus recognize directly ‘real world’ attempts to bring the global, in the sense of the macroscopic aspect of contemporary life, into conjunction with the local, in the sense of the microscopic side of life in the late twentieth century. The very formulation, apparently in Japan, of a term such as glocalize...is perhaps the best example of this. ...The conclusion that ‘with satellite television, you never know you left home’ has a persuasive ring. But what this kind of observation seriously downplays is the increasingly complex relationship between ‘the local’ and ‘the global.’ It underestimates the extent to which ‘locality’ is chosen; it underplays the extent to*

*which 'the local' media are, certainly in the USA, more and more concerned with 'global' issues ('local' reporters reporting from various parts of the world, according to 'local' interest); ...All of this comes about through an inability, or unwillingness, to transcend the discourse of 'localism-globalism.'*

These observations about globalisation and 'glocalization' give rise to certain questions about the meaning of the NAM in Taiwan. For example, how do New Age teachers or organisations in Taiwan interact with New Age organisations abroad? How far do local leaders adapt global material for teaching at the local level? And how far do they 'package' local material for consumption at the global level? In what ways does the documentation produced by local groups relate to literature distributed globally? These questions are designed to discover how far the information circulating within the NAM in Taiwan is the same as the original sources in the USA and elsewhere. These questions can also help to reveal the extent to which Taiwanese people refract the influence of global forces. I will answer these questions in Chapter 7 when examining the organisations, the network, and the globalisation of the NAM in Taiwan.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced my framework of theoretical ideas for the analysis of the NAM in Taiwan. The theoretical ideas (self-religion, reflexive modernisation and globalisation) and the issues of emotions and embodiment concerning the NAM in late modern society have been employed in the thesis so far in order to guide the design of my research questions. Although these theories are proposed by different scholars, in my examination of the NAM in

Taiwan they are connected to each other to some degree. They are all theories about late-modern society, which is a period beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in Giddens's definition.

The first theoretical idea is 'Self-religion,' as explained by Paul Heelas. I outlined the elements and characteristics of the basic New Age teaching, self-spirituality. I indicated that my discussion of Heelas's theory and my proposed research questions are intended to clarify the connection between the self and authority where it is not as clear as it should be in his arguments. The next set of theoretical ideas for my thesis is the theory of reflexive modernisation by Anthony Giddens. Giddens gives a clear picture of the issue of the reflexive self and therapies in late modernity but regards new spiritualities such as the New Age as a 'return of the repressed'. I then indicated that the New Age should be regarded as a part of late modernity, because its beliefs and practices are all about self-reflexivity. My research questions in this respect were designed to examine whether the New Age plays the role of what Giddens terms 'expert knowledge' to New Agers, which will be answered in Chapter 6.

In addition, the issue of emotions has appeared in Heelas's analysis of New Age healing and in Giddens's discussion of late modernity. However, this is still a 'missing link' because it has been ignored by most New Age studies. Therefore, I outlined a social constructionist approach to emotions, especially Hochschild's theory of emotion work, in order to guide my research questions about emotions and feeling rules in New Age practices. The analysis of my empirical data will be presented in Chapter 5.

The final set of theoretical ideas structuring my thesis is the theory of

globalisation by Roland Robertson. His ideas of globalisation and 'glocalization' give rise to certain questions about the meaning of the NAM in Taiwan, because the NAM did not originate in this country but was imported from the USA. These research questions about globalisation and 'glocalization' will be answered in Chapter 7.



## Part II

### **Examining the Empirical Evidence**

## Chapter 4

# **Analysis of the Range of the New Age Movement in Taiwan**

### Introduction

In this chapter I will look at the range of the NAM and locate the movement within the social context of Taiwan. As a newly introduced spirituality, it attracts people from different religious backgrounds, as we will see in this chapter, which reflect the religious diversity of Taiwan. The chapter begins with a section covering a brief history of religions in Taiwan, which paves the way for the development of the NAM in this country. How the NAM emerged and developed in Taiwan will be presented in this section as well. In the following section I will outline the characteristics of participants in the NAM, including their socio-demographic background and their previous religious background. Then, I will outline the characteristics of New Age spiritualities, which includes an examination of the theory of ‘self-religion’ by Paul Heelas based on my interview materials. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the extent of the activities and practices that are taking place in Taiwan under the label New Age Movement, and to evaluate its position within the country’s religious/spiritual marketplace.

### 4.1 The History of Religions in Taiwan

Taiwan is a country with a long history of migration and colonisation,

which went through the rule of the 'Ching' (清) dynasty, Japanese occupation, being taken over by the Nationalist government (Kuomintang, KMT) after the post-war period, culminating in the present Democratic Progressive Party (Minjintang, DPP) government. According to a large-scale interview survey of religious changes among Taiwanese people between the age of 20 and 70 years old, 47% of the population identify themselves as Buddhists (Hei-Yuan Chiu, 1997a, p.4). Although the percentage actually includes most folk believers or other religious followers in terms of a strict definition of Buddhism,<sup>18</sup> it also implies that the development of Buddhism is significant in Taiwan. In fact, folk religion as the core religion for the 'Han' (漢) people in Taiwan for the past two to three hundred years has been preserved. Taiwanese society preserves Chinese religious traditions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and popular religions, but they have also developed and grown into unique religious phenomena through different stages of history. The development of religions in Taiwan can be divided into four periods: 1) the pioneer stage; 2) Japanese occupation; 3) the post-war period and the period under Martial Law; and 4) the period after the Lifting of Martial Law. The New Age as a fluid spiritual social movement (see Chapter 2) in Taiwan came to light during the period after the Lifting of Martial Law.

#### 4.1.1 From Diffused Religions to Institutional Religions

Taiwan was incorporated into the Chinese domain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries during the 'Ching' (清) dynasty (1644-1911).

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<sup>18</sup> The result of the social survey shows that a percentage of 65 in the population are folk believers; the second largest group is Buddhism, which occupies a percentage of 11 in the population. The others are Non-believers (9 %), Taoism (7 %), Christianity (5 %), and other religions (3 %). (Chiu, 1997a, p.34)

Early settlers from China crossed the Taiwan Strait to the island. In the first stage of migration, the Taiwanese consisted of two linguistic groups, the southern Fujianese immigrants from ‘*Chang-chou*’ (彰化) and ‘*Chuan-chou*’ (泉州), and the Hakka from western ‘*Fujian*’ (福建) and ‘*Guangdung*’ (廣東) provinces.<sup>19</sup> These two groups were regarded as Han agricultural settlers who emigrated to Taiwan between the end of the Ming dynasty and the coming of the Japanese in 1895; then, even more of them came in the early nineteenth century.

The ‘*Hanren*’ (漢人) practised ‘*Han*’ (漢) ancestor worship and other folk (or popular) religious practices (Chang, 2003, p.27): as Fang-yuan Tung pointed out, ‘Taiwanese folk beliefs are the traditional religion of the [island’s] Fujianese and Cantonese ethnic groups’ (Kate, 2003, p.163 cited in Fang-yuan Tung, 1995). Folk belief as a popular religion is diffused among the mass in Chinese society and regarded as an ‘irenic mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism’ (Saso, 1970, p.83). In practice, for commoners, there are no clear boundaries between these three religious traditions. In addition, the core of the Chinese religion, which centres on both heaven and ancestor worship, is termed a ‘patriarchal traditional religion’ by Zhong-Jian Mo (1995, p.82; Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a, pp.65-66; 2004b, p.8). It includes public religion at both state level and the regional level; and it has played the most important part in Taiwanese culture from the beginning (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a, pp. 70-84).

During the period of Japanese occupation from 1895 to 1945, the colonised government imported Shinto beliefs to Taiwan. In respect of

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<sup>19</sup> In Taiwan, the Fujianese language (‘*Minnanhua*’ [閩南話]) and Hakka language (‘*Kejiahua*’ [客家話]) are two major vernacular languages in addition to the official language Mandarin.

religious policy, the colonial government enforced a policy of ‘Temple Renovation’ (‘*Sihmiao-Jhengli*’ [寺廟整理]) in the later stage of the occupation between 1937 and 1945, which was the period of the ‘*Kominka*’ (皇名化, Japanisation) Movement. At that time, Chinese religions were preserved but oppressed, and some temples and their statues were destroyed (Mau-Kuei Chang, 2003, p.159). However, Buddhism grew rapidly in Taiwan under Japanese colonisation because the government promoted Buddhism but oppressed Chinese folk religious practices (‘*Yidao-Yangfo*’ [抑道揚佛]) (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a, p. 89; Hei-Yuan Chiu, 1997a, p.46). In 1945, China won a final victory after the eight-year long Resistance War against Japan; Taiwan was reunited with the “Ancestors’ Country” again. However, it is notable that Taiwan and China had had little contact with each other since the seceding of Taiwan to Japan in 1895, and had been on their respective paths of change in two different political fields with different moral horizons (Mau-Kuei Chang, 2003, pp.42-44). In 1949, the communists took over China, and the KMT government retreated to Taiwan, followed by about a million and a half immigrants. Their language was for the most part Mandarin, thus making Mandarin the official language of the island (Saso, 1970, pp.83-84). Although the government allowed people religious freedom, they upheld traditional values and Confucianism as the dominant civic virtues. The ideas of royalism (‘*Jhongjiyun*’ [忠君]) and patriotism (‘*Aiguo*’ [愛國]) from the patriarchal traditional religion were promoted (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a, p.84), while the Taiwanese dialects, traditional customs and folk religious practices that were defined as ‘local, backward, superstitious’ were dismissed (Mau-Kuei Chang, 2003, p.47). It is also significant that various reformist

and neo-traditionalist movements of Buddhism that had originally spread in China were imported into Taiwan (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004b). Buddhism took advantage of its opportunity for development, as Zhengzong Kan (2004) notes: ‘under Martial Law, Buddhism had a very good chance to develop, since the KMT at that time allowed Buddhism to exist but strictly restricted some religions’ (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004b, p.16 cited in Zhengzong Kan, 2004). However, the number of temples for traditional religions sharply increased between 1950 and 1960, so that the growth rate was much higher than during the period of Japanese occupation (Hei-Yuan Chiu, 1997a, p.42).

In 1987, Taiwanese authorities lifted Martial Law, which is regarded as the most important cause of rapid social change, including religious development, in modern Taiwan. After the *Civil Associations Act* (人民團體法) was passed in 1989,<sup>20</sup> in addition to the eleven religions<sup>21</sup> that had been acknowledged by the government before the lifting of Martial Law, numerous religious groups emerged, revived, and registered as civic organisations. Since then, various religions have been spreading through the country; and some New Buddhist organisations have developed on to the global level, such as Buddha Light Mountain (Foguangshan, 佛光山) and Buddhist Compassion Relief (Ciji Gongdehui, 慈濟功德會) (Clarke, 2006, pp.329-332). The contemporary boom of Buddhism in Taiwan is an example of this process, especially the rapid growth of several Buddhist organisations such as the Foguangshan, the Ciji Gongdehui, the Fagushan (法鼓山, Dharma Drum

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<sup>20</sup> Please see <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/Fnews/FnewsContent.asp?msgid=1261&msgType=en> for the content of the Act.

<sup>21</sup> They were Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Roman Catholic Church, other Christian Churches, Religion of the Yellow Emperor (軒轅教), Religion of the Ordering Principles (理教), Tenrikyo, Baha'i (大同教), the T'ientai Teachings (the Lord of Universe Church, 天帝教), and the Unity Sect (一貫道).

Mountain), and the Zhongtaichansi (中台禪寺, Zhongtai Zen-temple) (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004b). On the one hand, concerning the flourishing of popular Buddhist movements, Jen-Chien Ting indicates that ‘the underlying reason for Buddhist growth in modern Taiwan may just be due to Taiwan’s success in economic development, which may have brought up extensive local religious ferment. On the other hand, under Japanese influence, before 1949, Buddhism in traditional Taiwan was already quite a popular religion’ (2004b, p. 28).

Recently, social research on religious changes in Taiwan by various scholars has reached a new conclusion: that is, institutional religions are taking over traditional diffused religions and becoming more important in Taiwanese religious life (Hsin-chih Chen 2003 ; Hei-Yuan Chiu 2004; Wen-Pan Kuo 1997, 2001, 2002; Pen-Hsuan Lin 1997, 1998, 2001a; Jen-Chien Ting 2001, 2003, 2004a). In this regard, Jen-Chien Ting (2004a) was the first to construct a typology of religious changes, including the NAM, in Taiwan in terms of the analysis of social differentiation over the long haul, and he called this phenomenon the ‘visiblisation of institutional religions’. He categorised religions into six types<sup>22</sup> of religious institution that have emerged and developed at different stages in Taiwan’s history. They are Family Religions (for example, ancestor worship) and Territorial cults (folk religion), Clergy-Centred Denominations (Mahayana Buddhism in Taiwan), Independent Sects (I-Kuan Tao), Clergy-Laity Juxtaposed Denominations (modern secular

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<sup>22</sup> There are parallels between Ting’s six types and Robert Bellah’s typology of religious evolution, except for the first category ‘primitive religion’, which was absent in Taiwan according to Ting’s analysis; these parallels are Archaic Religion vs. Family Religion and Territorial Cults, Historic Religion vs. Clergy-Centred Denominations and Independent Sects, Early Modern Religion vs. Clergy-Laity Juxtaposed Denomination, and Modern Religion vs. Charismatic Cults.

Buddhism), and Charismatic Cults (The Supreme Master Ching Hai International Association) (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a). Although folk religion, which is regarded as a part of Taiwanese culture in popular society, still plays an important role in Taiwanese culture in so far as some of its symbols and teachings are preserved in new indigenous religions, it is in decline following the rise of education levels and the modernisation of Taiwan (Hei-Yuan Chiu, 2001, p.253; 2004, p.14).

In addition to the shift towards institutional religions in contemporary Taiwan, the 'new religions'<sup>23</sup> also flourished and participated in the religious marketplace, in which the New Age was included after the Lifting of Martial Law. In a way, it is just as Clarke (2006, p.329) suggested, that 'the Nationalist government's virtual suppression of religion after it took control for a period of over twenty years had the effect of unleashing large numbers of NRMs with liberalisation in the 1980s' (2005). However, it should also be noted that religious changes in contemporary Taiwan are not to be equated to the case of Privatization in the west (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a). According to Jen-Chien Ting (2004a), the flourishing of new religions in this country is properly termed 'religious individuality', which refers to the fact that 'religious teachings and practices are intensely concentrated on personal salvation and reflexive inner experiences' (p.48; pp. 401-409). It is manifested in and followed by the change of social structures when religions are detached from their territorial boundaries and community consciousness, which were the characteristics of traditional religions, and when they place more emphasis on

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<sup>23</sup> In 2000, there were at least 323 officially recognized religious groups in Taiwan, which is 14.04 times more than the 23 groups in 1989 (Chiu, 2002). 'New religions' in Chiu's article (2002) are defined as 'newly emerged religions in different stage of history in Taiwan that are not originated in this country, including revival of established religions'.



voluntary participation and personal choices (p.401). Religious changes in modern Taiwan are different from those in the West because the public and private spheres in Taiwanese society have actually never been separated or differentiated (pp.115-119). The emergence of institutional religions such as Buddhism and independent sects really represented a kind of personal choice, which is complementary and additional to the mainstream patriarchal religion in traditional Chinese society; therefore, there was no conflict or resistance, as happened in the case of 'Privatization' of religion in the West (p. 47). In other words, although on the surface the 'religious individuality' of Taiwan looks like the phenomenon of 'privatized religion', such a religiosity based on personal choices without political influence has actually been embedded in Chinese society, including Taiwan, for a long time. Buddhism and Taoism accommodated themselves to changes in social structure (privatization), and their religious types remain intact in modern society.

Jen-Chien Ting mentioned the emergence of the 'spiritual practices of the self' in Taiwan while discussing the formation of 'religious individuality'; and he noted that it is related to the NAM in the West, where practice is focused on the self and based on a holistic spirituality (Jen-Chien Ting, 2004a, p54; 2003, pp.42-49). The case of the New Age in Taiwan is different from the West, where it has been regarded as problematic in some respects and as a challenge to traditional religions. However, the emergence of the New Age in Taiwan is not regarded as a counter-culture or the opposite of traditional religions, but as a part of 'religious individuality'. The account of the New Age by Jen-Chien Ting is accurate to some degree, and it provides a connection between the New Age and other religions in Taiwan. However, Jen-Chien

Ting ignores the fact that the idea of salvation is absent from the NAM, which makes it different from other religions that are grouped in his category 'religious individuality'. I will explore this point in later sections when I am examining the characteristics of the NAM.

Having undertaken a brief review of the history of religions in Taiwan, I will look at the development of the NAM in the following section.

#### 4.1.2 Emergence and Development: the New Age Movement

The idea of the New Age appeared in Taiwan between the late 1970s and early 1980s when a few books were translated and published in the Chinese language, such as *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (人可能進化的心理學, 1979) and *The Fourth Way* (第四道, 1984) by Ouspensky, and *A Seth Book: the Seth Material* (靈界的訊息, 1982), *Seth Speaks: The Eternal Validity of the Soul* (靈魂永生, 1984), and *The Nature of the Psyche, its Human Expression* (心靈的本質, 1987) by Jane Roberts, a channel of Seth.<sup>24</sup> During the period between 1980 and 1985, there were no groups/organisations established, but a few intellectuals (who encountered the idea of New Age while staying in the US) endeavoured to translate their favourite books in order to introduce this new spirituality to Taiwan. This period can be regarded as a seeding stage of the NAM in Taiwan.

It is significant that the NAM began to develop in Taiwan after the lifting of Martial Law in 1987. There were two New Age groups which emerged between 1986 and 1990, *A Course in Light* and *A Course in Miracles*, although

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<sup>24</sup> The Chinese versions of the three books by Jane Roberts were originally published by China Times Publishing Co., but later the Fine Press bought the copyrights of these books and had them published under the New Age series.

the numbers of participants were still a few. Both of them manifested as study/practice groups. The first study/practice group for *A Course in Light* emerged when the translator of the Course introduced the material to a group of friends, about 5 – 10 persons around 1987, and it lasted for a few years until the Chinese version of the Course was published in 1993. On the other hand, the idea of *A Course in Miracles*<sup>25</sup> was first introduced to Taiwan by one of the profit-seeking organisations among the Human Potential Movement (HPM), the *Spiritual Ocean International Group* (心靈海國際教育集團).<sup>26</sup> However, groups for *A Course in Miracles* were not formalised until the Chinese version was published in 1999. At the same time, another strand of the NAM was gradually developing; it developed around an intense correspondence between the translator of the works by Jane Roberts about Seth and a number of faithful readers. The translations by Chi-Ching Wang (王季慶) attracted those readers who were searching for life meanings and enjoyed topics on spirituality.<sup>27</sup> Later, Mrs Wang and the readers formed a first study group for Seth in 1992, which was the precursor of the first New Age organisation in Taiwan, the *Chinese New Age Society*. Many of the early participants in this stage later became agents of promoting the NAM in Taiwan.

On the other hand, movements related to the NAM such as the Rajneesh Movement (or Osho) and the HPM were also introduced to Taiwan during this

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<sup>25</sup> It is the *Spiritual Ocean* that first introduced the *Course* to Taiwan, which attracted a number of people who were interested in the *Course* before the Chinese version was published. The Taiwanese centre for *A Course in Miracles* formed its network as well as the virtual organisation in 1999, which is separated from the development of the *Spiritual Ocean*.

<sup>26</sup> It was originally registered as a human resources consultant company, that was named 'Spiritual Ocean'; it expanded and established several different companies between 1989 and 2001.

<sup>27</sup> 25 out of 40 interviewees in my research reported that their encounter with the New Age started with reading her translations.

period.<sup>28</sup> For example, the first Taiwanese disciple of Osho, Kuo-Yang Lin (Sw. Dhyana Chandana), has been translating publications about Rajneesh into Chinese since 1983, and established the Osho Publishing Co. (奧修出版社) in order to promote Osho's philosophy. His translations have been regarded as the main materials for the followers of Rajneesh in Taiwan.<sup>29</sup> In addition, there are currently nine centres (including Osho Publishing Co.,) for the Rajneesh Movement in Taiwan, which are accredited to the Osho International Meditation Resort (Puna, India) as meditation centres; four of them are located in Taipei, two of them are in Taichung; the others are in Hsinchu, Kaoshiung and Tainan. The first meditation centre was established in 1992 in Taipei, and later registered as a formal organisation '*Osho Meditation Association R.O.C*' (中華民國奧修靜心協會). With regard to the HPM, several profit-seeking organisations were established during this period, such as *Star's Edge International* (國際星邊公司, 1986), *Zhenshanmei Shengming Qianneng* (真善美生命潛能研修中心)(1986), *Spiritual Ocean Internal Group* (心靈海國際研修訓練機構, 1989) and *Enlightenment Center* (創見堂, 1989).

More and more study groups, healing activities, courses, workshops and publications have appeared since 1995, which can be regarded as a rapid growth stage for the NAM in Taiwan. Books that are popular in study groups

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<sup>28</sup> The two movements will not be examined in my analysis of the NAM in Taiwan in this thesis, but I will give a brief introduction in this chapter, because there are still overlaps among the three movements in terms of participants, network and spirituality. Most participants in the two movements are separated from the NAM according to my fieldwork, although a few participants participate in all three movements. For example, people who are deeply involved in the Rajneesh Movement are not interested in spiritualities or activities in the NAM, and those who participated in the HPM seldom devote themselves to the NAM. However, some people who support the NAM might also consume products (books, healing sessions/workshops) related to the two movements for their 'spiritual growth'.

<sup>29</sup> He had translated 43 volumes of the works of Osho into Chinese by 2002. In addition, about 13,000 copies of the work of Osho are sold per year, according to the translator's estimation (Wenting Tsai, 2002, p.70).

are those especially focused on channelling messages, such as Seth (by Jane Roberts), Orin & Daben (by Sanaya Roman and Duane Packer), and in recent years the Conversations with God (by Neale D. Walsh).<sup>30</sup> In the beginning, these groups were hosted and organized by volunteers, and later many of them also registered as a part of the network of the *Chinese New Age Society*. In addition to Taipei City, the most important city for the development of the NAM in Taiwan, these study groups have also spread into other cities such as Hsinchu, Taichung, Kaoshiung and Tainan. In addition, the idea of healing has been regarded as an important issue for personal development and spiritual growth; therefore, various publications, bodywork, healing workshops, therapies and meditations have been introduced to Taiwan. Recently, a PhD dissertation (Chia-Luen Chen, 2002) suggests that it is the Rajneesh movement that established the healing marketplace in Taiwan (pp. 99-101). However, I would like to suggest that this is only a part of the truth. These pioneers of the NAM in Taiwan all emphasised the idea of healing and experienced the process of healing while promoting the movement; and many of the field informants and interviewees (including therapists/healing practitioners) for my project who identified themselves as New Agers are not involved in the Rajneesh movement at all.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the HPM also introduced various healing workshops and played an important role in the spiritual healing marketplace in Taiwan. Therefore, it is sufficient to say that the issue of healing is important to the development of the NAM in Taiwan. In one sense,

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<sup>30</sup> Most of the study groups were faithful readers of a book series entitled the 'New Age' published by Fine Press, a series mapped out by the founder of the Chinese New Age Society.

<sup>31</sup> Only 4 out of 51 (40 valid interviewees plus 11 field informants) people are involved in both the Rajaneesh movement and the NAM; the others have never participated in healing/therapies/meditations related to Osho. In addition, there are 34 people who explicitly indicated the importance of the idea/practices of healing to them in the process of spiritual quest.

the phenomena outlined above are consistent with observations of the New Age in the West in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century; in another sense, they represent the movement's leaders'<sup>32</sup> preference for the topic of healing (Shu-Chuan Chen, 2004a, b).

Many of the early participants in the movement became individual practitioners after 2000. Some of them established centres or organisations, including websites; some others cooperated with centres in organising workshops or healing sessions. The *Chinese New Age Society*, as the first formal organisation for the NAM, can be regarded as the most important organisation in promoting the idea of the NAM in Taiwan. Other active centres/organisations for the NAM include *Buddhist Life*, *A Course in Light*, *A Course in Miracles*, *Garden of Light Carrier*, *Himalaya Living Space*, *TOPTEC*: I will analyse the organisations of the NAM in Chapter 7. However, it is clear that the movement reached its current stage of development in Taiwan after 20 years of activity.

## 4.2 The Characteristics of the NAM in Taiwan

Having looked at the history and the background of the development of the NAM in Taiwan, in this section I will examine the characteristics of the NAM in Taiwan. I will analyse the social and religious background of participants, and the characteristics of the spiritualities that are brought to light by my interview materials.

### 4.2.1 The Characteristics of Participants

Although this thesis is not based on a quantitative-based research project,

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<sup>32</sup> Such as the *Chinese New Age Society*, *A Course in Light* and *A Course in Miracles*.

a sketch of the social background and previous involvements in religions for my forty interviewees can provide information about the characteristics of people who participate in the NAM. As explained in Chapter 1, a sampling frame of New Age participants was not available, so I was dependent on my own participant observation in various New Age activities and on my contacts with leading practitioners for my overall impression of the NAM's social profile. I am confident that my sample of interviewees and other informants is not significantly unrepresentative of the total population of experienced New Agers in Taiwan. The following Tables show the background of my sample of participants, including their distribution by gender, age, education and occupation.

Table 4.1 shows that the majority of my sample of participants in the NAM fall into age groups between 30 and 49. In this regard, the majority of participants in the movement in Taiwan are younger than in the case of the West, since research shows that 'baby boomers' (persons now between 45 and 55) are the main participants in the NAM in the West (Brown, 1992; Mears & Ellison, 2000, p.293). Also, research on gender and New Age participation has indicated that women are more likely than men to believe in and participate in NAM (Bloch, 1997; Mears & Ellison, 2000, p.293; Rose, 2001).

Table 4.1 does show that female participants (65 percent) in the NAM in Taiwan outnumber male participants (35 percent), which is in line with the situation in the West. In addition, sixty percent of the interviewees are married. Although the residences of participants are not shown in the table here, it is noted that most of the interviewees live in north Taiwan (Taipei, Hsinchu, Taoyuan); a few participants live in Taichung (the middle of Taiwan);

and there are two leaders who live in the US but visit Taiwan every year to host workshops.

**Table 4.1 Gender and Age**

<b>Age (in 2005)</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
30-39	8	7	15(37.5%)
40-49	10	6	16 (40%)
50-59	6	1	7 (17.5%)
60-69	2	0	2 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 (65%)</b>	<b>14 (35%)</b>	<b>40 (100%)</b>

Table 4.2 reveals that most of my informants hold degrees of higher education. The second largest group has been through further education; only four participants fall into the group with only high school education. This Table clearly shows that participants involved in the NAM are well-educated people.

**Table 4.2 Education**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Total</b>
Higher Education	28
Further Education	8
High School	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

Table 4.3 illustrates the distribution of participants by occupation. It shows that over half are senior managerial staff and professionals; they include business employers and managers, medical practitioners, teachers and writers. It is also notable that almost three-quarters of the participants are from the field of business and professions. It can be seen from The Tables that well-educated, managerial and professional people feature among the participants of the NAM in Taiwan.



**Table 4.3 Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Total</b>
Senior Managerial & Professional	23
Junior Managerial & Technical	5
Clerical and Supervisory	8
Home Maker	1
Student	1
Retired	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

Research and discussion on socio-demographic factors in the NAM in the West show that the majority of people who participate in the movement are from well-educated, middle-aged and middle class groups; the occupations tend to be professionals, managers, administrators and sales persons (Brown 1992; Lewis 1992; Lewis & Melton 1992; Rose, 1998; Mears & Ellison, 2000; Rose, 2005). Therefore, the above Tables indicate that the characteristics of participants in the NAM in Taiwan are similar to those of the NAM in the West, with the exception that Taiwanese New Agers tend to come from younger age groups. However, the predominant age group is a reflection of the ‘age’ of the movement in Taiwan.

#### 4.2.2 The Characteristics of Previous Religions among Participants

##### ***Buddhism and Multiple Involvements Among the Majority of Participants***

Table 4.4 shows the previous religious beliefs of my sample of participants in the NAM. But it should be emphasised that participation in New Age activities does not necessarily imply the abandonment of previous religious or spiritual beliefs. On the contrary, the extent of continuity between previous and current beliefs was considerable for many of my interviewees.

In this sense, ‘previous’ simply means ‘before participating in New Age activities’ without any implication of having left the previous beliefs behind.

**Table 4.4 Previous Religions**

<b>Previous Religions</b>	<b>N</b>
Buddhism	14
Multiple Involvement	11
None	5
Other Christian Churches	4
Popular Religion	2
Roman Catholic Church	1
Others	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

It is noted that many interviewees were involved in Buddhism before they linked themselves to the NAM. Most of them participated in more than one Buddhist denomination, such as the Pure Land, Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, and modern Buddhist sects including the Ciji Gongdehui, the Foguangshan and the Lingjioushan. In addition, many interviewees were involved in more than one religion, such as Buddhism, the Roman Catholic Church, other Christian Churches, Taoism, popular religion, and new religions such as Rael’s UFO religion, A’nanda Ma’rga (阿南達瑪迦) and the True Buddha School (真佛宗). This suggests that those people who participate in the NAM are probably open to various religions. In another sense, the distribution of their previous religions shows the religious diversity of Taiwan.

It is significant that many interviewees who had previously participated in Buddhism or who had had multiple involvements mentioned the similarity between Buddhist teachings and New Age spiritualities, according to their experiences. In one sense, it corresponds to the analysis of Heelas (1996) that,

as an expression of ‘perennialism’, one of the characteristics of self-religion is that ‘New Agers continually draw on traditions — shamanic to Buddhist’ (p.27), and go ‘beyond traditions as normally conceived, going beyond differences to find — by way of experience — the inner, esoteric core’ (p.28). In another sense, however, the elements of syncretism and collectivism that are embedded in Asian cultures might help people cultivate the view of perennialism.

#### 4.2.3 The Characteristics of New Age spiritualities: a ‘Practical’

##### Self-Religion

##### *A Positivist Approach to Self-spirituality*

Paul Heelas terms the NAM a ‘self-religion’ and suggests that the teachings and practices are all about Self-spirituality, which comprises three elements and five characteristics (1996, pp.18-28), as I showed in Chapter 3. The first characteristic is that much of the New Age is extremely ‘detraditionalised’ or ‘anti-authoritarian’. The second is about the ‘self-ethic’, which is connected to the third characteristic: self-responsibility. The last two characteristics of the New Age are ‘freedom’ and ‘perennialism.’ These characteristics sacralize the self in the modern world. The argument in this regard focuses on the connection between the self and authority/traditions, and this is what I will pay more attention to while examining the applicability of the conception of ‘self-religion’ to the NAM in Taiwan.

First, almost all my interviewees were positive towards the value of ‘self-responsibility’, which is an important aspect of the self-ethic in Heelas’s analysis. Many interviewees gave a definite ‘yes’ to the question ‘Do you feel

that people alone are responsible for their own lives?’ In addition, they gave detailed explanations following the simple answer ‘yes’; for example, a male interviewee replied:

*Yes, they are! Once you feel that you have the power at hand to be responsible, you will cherish your decisions, and you will also respect your every decision. Even later it does not look like a proper decision, after all, you regarded it as the best decision at that time. I do not blame or deny ‘what I was’; it is an experience, it is a process. (24/11/03, P18)*

Another female interviewee explained her opinion of ‘self-responsibility’:

*Of course, it is definitely so. And the ‘responsibility’ not only means that I am paying back the karma because of what I have done, which is what normal people would think; but it is not. The statement ‘I take the responsibility for my own life’ means that because I create my own reality, so I have the ability to recreate it, to rechoose it. This is self-responsibility, everyone has the power.... That is to say, people do not depend on others because they have their own power, which is the gift that everyone has been given. (11/12/03, P19)*

In addition, although most interviewees were positive in response to interview questions about self-ethics, such as ‘We should listen to our inner voice/intuition because the truth lies within; we alone are our own source of guidance,’ a few of them emphasised the importance of discerning the voice between ‘inner/intuition’ and ego. A response in this regard from Mrs Du, the translator as well as spokesperson of *A Course in Light*, is particularly interesting:

*OK, the statement itself is right, but what is wrong is that many voices from inside would still be desultory if you are not spiritually purified enough; you would still be misguided because there would be many voices from your ego. Therefore, the first step is that you*

*have to cleanse yourself. (13/10/03, P4)*

What Mrs Du meant by ‘cleansing yourself’ is to practise ACIL or other New Age courses in order to achieve the state of ‘spiritual clarity’; it is only in such a state that people can distinguish their ‘inner voice/intuition’ from their ego.

Another interviewee, a middle-aged male trainer in Human Resources, suggested a way to listen to the inner voice in his responses:

*How do you listen to the real inner voice? That is, to practise meditation. Meditation is to provide yourself with a space, you give yourself a space to be with your body and emotions; then, you would be aware that your emotions are not quiet and your body is not relaxed; therefore, you would have to do something to release them. (24/02/04, P35)*

The opinion of the above interviewee with regard to ‘Do something to release them’ is similar to the ‘Cleanse yourself’ by Mrs Du: that is to say, doing New Age practices such as meditation or healing; to help oneself clearly listen to one’s inner voice/intuition.

Interviewees may also connect the idea of self-responsibility to ‘tradition’ and to ‘freedom,’ and suggest that the point is self-belief and the transformation of self- awareness. For example, an individual practitioner, a female energy healer, said:

*There is nothing to be limited, and it is still related to your belief system and your soul as a whole. I feel that once a person has experienced the transformation of his awareness, what he perceived as a tradition might not be a tradition anymore but a matter of freedom, and it is related to life... What does it mean by self-responsibility? It does not only refer to taking good care of yourself but also to expanding your concerns about your family and*

*friends; in addition, it also includes how you find a balance between spiritual practices and material life. (24/10/03, P11)*

When I examine the opinions of participants in the NAM in Taiwan about the teachings of self-spirituality by Heelas, such as ‘let go/drop it,’ ‘you are Gods and Goddess in exile (1996, pp. 18-21),’ it is notable that they have distinctive explanations for the connection between the Self and ego. In fact, most interviewees did not agree with the statement based on Heelas’s theory in my interview questions, that ‘We should let go of ego/self to experience authentic Self.’ For them, it is a process of experiencing the Self; it is not a case of dropping off the self/ego, because it is a ‘tool’ that helps people live in the popular society. The important thing is to improve the self/ego, to right the wrong thinking instead of letting go of it. Some typical responses include, for example, a female interviewee, an energy healer, also said:

*I think that the connection between ego and the Self is the idea of balance...your ego is to help you live your life, you have to take care of it; what you can do is to keep a balance between your higher Self and your ego....your higher Self would be happy if your ego helps you live well. (12/10/03, P3)*

The translator of ACIL referred to the idea of ‘no mind’ in Buddhism while answering the question about self/ego, and she also supported the idea of another New Age course:

*I myself have pondered this point for a long time and have even made many mistakes before, that is, trying hard to let go of the ego/self. However, the truth is that it is impossible to let go of the ego; you can only improve it and lift it because each of us is still an individual being; in other words, when we are created, we are beings, which is a part of the whole; it is right that we have to integrate ourselves into the Whole. Therefore, what you have to let go is not the ego but an*

*ego which is created by false ideas, as A Course in Miracles suggested. (13/10/03, P4)*

One male interviewee referred to the idea of Seth while answering the questions; he encountered the New Age because of his cancer:

*What I believe is, as Seth says, the ego is your eyes, your eyes are to see the reality, but at the same time it (the ego) is also a channel to connect with your higher Self. Therefore, why do we let go of our ego?? (24/11/03, P18)*

In addition, interviewees connect the self/ego and the Self in terms of holism. Following are a few extracts:

*We would not be here on the earth if we didn't have the ego.....So, what we are to explore is the way we use the ego to connect with the Whole. (23/12/03, P20)*

*The process is not to completely let go of the ego and be without ourselves, it is not. ...The Self and the ego are united...they support each other and coexist. (27/12/03, P23)*

*The purpose of the existence of the ego is not used to let go but to recognise that it is a part of the Self. The way to deal with the ego is not to let go but to understand that it itself is not the ego. (15/01/04, P29)*

As for another formula by Heelas about 'self-religion', 'you are the god/goddess in exile', many interviewees were positive in response to the statement in my interview questions that 'To experience the "Self" itself is to experience "God", the "Source", "Christ Consciousness", etc'. For them, it was a stage of union that is based on holism. They regarded it as a state of 'oneness,' which is a part of 'holism.'

The idea of holism is further clarified in their responses to the following two interview statements, that 'All life is interconnected energy;' and 'Do you

feel that all is ultimately one and thus everyone has a sense of responsibility for others and the earth?’ Most of the interviewees were very positive towards the two statements. For example, a male interviewee who is a small-size business employer, said:

*That's right, it is true that all life, including nature, is interconnected energy; even our meeting today in some way is connected to it. It(ACIL) says that there is no coincidence in life. (23/10/03, P9)*

However, a few interviewees agreed with the above three statements but reflexively questioned whether they really could reach the stage; for example, a middle-aged female interviewee, a former nurse, frankly stated:

*I can imagine it; however, can I really reach it? I doubt myself.... I would have to have rich life experiences in advance in order to know if I could reach it. I cannot just superficially say, 'God, oh my Lord, I am God' ....It is...too superficial. (14/11/03, P16)*

Interviewees may also develop their own ‘theory’ about differentiating those terms that are regarded as having the same meaning in Heelas’s analysis. For example, one female interviewee who had been deeply involved in Buddhism as well as practising Tibetan Buddhism proposed her own interpretations and elaborated a hierarchical system about the higher Self, the Self and the One Consciousness,

*In my view, the Self is different from the higher Self. The Self is the system of multi-dimensional self, including various features, personalities, even animals, etc.... And, the higher Self is a group closely related to me... a soul group. The higher Self has many levels; and it is broader than dimensions... you will have to experience the Self first and then the higher Self if you would like to experience the One Consciousness. (11/12/03, P19)*

In his characterisation of New Age beliefs, Heelas gives some priority to



the belief that 'our lives do not work because we are conditioned by our ego/tradition' (1996, pp.18-19). However, most interviewees still refer back to the issue of self-responsibility regarding this statement. They do not blame it on the ego or on traditions; for example, a female interviewee said:

*The statement should be corrected as 'our lives do not work because we are conditioned by the interpretations that have been accepted by our ego' ...In fact, ego is very lovely (laughing)! It cannot influence you if you don't accept those interpretations. So, it is your interpretations but not tradition that limit you. (30/10/03, P13)*

Another female interviewee explicitly stated,

*It is nothing to do with your ego and tradition if your life does not work. Just like when a machine is out of order, you have to examine the reasons why it does not work; you cannot just blame it on the environment where it is settled and conclude that the problem is the bad Feng Shui of the environment! (laughs) (05/01/04, P25)*

From the above discussion we can see that my interviewees basically adopt ideas such as 'self-ethics', 'self responsibility', 'freedom' and 'perennialism' that characterise self-religion. However, they are not as 'anti-traditional' as suggested by Heelas's observations of the NAM in the West. This is because they had profound knowledge about traditions/religions, as well as deep involvement in them, before they encountered the New Age, which will be further discussed in relation to the next characteristic of their spirituality. In addition, the ego/self and authority (God) are not believed to be contradictory with each other and are not separated from each other but coexist, according to their point of view, which is actually influenced by the idea of holism. Although Heelas notes the idea of holism in the NAM, he does not explain it well in relation to connections with the self. But it can be

seen from my discussions and analysis that my interviewees view the ego and the Self as a whole as part of a process of self-transformation. Their elaborations, in fact, fill some of the gaps in Heelas's arguments. For those who participate in the NAM, such as my informants, the spirit of the movement is world-affirming but not world-rejecting; they interpret the connotation of spirituality according to their own life experiences. The way in which they live and experiment with New Age spiritualities is actually based on a 'positivist' approach in the sense that they believe in the existence of an overall theory of life, and they are committed to testing out practices that are expected to provide empirical evidence of the theory's validity. 'Experimentation' is an important aspect of many innovations in religion (Beckford, 1986, p. xv). This is why so many New Age activities are intended to produce practical, tangible improvements in the quality of consciousness and everyday life conditions.

### ***Spiritual but not Religious***

How do people who become involved in the NAM in Taiwan define this spiritual movement? They regard it more as a way of living and a spirituality of life than as a religion. When they talked about the differences between the NAM and their previous beliefs, their comments on and criticisms of religions concentrated on characteristics such as authoritarianism, dogmatism, exclusiveness and rigid formalisation. The following extracts from my interview materials are representative of the opinions expressed:

#### **Anti-authoritarianism**

According to Heelas's analysis, the NAM in the West is anti-traditional

and against authority. However, people who participate in the NAM in Taiwan do not think that it is necessary to be absolutely opposed to tradition, as I argued in the previous section. Nevertheless, there is no major difference between the West and Taiwan regarding anti-authoritarianism and the NAM. For example, a female interviewee who works as an energy healer as well as a channeler said:

*I did not get involved in religions very much; I feel that they (religions) overemphasize authority. ...I feel...what religions talk about is in fact very transcendental, so I do not really understand why it is so different when it comes to the interaction between followers and masters. This worried me a lot; I feel that I could not adjust myself to this situation.... for me, religions should allow people the freedom to communicate. And then, there was a bookstore (Buddhist Life) around here and the storekeeper recommended me some New Age books. (12/10/03, P3)*

A female business manager who had been involved in several contemporary Buddhist groups as well as in Catholicism expressed her opinions in a relaxed but strong tone:

*When I was a Buddhist, they...I felt like an obscurity, ...they made those huge gods/goddess figures, which made you feel that you are very humble. You are required to bow to monks or nuns when you meet them. It seems like you always bow your body when you are in the hall of the temple because you see monks and nuns everywhere, and you have to bow (laughing) for greetings! ...Even sometimes you are required to do the ritual of 'Sangui Jiukou' (三跪九叩)...And the same is for Catholicism; the Father in heaven is very majestic, and you are to chant the Lord's Prayer everyday... they (Buddhism and Catholicism) are all the same (laughing), you know what! And then I found that after I encountered the New Age I felt I was getting back to my dignity. Because I do not rely on others. I create all the*

*reality by myself; it's not given from others...and I am not in the situation where I can only accept what others offer me. At least I have choices. (28/12/03, P24)*

### Anti-formalisation

There are a few formal organisations in the NAM in Taiwan. However, these organisations are loose in terms of structures and management. Some organisations only exist as 'virtual' centres. In addition, the fact that the NAM is less formalised in terms of organisations is not only because they are newly established or restricted in funds. In fact, my interviews with the first generation of leaders in the NAM in Taiwan clearly showed that they are basically against formalisation.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in general interviewees are also critical of rigid formalisation when they compare religions and the NAM. For example:

*What the differences between New Age and religions are is that I would have to belong to some specific organisation if I would get involved in specific religion; then, I would have to follow the rule of the organisation, and only do things they prove to be good; and you would not be allowed to be converted to more than one religion. (30/10/03, P13)*

*They (religions) distort truths. Their interpretations distort truths. Truths are truths, it is just I feel that organized religions distort (truths) too much; it does not make you feel that the power is in your hands; and that the power is in your hands also means that you are responsible for yourself, but I cannot find this in organized religions. (24/11/03, P18)*

It is clear from the above extracts that interviewees strongly criticise the rigid formalisation of religions. They also value the idea of self-responsibility

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<sup>33</sup> I will analyse and discuss the organisations as well as the leadership of the NAM in Taiwan in Chapter 7.

highly in order to emphasise that power lies in the self but not in structures (organisations).

### Anti-exclusiveness

Interviewees also criticise the characteristic of exclusiveness in religions. The following quotation from a female interviewee shows that she is against religious exclusiveness because religions would not accept the New Age idea that ‘everyone is God’:

*The core tenet of the New Age — if it is a teaching — affirming that ‘everyone is God’ would be definitely accused by many religious people! And you will be immediately expelled! Well, they will directly put you in the arena, to know God (Lord): you heretic (laughing)! (05/01/04, P25)*

### Anti-dogmatism and ritualism

Interviewees in my research are also against dogmatism and ritualism in religions, according to their experiences. Their opinions reveal that they place a high value on ideas such as freedom and perennialism. For example, a male interviewee who is working as a hypnotherapist indicated that there are things in common between religions and the New Age. His opinion obviously reflects the idea of perennialism:

*Religions are not bad but good to human beings, it is just that old ideas or thoughts prevent them from making progress...in addition, there are rituals that are not necessary... there are commons between New Age and religions if they (religions) discard those unnecessary disciplines and rituals. Therefore, there is no need to criticize New Age from the perspectives of religions. Instead, New Age is more tolerant of religions, and religions could become much better if they would adopt the idea of New Age. (27/12/03, P23)*

A female interviewee shared her opinions with regard to her previous experiences in some Buddhist groups:

*Religions put much emphasis on appearances, and therefore ignore touching inner selves.... And one thing about the commandments in Buddhism that annoyed me is that ...if my memory is right, that commandments for monks are half less than nuns.*  
(28/12/03, P24)

One of the leaders in the NAM who introduced the idea of the New Age to Taiwan in the early stage also supported the idea of perennialism. She expressed the view that the task is to prevent problems such as religious dogmatism and formalisation while promoting the New Age:

*It is useless to change people from outside... because you cannot just constrain people and ask them to follow orders or dogmas...; enlightenment means that we are from God, our souls. This is not arrogance but love, it is an affirmation on humanity, an affirmation on souls. ... And I feel that the thing behind religions is New Age, that is, the spirituality. Religions are organisations and they cause maladies; we (New Age) are trying to avoid such maladies.*  
(08/01/04, P27)

The informants' attitudes towards dogmatism and ritualism are similar to Hanegraaff's observation about the NAM in the West that participants strongly reject dogmatism and exclusiveness in institutional religions because they cherish the values of religious freedom and individuality (Hanegraaff, 2001, pp.18-19). In addition, some participants are even more negative towards Christianity than towards other religions. This phenomenon reminds us that the holism of the NAM is contradictory to the main religious traditions of the West, that is, the dualism in Christian theology. For example, a male interviewee who once was a Christian before he got involved in the NAM said:

*I had attended the Christian worship and listened to them talking about God...; then, I was thinking: how come it (God) so easily get upset? A God who demands people to praise him? A God who is peevish, vainglorious? I could not accept it, and I could not get involved in it. (22/10/03, P8)*

A female interviewee who had been involved in Christian churches since she was a child, said:

*I attended church worship since I was a child, and I was educated at church school; I also worked as a nurse for a church hospital. Although I had not left the church, however, I could not find anything from it. I knew that religions are the power that people are finally seeking for, but I could not believe that even I myself could not get that kind of power even though the earliest religion I encountered was the church. I even saw darkness there; I didn't believe it at all. (14/11/03, P16)*

Another female interviewee who is currently 48 is from a Christian family. She had participated in Christian churches since childhood until high school. She encountered the New Age two years ago and has been practising ACIL since then. She said:

*I grew up in a Christian family and was baptized as a Christian ...but one thing I did not like about Christianity is that it excludes other religions...I wanted to search for my own path, so I left the Church. ... Gradually, I thought about what the role of God is? ... I was told that every religion comes from one Source and I believe that. All religions teach people to be a good person but are different in terms of interpretation. As for the New Age, I think it is more open. (16/07/04, P36)*

The above extracts from my interview materials show that New Age can more or less be regarded as an instance of the 'spiritual but not religious' phenomena among traditional and organised religions in Taiwan. The phrase

‘spiritual but not religious’ was proposed by Robert Fuller (2001) while exploring the historical background of what he termed ‘unchurched religion’ or ‘unchurched spirituality’ in the US, in which the New Age is included. Fuller indicates that a large number of contemporary Americans identify themselves as ‘spiritual but not religious’, where spirituality is ‘associated with higher levels of interest in mysticism, experimentation with unorthodox beliefs and practices, and negative feelings toward both clergy and churches’ (p.6). Spirituality in this regard is viewed as a journey closely connected with a quest for personal growth and development. People involved in the NAM in Taiwan advocate this new spirituality and regard it as a path to truth, to enlightenment, to self-empowerment; New Age teaches them to be their own master. In a way, their attitudes towards Christian churches are similar to those of Americans who can be identified as ‘spiritual but not religious’.

However, it is notable that, although many interviewees criticise religions in terms of dogmas, rituals and organisations, some of them are neutral towards religions. Although these people do not believe or become involved in religions anymore, they respect the existence of religions as well as others’ beliefs. They are notably positive towards Taiwanese religions/traditions, especially Buddhism, popular religions and some new religions. Therefore, although as Hanegraff suggested, the NAM is an expression of western culture, and of criticism of the very same culture; most participants in the NAM in Taiwan do not completely reject religions. Instead, they simply focus on the New Age, which is a little different from the observation of Americans by Fuller in terms of being ‘spiritual but not religious’. It also reflects the fact that participants in the NAM in Taiwan still



maintain a kind of 'ambiguous' connection with 'tradition'.

### ***Transformational but not Salvational***

Another characteristic of the spirituality of the NAM in Taiwan is that it is 'transformational but not salvational' (see Shimazono 1999, 2004). It encourages people to deal with problems in their daily lives by the power of the 'self'; it teaches people to go within instead of without in order to find the power; and it encourages them to transform themselves. For example, a female interviewee said:

*New Age is not a religion, and I feel that its distinctiveness is that it lets me know who I am; I myself am the centre of the power.*  
(27/09/03, P1)

New Age emphasises the statement, 'to be your own master'; and the power of transformation is said to be the self. Learning this is the first step to transformation for participants. A female interviewee who had had strong involvement in Buddhist meditation, who had often visited Buddhist temples before she encountered the New Age, compared the New Age to her experiences in Buddhism,

*New Age made me feel powerful; it helped me gain my own power. In the past I had been taught by Buddhism to accept the status quo, and it seemed that many situations were helpless, you just had to accept it... But New Age tells you that you can change your past as well as the future from the moment. You have the power to do it. And soon I felt such a power.* (02/02/04, P30)

For participants, the very difference between the New Age and religions is that the former encourages them to change any situation they are not satisfied with, but the latter teaches them to compromise with the status quo. New Age people believe that they are the creators of their own destiny; it is not

a transcendental power outside themselves which controls their life. As one of my informants put it:

*New Age says that 'you create your own reality' is that you bring back the power to yourself. You are not the victim, you are the creator of your destiny, and you create your own life. (19/02/04, P34)*

For participants, what they search for is a spirituality that is practical and can guide them in their daily life. In this respect, my findings confirm Peter Clarke's (2006, p.34) claim that 'The New Age focuses on improving the quality of life, on caring, on improving the environment and on personal health'. The desirable goal for New Agers is more world-affirming than otherworldly spiritual enlightenment. In other words, New Age for them is a useful practical 'guidebook' for life. These statements, which are about the values and goals of New Age activists, carry no implications, however, for the actual outcomes of New Age practices in practitioners' lives. Indeed, Steve Bruce (1998) is highly sceptical about the claims that are frequently made about the New Age's capacity to transform lives in measurable ways.

In addition, the New Age can be categorised as 'religious individuality' in Ting's analysis, as I have explained earlier in this chapter. However, the difference between the NAM and other traditional and new religions in Taiwan is that the idea of salvation does not exist in New Age spiritualities; and this distinguishes the NAM from other religious groups in the category of 'religious individuality'. According to the Japanese scholar Shimazono (1999; 2004), there are two characteristics in Salvation religions that are not found in the 'New Age Movement',<sup>34</sup> including 'an acute awareness of human suffering'

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<sup>34</sup> Shimazono proposes the term 'New Spirituality Movements and Culture' to replace 'New

and the ‘concept of personified agents such as gods and the sacred Other’ (2004, p.301). Shimazono argues that, by contrast, the most important concern to New Age people is not ‘salvation’ but ‘self-transformation’ and a ‘transformation of civilization’ (pp.301-302).

In this regard, the observations of Shimazono are helpful when examining the differences between the NAM and other religions. However, it is also interesting that the idea of salvation is related to ideas of ‘sin’, and this is again different from New Age spiritualities. People who participate in the NAM support the core idea that, ‘you create your own reality.’ In other words, life is nothing to do with sin but with the way in which you ‘see’ it and ‘create’ it. Just as the following extract shows, one of the pioneers in the NAM in Taiwan said:

*What on earth is humanity? Basically...does evil really exist? Is it unavoidable? Or is it just a mistake of our cognition which resulted in such a consequence? ...Religions would say that it is your original Sin. I admit that everyone has their problems; like myself, I have many problems too. But the point is that we all have problems and we are not perfect; this is not sin. Instead, it probably could be that...you hope that you are happy, so, you hope to resolve these problems; it is a motivation to changing and to improving yourself but not a condemnation. (08/01/04, P27)*

With regard to the experiences of self-transformation for New Age people, my interview materials reveal that reflexivity of the self plays an important part in the process. It helps participants to cultivate the faculty of awareness and thus gain an insight into the past, present, and the future. This kind of self-reflexivity helps them focus within to find their true self, which is

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Age Movement’ in his analysis of the phenomena in Japan: my discussion of his analysis is in Chapter 2, Section 6, pp.46-49.

based on self-identification. They reflexively ask themselves questions about the self, which are all about issues of existence such as ‘Who am I? Where am I going? What do I want for my life?’ In addition, they believe that they can ‘improve’ their lives in terms of spiritual transformation by changing especially the state of their body and emotions, which is interpreted as a state of being healed. In this regard, observations by Anthony Giddens in his analysis of healing phenomena in late modernity are helpful in throwing light on the NAM, and I will discuss them in Chapter 6.

The last point I would like to emphasise is that, although people might also experience self-transformation while participating in some religious groups, it is still different from self-transformation in the NAM. Self-transformation in the NAM emphasises ‘the power of the self’ instead of ‘salvation or empowerment from a transcendental God’. Therefore, the characteristic ‘transformation but not salvation’ in the NAM in Taiwan still supports a spirituality of the self. However, the analysis of the process of self-transformation in terms of emotions and healing is largely missing from Heelas’s theory of ‘Self-Religion’, as I indicated in Chapter 3. Therefore, the issue of self-transformation in terms of emotions will be examined in the next chapter in order to integrate this important dimension of late modernity into the study of NAM.

## Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the range of the NAM in Taiwan, including the history of the movement, the social and previous religious background of participants and the characteristics of New Age spiritualities. Several

conclusions have been drawn from my discussion and analysis.

First, the translations of New Age books played an important part in the early stages of the NAM in Taiwan in the 1980s. Several small groups were formed and organised at that time; most of them were study groups. In the middle of the 1990s, more and more centres and organisations were established, including virtual and physical organisations. In addition, those people who were regarded as pioneers in introducing and promoting the idea of New Age tended to focus on the issue of healing and related practices, which has subsequently become the mainstream of the movement in Taiwan. The phenomenon also corresponds to the characteristics of the NAM in the West in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Second, with regard to participants, the majority of the informants in my research fall into the age group between 30 and 49. Females (65%) are more numerous than males (35%). Most of them are well-educated people, and work in the field of business and professions such as employers, senior managers, medical practitioners, teachers and writers. As for their previous religious background, the interview materials reveal that they are open to various religions. Over one in four of the interviewees were Buddhists and had participated in more than one Buddhist group before they joined the NAM; these Buddhist groups include the Pure Land, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and modern Buddhist groups such as the Ciji Gongdehui, the Fagushan and the Lingjioushan. In addition, another quarter of the interviewees had participated in more than one religion, including Buddhism, Christianity, Taoism, folk religion, and new religions. The diverse backgrounds of participants in my research also reflect the religious diversity

of Taiwan.

In third place, there are several conclusions in terms of the characteristics of the spiritualities of the NAM in Taiwan. With respect to the five characteristic of 'Self-religion' identified by Paul Heelas, for example, I found that most of my interviewees acknowledged the values of self-ethics, self-responsibility, freedom and perennialism. Most interviewees felt that they had the power to change or create their own reality, and that the source of the guidance was within the self, which is based on the values of self-responsibility and self-ethic. They also emphasised the importance of cleansing, believing that the way to cleanse the self, separating inner intuition from the ego, was to participate in New Age practices. However, most interviewees were not really against tradition, which is different from the situation in the West. In addition, the idea of holism was apparent in their explanations when making comparisons between the self/ ego and authority (God). In their view, neither contradicts the other; they simply co-exist. Heelas did not elaborate the connection between the self/ego and the authentic Self (God) in his theory; but my research has indicated that the connection between the self/ego and the Self is a process rather than a relationship of opposition. The interviewees in my research constructed their own 'self-religion' according to a positivist approach; that is to say, they adopted those elements of 'self-religion' that could be applied to their life but they also revised a few points that were incompatible with their life experiences.

Finally, participants in the NAM in Taiwan regarded the movement as a way of life instead of a religion. They were spiritual but not religious, which is evident in their hostile attitudes towards religious authoritarianism,

formalisation, exclusiveness, dogmatism and ritualism. However, although most of them did not participate in religions after they had become involved in the NAM; they still respected the existence of religions and others' choices. It is especially noticeable that they were positive towards Taiwanese religions and tradition to some degree. Another characteristic of the spirituality of the movement is that it is 'transformational but not salvational'. In this regard, New Agers emphasised the experiences of self-transformation, which were not regarded as salvation or empowerment through a transcendental force. The idea of original Sin or pure Karma was also absent. Self-transformation was regarded as a process of self-reflexivity effected by self-awareness in the process of New Age practices, where the self reconstructs its self-identity, including the past, the present and the future.

In short, the NAM in Taiwan comprises a range of values, beliefs, practices, forms of organisation and practitioners that is no less wide than the range of New Age phenomena in the West. Indeed, there are many similarities between Taiwanese and Western forms of the New Age. Nevertheless, the relatively distinctive features of the NAM in Taiwan are its partial compatibility and continuity with traditional forms of spirituality and religions, its positivistic approach to life, and its emphasis on transformation of self and society.

## Chapter 5

# **Transformation I: Self, Emotions and Feeling Rules in New Age Practices**

### Introduction

This chapter looks at the issue of emotions pertaining to self-transformation in two New Age courses in which I participated for the purpose of observation: *A Course in Light (ACIL)* and the *Divine Will (DW)*. I also use interview material to illustrate the connection between self-transformation and New Age practices. The chapter begins with a section about inserting the issue of emotions into one of the important theories relating to the NAM: ‘Self-religion’ by Paul Heelas. I will also introduce two New Age courses for analysis in the following sections. Next I will look at reflexivity and emotions. The reflexivity of the self is the first step for participants to understand what they experience from New Age practices. In this section I will examine the way in which reflexivity of the self identifies emotions (emotional identification), the way in which participants express their feelings (emotional display) and the way in which they experience emotions (emotional experiences). Then, I will consider the importance of social interaction in shaping emotions, that is, ‘feeling rules’ in New Age practices. I will describe how participants transform their emotions according to a set of feeling rules, which is based on the spirituality that supports the practice. What kind of emotions are constructed, encouraged and provoked in New Age practices will be outlined as well. With its focus on the role of emotions in the experiences of



self-transformation for participants in New Age practices, the purpose of this chapter is to answer my research questions regarding emotions and embodiment, by locating the role of emotions in the embodied experiences of self-transformation for participants in New Age practices. These questions are: How do participants deal with the issue of emotions in New Age practices? Are there feeling rules in New Age practices? If so, how do New Agers express the feeling rules? What are the relationships between the self, emotions and healing in New Age practices?

## 5.1 New Age Practices in ‘Self-Religion’

### 5.1.1 Bringing Emotions Back to ‘Self-Religion’

Paul Heelas’s analysis of the NAM as a self-religion provides a broad picture of the movement but no elaboration on the topic of transformation, as I argued in Chapter 3. Heelas notes the importance of healing in the NAM, which is related to transformation, and suggests that the ‘Self has a key role in healing the self’ (Heelas, 1996, p. 82). However, one of the most important aspects of healing, that is, the issue of emotions, is not really given adequate attention in Heelas’s theory. Heelas implies that ‘embodied emotional experiences’ are the ‘effect’ of New Age activities when he says that ‘it is undoubtedly the case that participation in New Age activities often results in physiological arousal, heightened emotionality, unusual sensations, and out-of-the-ordinary bodily experiences’ (p.191). He indicates that emotions are socially constructed (p.191) but only refers to psychologically empirical

research.<sup>35</sup> He suggests that the psychological process of emotions — the cognitive construction — or drug use (in some cases) plays a mediating role in New Age activities, especially spiritual experiences, but his argument does not tell us how emotions could be socially constructed (pp.191-192).

Nevertheless, I would like to contend that emotions play an important part in experiences of self-transformation. Therefore, the issue of emotions should be brought back to the ‘centre’ of self-religion when examining New Age practices. I agree with Heelas that the cognitive construction of emotions acts as an intervening agent, as we will see from the case of ACIL in a later section of the chapter, in which the reflexivity of the self helps participants change their emotions. But I will also go further, to analyse in terms of sociological perspectives the way in which emotions can be constructed according to a set of feeling rules in New Age courses such as DW.

I outlined in Chapter 2 the way in which social constructionists approach the issue of emotions. In terms of theory, there are several approaches to emotions in sociology. For example, Turner and Stets (2005) review existing sociological theories of emotions and identify seven categories, which are (1) dramaturgical and cultural theories, (2) ritual theories, (3) symbolic interactionist theories, (4) symbolic interactionist theories incorporating psychoanalytic ideas, (5) exchange theories, (6) structural theories, and (7) evolutionary theories (Turner and Stets, 2005, pp.23-25). My analysis of emotions and embodiment in this chapter will refer to dramaturgical and cultural theories.

According to Turner and Stets (2005), dramaturgical and cultural

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<sup>35</sup> Heelas refers to the article by Proudfoot and Shaver (1975).

approaches to emotions emphasise ‘the importance of culture as providing a script, the presentation of the self on a stage in front of others who constitute an audience, and the use of props and other staging devices to achieve not only dramatic goals, but also strategic ends’ (pp. 26-27). Interactions between actors are guided by a ‘script’ written by culture, in which the actors are aware of the ‘norms, values, beliefs, and other symbolic elements that direct how they are to talk, act, and otherwise play their roles’ (p.26) in a specific situation.

In addition, actors not only play roles and interpret the script, but also engage in strategic behaviour as they manage their presentations of self. Erving Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1981, 1983) is the founder of this approach and one of the pioneers of dramaturgical theory. The other theorists who belong to dramaturgical and cultural approaches to emotions include scholars such as Candace Clark (1987, 1990, 1997), Steven Gordon (1981, 1989, 1990) Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983[2003], 1998), Morris Rosenberg (1979, 1990, 1991) and Peggy Thoits (1985, 1989, 1990). They all have their own theoretical explanation of emotions, by focusing on different aspects in terms of dramaturgy and culture (Turner and Stets, pp. 26-68). In this chapter, when examining New Age practices I will focus on Hochschild’s ideas of emotion work, and Rosenberg’s reflexive theory of emotions.

### 5.1.2 New Age Practices and Transformations

Most of my informants shared their transformational experiences in their life with me during interviews, and attributed them to New Age practices. Although the forms of practices of the NAM in Taiwan include education (study groups) and healing (such as therapeutic workshops, meditation groups), the idea of transformation remains important to both of them. The following

extract is from an interview with a female interviewee who is a *Reiki* practitioner as well as a teacher of ACIL; she had practiced *Osho* meditation as well as joining study groups for *Seth*. She commented on the meanings of these practices to her:

*In fact, transformation in these four aspects (the body, emotions, mentality and spirit) happened at the same time. However, most times the aspect of spirit is less visible; what you can really feel is your body and emotions; even your mind is second to your body and emotions. I became aware of my emotions and the state of my body by practising Osho meditation. You also can be aware of your emotions and the body through Reiki. Then, ACIL enables you to see the way in which the mind interacts with the spirit. As for Seth, it helped my mind form a conceptual framework of life. (05/01/04, P25)*

In addition, although most participants regard the transformation that they have experienced as involving several aspects, including body, emotions, mind and spirit, what they can say about their experiences in this regard focuses more on how they feel about the body and emotions. The following extract is one of the examples from my interview materials: a female business employer stated that her feeling of dislike for authority had caused her a headache:

*Let me tell you this... one day I was going to meet a person in a hospital, but I didn't really like to meet him, you know...and soon ...it influenced my head; then I had a headache; it is true. ...He is an authority, and I hate authority so much. He can dominate many things and I cannot help but feel a headache in advance. So, I know the reason why I felt a headache. I would look at my headache and find the cause. (16/02/04, P33)*

Just as in the above extract, many of my interviewees feel that their

physical illnesses are caused by emotional problems. In this regard, McGuire also indicated that there were connections between specific emotional problems and physical diseases for the interviewees in her research (McGuire, 1991, p.50). In one of my interviews, a woman explained the connection between her liver disease and her emotional problems:

*When I first started to join the (Seth) course, I was not feeling very well; I thought it was because of my work...I often worked overnight...one day I consulted Doctor Hsu,<sup>36</sup> I told him about my liver disease. He explained that there is a connection between liver disease and specific personality, and it makes a lot of sense to me... Normally people have problems with the liver because the flow of emotions is blocked, they repress their emotions a lot, and their self-expectations are very high. It made a lot of sense to me; in fact, the problem with my liver got worse when I broke up with that guy...and I chose to close my emotions... the past two years I haven't worried much about my liver because I felt that I have been dealing with my emotions, I have been changing my lifestyle...make sure my emotions flow well. (09/01/04, P28)*

Another female interviewee who is a healing practitioner explicitly expressed her opinions about the connection between her emotions and the body:

*I found that my emotions have much to do with my body energy. The stability of my emotions...is closely related to my body energy, which includes the physical functions and the 'Qi-Xie' (氣血) circles; that is to say, I had emotional problems because my body was not well. (12/10/03, P3)*

On the other hand, a few interviewees with chronic illnesses explained the way their bodily malfunctions influenced their emotions, and how it has all

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<sup>36</sup> Doctor Hsu has been the president of the *Chinese New Age Society* since 2004. He has been promoting the idea of Seth in the NAM in Taiwan for more than ten years.

been improved by practising New Age practices. For example, a retired schoolteacher said:

*The biggest change for me after practising the Course in Light was to live a regular life and learn not to be too hurried; and I would do exercises to take care of my body because of my heart disease. In addition, the problem with my stomach has been improved; I got the stomach problem because I was always too hurried and impatient; also, I was too gloomy and anxious. But I have changed a lot in this regard...I would be more appreciative and grateful; I would still be grateful even when I am feeling frustrated. (23/10/03, P10)*

In short, the interview material shows that the experience of self-transformation is closely connected to New Age practices. Therefore, in order to observe the way in which New Age practices proceed and the way in which people interact with each other during sessions, I participated in the following two courses: *A Course in Light (ACIL)* and the *Divine Will (DW)*. Brief introductions to the two courses follow, but specific sessions of the two courses will be described in detail for analysis in later sections.

### ***Divine Will***

*Divine Will* (DW) is a spiritual course about ‘self-transformation’ with the aid of ‘higher sources’. Sanaya Roman, an American who has been receiving messages for over twenty years<sup>37</sup> from Orin, a being of light,<sup>38</sup> has channelled the material.<sup>39</sup> DW is described as one of the ‘powerful energies...from higher dimensions of light, from the Central Spiritual Sun,

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<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.orindaben.com/home/aboutsr.htm>

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.orindaben.com/dw/dwillsanayainfo.htm>

<sup>39</sup> There is no information about when Sanaya Roman started to channel the message of Divine Will on either the official website of Divine Will or in the published handbook. However, it shows in the handbook that the copyright of the transcript is 2001. The messages, therefore, must have been received before 2001.

from the stars, and from within the earth itself'.<sup>40</sup> DW includes seven qualities and is expressed through the constellation of the Great Bear. It is reported that its stars are 'the "bodies" of seven Great Ones who are transmitting messages about Divine Will to humanity that is coming from even higher sources.'<sup>41</sup> The seven qualities of DW are: Will to initiate, Will to unify, Will to evolve, Will to harmonise, Will to act, and Will to express.<sup>42</sup> The course is composed of two parts in terms of practices: Part I is entitled 'Transforming with Divine Will' and Part II 'Living a Soul Life with Divine Will'. There are 12 sessions in each part; Part I can be regarded as the basic level and Part II the advanced level. It is a course that combines study with meditation, with the aid of published handbooks and Tapes/CDs.<sup>43</sup> The goal of the course, according to the introduction on the official website of DW, is to 'transform various areas of your life so you can become a soul-infused personality and live a soul life'.<sup>44</sup>



**Figure 5.1** The group was studying a book entitled, *Healing Yourself with Light*, before they moved on to practise DW II. (17/10/03)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.orindaben.com/dw/dwillorininfo.htm#introdw>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.orindaben.com/dw/willgeneral.htm>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.orindaben.com/dw/willgeneral.htm>

<sup>43</sup> There is no Chinese version of the tapes/CDs for the DW. Participants in Taiwan use the original English version. However, the teacher of the group offers participants the unpublished Chinese translation script to help them understand the original text.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.orindaben.com/db/dbstore/description.php?prodno=mm050>

The group practising DW in Taiwan, in which I participated, is a study group (see Figures 5.1), which is open to people who are interested in New Age books and practices. The host of the group is a licensed Chinese medicine doctor, who has taught courses about Orin and Daben, such as *Divine Will* and *Awakening Your Light Body*, in New Age circles in Taiwan for three years. The group was studying and practising DW Part II between November 2003 and February 2004. The group meeting is held once a week. It takes about two and a half hours for one session. A group meeting includes studying the text of DW Part II, practising meditation and sharing experiences, thinking and feeling with each other during sessions.

### ***A Course in Light***

A Course in Light' (ACIL) is a spiritual practice in which people meditate by means of visualising twelve colours of light energy relating to five subtle bodies and twelve energy centres (see Figures 5.2).<sup>45</sup> It aims to cleanse and purify different 'subtle bodies' in order to achieve transformation. According to ACIL, the physical body consists of five 'subtle bodies' (see Figures 5.3), which are the emotional body, the mental body, the perceptual body, the astral/etheric body and the soul body (Moltzan, 2001[1973], pp.5-7).

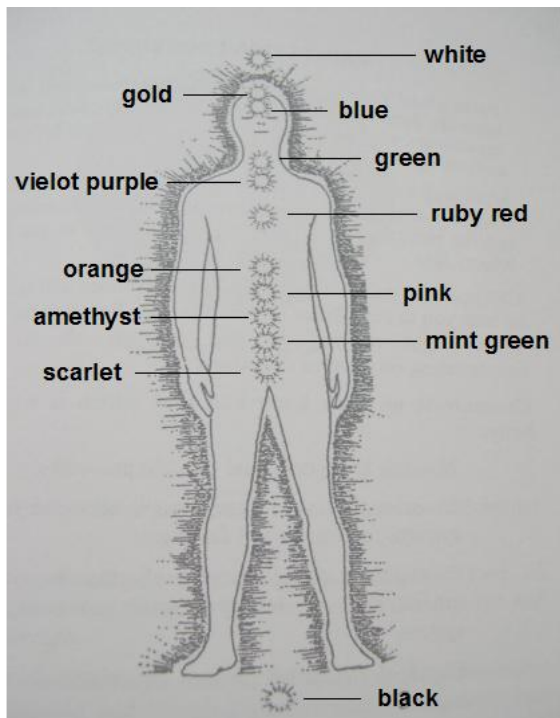
The material is channeled by Antoinette Moltzan (Toni), an American from Texas, who has been receiving messages from 'light beings' since 1971 (please refer to the section 'A Course in Light Information Centre' [pp.214-217] in Chapter 7 for a brief history of the group). Participants practise light

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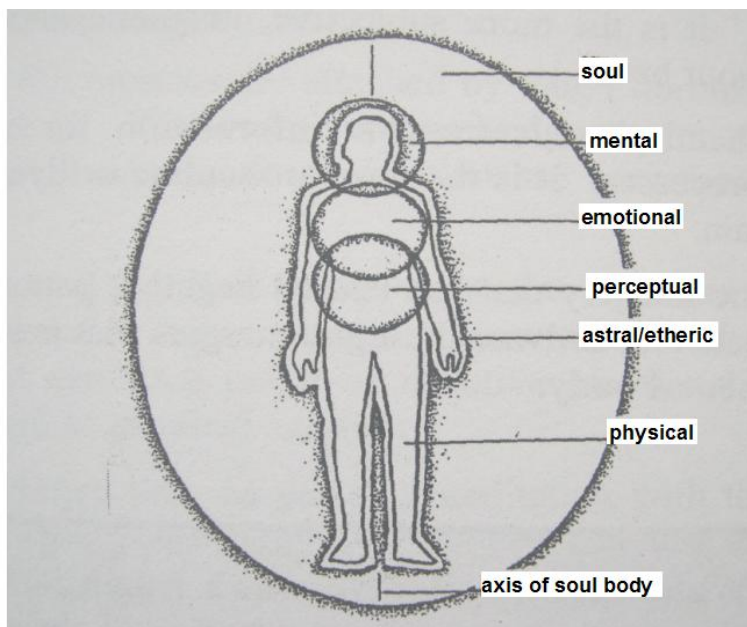
<sup>45</sup> According to ACIL, the twelve energy centres are connected to subtle bodies together with twelve colours of light energy, including 1) white - six inches above the head in the soul body; 2) gold - crown chakra; 3) blue - brow chakra; 4) emerald green - upper part of the throat; 5) violet purple - lower throat; 6) ruby red - heart chakra; 7) orange - solar plexus; 8) pink - navel chakra; 9) amethyst - lower abdominal area; 10) mint green - centre of the pelvis; 11) scarlet - root chakra; 12) black - six inches below the bottom of the feet.



meditation with the aid of the book of ACIL together with a CD.(see Figure 5.4)



**Figure 5.2** 12 energy centres



**Figure 5.3** Light energy bodies (Moltzan, 2001[1973], p.7)

ACIL is a series of lessons comprising 16 levels. The first four levels are regarded as basic lessons and take at least one year to learn, each level

taking three months for participants to complete. The advanced series includes nine levels called the ‘Planetary lessons’; the last ‘Angelic’ series comprises three levels.

Regular participants practise light meditation by listening to the CD for instruction every day at any time of their choice, and by attending a group session once a week. The CD of the Chinese version of light meditation, for the first four levels, is about 38 minutes in length.<sup>46</sup> It is produced and recorded by Vicki Yang, the translator of the book, and the person who introduced ACIL to Taiwan. People can learn the procedure of light meditation recorded on the CD through self-study. The procedure for a normal group practice contains three parts: sharing, studying and meditation (See Figure 5.5). I participated in one of ACIL groups from November to December 2003 and then from July to 5<sup>th</sup> August 2004. There are usually about 8-12 people in the group meeting in which I participated; it is held weekly for two to three hours.



<sup>46</sup> This is different from ACIL in English, in which each lesson is accompanied by a CD; therefore, there are 24 CDs for the first four levels of ACIL in English.

*Figure 5.4 The Material of ACIL: books and CDs*



*Figure 5.5 The group was studying Lesson 11, Mint Green, Planetary Level 1. (28/07/04)*



*Figure 5.6 Group members were sharing their thoughts about the lesson for the previous week. Lesson 12 Scarlet, Planetary Level 1 (04/08/04)*

During the group meeting, participants talk about the thoughts, feelings and events that happened to them in relation to the lesson for the previous week (see Figure 5.6). After that, they read the text that is assigned as a new lesson for the current week. Then there are discussions and instructions by the teacher. Finally, they practise light meditation by following the teacher's guidance (see Figures 5.7).



**Figure 5.7** *The group was practising meditation. Lesson 11 Mint Green, Planetary Level 1 (28/07/04)*

According to my interview material, these two courses generate the same experiences of self-transformation as those which can also be seen in most spiritual practices in the NAM. Firstly, New Age practices teach participants to be self-reflexive in their daily life. Secondly, participants learn the appropriate way of expressing their emotions freely and positively. Thirdly, energy flows play an important part for participants when transforming their emotions. I will discuss the connection between reflexivity and emotions in the next section.

## 5.2 Reflexivity and Emotions

In Chapter 2 I outlined the theoretical ideas of reflexive modernisation, as developed by Anthony Giddens, which reveal the importance of the reflexivity of the self in late modern society, because the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self (Giddens, 1991, p.32). In addition, the reflexive project of the self involves ‘the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives’ (p.244). However,

Giddens does not really pay adequate attention to the issue of emotions as well as to the connection between reflexivity and emotions. Therefore, Morris Rosenberg — whose reflexive theory of emotions can be categorised among the ‘dramaturgical and cultural approaches’, as I mentioned in the previous section — offers his explanations of reflexivity and emotions, which will be helpful when examining the way people participating in New Age practices transform their emotions into specific feelings by means of the reflexivity of the self. According to Rosenberg (1990), reflexivity, as the process of an entity acting back upon itself (p.3), acts as a mediator in transforming the physiological basis of emotions into feelings, in which social meanings are embedded. The experience of self-transformation is a process of emotional identification, emotional display and emotional experiences. More of his explanations for the process will be examined below when I study the following session of ACIL as a case to illustrate the process.

### 5.2.1 The Emotional Conflict in the ACIL Group Meeting

ACIL is a spiritual practice which strongly focuses on the reflexivity of the self. Participants usually share their feelings and thoughts with other people, either in weekly group practice or by electronic communication. Normally participants regard emotional talk or emotional reactions as a process of cleansing, which is based on their emotional experiences in daily life. However, during the period of my participation, an emotional conflict between two members occurred in one of the sessions. From the analysis below, we will see how one member reflected on the event of emotional conflict, how she became aware of her emotional reactions and the way in which she identified

and expressed her emotions.

This conflict occurred in the eighth lesson of the Planetary Level 1 of ACIL. The theme of the session was the light energy of the colour orange. At the beginning, the session proceeded as usual: group members shared their feelings and thoughts with each other; then, the group teacher guided members to study the theme of the current week. At that time, the group teacher was reminding members that they might encounter criticism in this coming week, which might be criticising others or self-criticising. A few minutes later, member *B* suddenly stood up and wanted to change her seat from being next to member *A*. Member *B* felt that she was becoming dizzy after member *A* had joined this session. The group teacher and another member, *C*, explained that it was because member *A* had not been very well recently. Then, the teacher encouraged member *A* to share with group members the challenge she had encountered recently. Quite unexpectedly, member *A* directed an emotional outburst towards member *B* in the middle of the study stage. Member *B* had also reacted aggressively and angrily to member *A*. It was obvious that member *A* was uncomfortable and upset. She expressed the view that everyone seemed to blame her for passing negative energy to member *B*; at the same time, member *B* had had an emotional and angry reaction towards member *A*, with verbal insults and an aggressive attitude. The atmosphere was uncomfortably chilly, and everyone went into silence for a while. Then, the group teacher continued to explain the way in which the energy field works through our life and her own experiences in this regard.

The next day, all participants in the group (me included) received the following email from member *A* (translated into English):

*From: A*

*Subject: Thanks to B ~~~*

*Date: Friday, July 09, 2004 1:54 AM*

*Hi B,*

*It's A. I am sorry to bother you with this email. I would like to tell you that I am very grateful for your contribution to me last night; you helped me evoke my feelings that have been repressed, that is, feelings of being misunderstood and of being rejected. Thus, I was encouraged and motivated to freely express such feelings that had been deeply buried in my heart.*

*Although I was very annoyed at that time (in the group meeting), when I stepped out of the classroom, leaving the aura there, I knew immediately that I was in the process of 'Fa' (發; cleansing).*

*Therefore, thank you!*

*I would like to tell all my classmates: do not be afraid, the process of cleansing in light meditation is just as our teacher said, it is just like the process of peeling an onion; the point is to be aware of ourselves. Thanks to my classmates and thanks more to B. Thank you!*

*A 2004/7/08*

### 5.2.2 Emotional Identification, Displays and Experiences

In the email, member *A* reflected on how she felt about the event, how she was aware of her emotional reaction; and she interpreted the meaning of the emotional conflict. At this point it is helpful to refer to Rosenberg's explanations of the process in which emotions are possibly transformed by means of the reflexivity of the self into a state that is completely different from being a merely physiological experience:

*The internal features that constitute the foundation of the emotions are physiological or bodily sensations. ...Reflexivity is exemplified by taking these experiences as objects of one's own reflection or control.*

*Once the internal state of arousal comes to be 'worked over' by these reflexive processes, they acquire a totally different character. The emotion comes to be mixed with elements that are separate from the physiological experience (Rosenberg, 1990, pp.3-4)*

Rosenberg's central argument is that reflexivity changes the physiological nature of human emotions. Through the reflexive process, a person's emotions are transformed into something different. Rosenberg proposes three ways in which the reflexive process transforms emotions: (1) emotional identification, (2) emotional displays, and (3) emotional experiences (Rosenberg, 1990, pp4-11; Turner and Stets, 2005, pp. 46-49). Emotional identification is a product of cognitive reflexivity; it happens when an internal state of arousal is ambiguous. On the other hand, when reflexivity operates at the level of action and through the interpersonal process for expressing or hiding certain emotions, it is termed 'emotional display'. Finally, emotional experiences involve two ways of altering feelings: cognitive work and bodily work. The former is to control our thoughts in order to manage our emotions; it is mental self-manipulation. The latter is to act on our body to control our emotions. (Rosenberg, 1991, pp.7-11)

In the case of the incident at ACIL, the three ways of transforming emotions do rely on the reflexivity of the self, which is a kind of emotional awareness. It is not possible to begin transformation of emotions until the self is aware of its emotions and makes identification according to the emotional experiences. In the process of reflexivity of the self, member A became aware of her emotions, and then she identified her emotional outburst (emotional experiences) as a process of cleansing, which can be regarded as emotional identification. In addition, such changes only remain at an inner level that is



invisible until feelings are expressed (emotional displays), as we saw from the email by member A.

### 5.2.3 Emotion Work

In addition to the reflexivity of the self on emotions, my observation of the session of ACIL showed that the teacher and other participants neither tried to stop verbal conflict between participants nor managed to calm their emotions. It appears that group members tried to ignore what was happening in the group meeting; the session was continued as usual, and participants kept on sharing thoughts with each other. In this case, ‘emotion work’ for other participants, to use Hochschild’s (1979) phrase, was to act and to pretend that nothing special or unpleasant was happening; it is a form of acting as if out of ‘ignorance’. However, such ‘emotion work’ is performed in order to encourage members *A* and *B* in the group meeting to feel free to express and display what they were feeling, instead of repressing their emotions. Emotional conflict between members was accepted, and positive meaning was given to it. This embodies the point of view about emotions shared by most New Age people I interviewed, that it is not necessary to repress, reject or lacerate our negative emotions such as anger, loneliness, grief, hate, emptiness. Although these emotions make us suffer, this is temporary. The following quotation is from an interviewee who reflected on her emotional experiences as follows:

*The kind of emotion that most scared me was anger. I felt that a good person would not show anger; we should be nice to people. But when I had learned to accept my emotions and to look at my anger, I found that very often the reason hiding behind my anger is a state of imbalance. For example, this pattern might be learned from*

*our parents. They might hope that you could live up to their expectations, and they would be upset if you disappointed them. Therefore, we would repress our anger, right? Then this repression resulted in a sense of meaninglessness, because I lost energy... But when I learned that this is a part of me, I accepted it and looked at the way my parents had treated me, I got the sense of it and finally forgave them. (11/02/04, P32)*

For New Agers, each kind of feeling has its own messages and meanings that are waiting for them to listen to and to deal with. Each kind of feeling is regarded as natural, which is neither good nor bad: it is our attitude of acceptance or rejection that defines the specific emotion as positive or negative. In the case of ACIL, participants learn how to bring consciousness to their emotions and to freely express feelings. They believe that the flow of emotions is a process of cleansing in light meditation. Just as the text of ACIL states, when ‘...all of the emotional reactions to life, all the feelings that have been harbored and contained...are exposed to the light, there is a tremendous clearing that becomes apparent as you witness your emotional reactions becoming much stronger’ (Moltzan, 2001[1973], p.103), and ‘through your conscious effort in meditation you will feel the results of release and clearing’ (Moltzan, 2001[1973], p.105). As we will see in the next section, this process also involves learning the rules pertaining to the identification and expression of emotions.

## 5.3 Feeling Rules and Emotions

### 5.3.1 The Session in Divine Will: ‘Transforming Your Emotions’

We saw in the previous section that people experience changes of

emotions by exercising the reflexivity of the self, and this involves emotional identification, emotional displays and emotional experiences. However, we can further explore the phenomena relating to the way in which people learn to experience the changes of emotions in New Age practices. A practice is a process of interaction among participants, which includes the interaction with oneself and with others. It is in the process of interaction that the feeling rules manifest themselves. It also occurs in the process during which people become familiar with the feeling rules that reflect the emotion ideology of the practice, which in turn help people learn the way to transform their emotions. In this section I will take another case as an example, which concerns a session in the New Age practice called *Divine Will* (DW). We will see that participants learned from this session about a set of feeling rules: they are rules about the way in which people transform emotions and express feelings. It is the fourth theme in Part II of DW, entitled 'Transforming Your Emotions'.

During my participation in the group, all the members were encouraged by the group teacher to host one session while practising Part II of DW. I volunteered to host the fourth session, and therefore had the advantage of being able to analyse the emotion ideology and feeling rules that are based on the texts. Although it will be seen from my analysis that this emotion ideology is implied in the messages channeled from Orin & DaBen by Sanaya, in which DW is regarded as a part of the system, the title of the chosen session is also directly connected to my research. In addition, it was my purpose to observe the way participants learned, understood, interpreted and applied those feeling rules during the session.

### 5.3.2 How to Transform Your Emotions

According to Hochschild (1979, 2003[1983]), there are two types of norms in terms of emotion cultures. The first is 'feeling rules', which is the focus of the current section. Feeling rules are based on emotion ideology and govern the intensity and the duration of emotions. The second type of norms is 'display rules', which involve 'surface acting' that 'specifies when and how the overt expression of emotions in a situation is to occur' (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 36).

Hochschild proposed the notion of 'feeling rules' (1979, 2003[1983]) in her study of emotions, where it is defined as 'guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situation' (1979, p.566). In addition, the way in which people identify and respond to feeling rules varies between different societies or groups. I refer to the term in order to explore what participants learnt from the group meeting about the way of transforming their emotions and how they interpreted their emotions according to the material of DW in terms of a set of feeling rules.

#### ***Emotion Ideology***

For the session I hosted for DW, I followed the normal procedure of the group meeting. The session was held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2003. There are about 30 minutes for chatting among group members before a session begins; then, the group teacher gives a short talk of about 20 minutes. The teacher often provides participants with information about healthy diet, or ideas which are not related to the course but to her profession as a Chinese medicine doctor. However, in a way, this is still related to the course because it is believed that a healthy physical body is the first step towards preparing oneself to practise DW

and the *Light Body*. At the beginning of the session that I hosted, the group teacher offered information about a healthy winter diet in terms of Chinese medicine. I then began hosting the session according to the course material. First, I asked members to share their feelings on the day before they joined the group; then, I gave everyone a handout of the course material, an outline of ‘the way to transform your emotions’.

During the stage of sharing, every participant talked about how they felt and expressed their feelings in daily life. For example, one group member shared the way in which she dealt with her negative emotions:

*When I feel happy, people tend to notice my emotions. However, if I have some negative emotions, I am very aware of such feelings and situations; people would not notice my negative emotions because I would hide them and avoid bringing them to others. I might also choose to be alone. As for feeling other people’s emotions, such as from my family, I think that one of the most useful ways is to let people express their feelings. I would feel their state of emotions more or less, but I cannot really tell what is going on with them if they do not express anything. (in session, 05/12/03)*

The above extract tells us about the way in which participants of DW are aware of the state of their emotions in daily life. The person concerned valued positive emotions as well as the importance of expression; she ‘managed’ negative emotions, which is also a kind of ‘emotion work’ in Hochschild’s term. Another participant elaborated on what she thought of emotions and described them as a flow:

*I am lucky to have many soulmates, both males and females, therefore, I would talk to them about my emotions and feelings, and they would understand me very well. Yesterday I suddenly got some insight into emotions, I felt that emotions are something very lovely; I*

*was teaching at some institute yesterday and I should have been very tired after that. But, when I reached home, I didn't feel like sleeping but washed a lot of clothes; then, suddenly I started to dance and was feeling energetic. I was quite happy. But then, when I listened to a piece of music, it reminded me of one of my students. I thought of the student's bad behaviour, and felt that it was not his fault in that case; it was just that he had not been loved enough. But normally people would only repress or stop their behaviour. ...I didn't know how to deal with my emotions at that time, therefore, I decided to pick up Orin's books and read. Then, I read some sentences about the issue 'clarity'; suddenly, I felt calm again.... I felt emotions are a flow.... And I felt that we should not resist our emotions but fully accept and enjoy them; and let them flow.... (in session, 05/12/03)*

The above extracts reveal one of the elements which belongs to a part of the emotion ideology of DW: that is, energy, and it is connected to emotional flow. In this regard, the following extract is helpful in illustrating the emotion ideology that I am going to analyse: the extract is from an American participant in DW who shared the way in which he or she regarded the connection between emotions, flow (energy) and transformation. The message was posted on the DW forum on the Internet:<sup>47</sup>

*Subject: Emotions are but signposts*

*Author: nighteagle*

*Date: 31 Oct 2002*

*Emotions are but signposts, that once acknowledged can be transformed; and as we ride on the highway of life we can choose to stop, drive slow or speed by. We only drive slowly to connect and understand the emotion. And when there is no attachment, or need*

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<sup>47</sup> I accessed the extract in December 2003, at the URL [http://www.orindaben.com/forums/divinewill/index.php3?bn=orindaben\\_emotions&expnd=all](http://www.orindaben.com/forums/divinewill/index.php3?bn=orindaben_emotions&expnd=all). However, the Divine Will forum has no longer been active since 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005 at this address.

*for connecting, we speed by. Naturally on the highway of life, flow is important; otherwise we experience traffic jams or accidents. Lifting and transforming your emotions is a wonderful thing, for it is through this we gain clarity to enjoy the ride. With divine will may your emotional bodies be beautiful. Transmitting love, light, peace and truth.*

For participants to transform their emotions and practise DW in daily life, they would adopt the emotion ideology of the DW, which includes a set of feeling rules. According to my analysis, there are two principles that can be regarded as the emotion ideology of DW, which are ‘working on energy’ and ‘working on love’.

#### Working on Energy

People who participate in DW learn to become aware of the state of their emotions in terms of energy, especially energy around the ‘emotional body’. The idea of the ‘emotional body’, as described in one of the books for Orin by Sanaya Roman (1986a), is that ‘the emotional body is a restless, constantly vibrating flow of energy around you’ (p.104). The idea of emotional body can also be seen in the book of ACIL, in which it is explained further that ‘the emotional body consists of energy made up of your feelings. The emotional body can affect your health, wealth and happiness if your emotions harbor unresolved issues. When the emotional self is not nurtured and loved, weakness and disease can develop in the body’ (Moltzan, 2001[1973], p. 5). Therefore, for participants in DW, the first step towards transforming emotions is to raise their vibrations (energy) from low to high, and to cleanse the energy and purify it.

### Working on Love

DW teaches participants that the most efficient way to raise their vibrations for changing their emotions is to work on love. Why is love related to the changes of emotions? According to Orin, 'Love is a place that exists as an energy you can tap into whenever you have a loving thought of anyone. You literally pull up your own vibration' (Sanaya Roman, 1986a, p. 86). In addition, participants are trained to express and experience 'unconditional love' because it indicates that 'love transcends the self': 'Any time you express unconditional love, from your deepest being, and any time you receive it, you assist many more people in achieving it also' (1986a, p. 86-87). In this regard, ACIL also stresses this element. Moltzan, the channeller of ACIL explains:

*It (unconditional love) is not required that you like the personality of any individual, nor must you like anything about any individual. What is desired of you is that you love the soul of all individuals.... To love unconditionally is to love as God loves, and requires accepting each soul exactly as it is, without any changes. (Moltzan, 2001[1973],pp.167-168)*

'Working on love' for DW participants also includes cultivating three qualities and displaying them in daily life: these qualities are compassion, acceptance and gratitude. Orin explains each of the qualities through Sanaya Roman (1986b): compassion is 'the ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes' (p.78) and 'coming from compassion means coming from truth' (p.82). It reminds people about:

*Focusing upon not what you want from them, but how you can assist them in their unfolding and growth in whatever direction is to their highest good (1986a, p.87)*

Secondly, for cultivating the quality of acceptance, it says that 'every



time you recognise the love you have, you increase it. One of the laws of receiving is that recognising when you have gotten something increases it in your life, and every time you do not acknowledge something you make it so much harder to have more sent to you' (Sanaya Roman, 1986a, p.93). For the last quality, 'gratitude', when working on love, Orin gives the following messages through Sanaya Roman (1986a):

*Whenever you give thanks, you increase the light in your aura at that very moment. ...The resonance of gratitude in your body vibrates with your heart center (p.101). It links the emotional body to the heart and thus to the soul, which is reached through the heart. ... When you say thanks, and appreciate your life, acknowledging people, events, and the higher forces, the pattern of energy that represents your emotional body begins to rearrange itself into a higher and finer vibration. (p. 104)*

### ***Feeling rules***

As stated above, feeling rules are based on emotion ideology, according to Hochschild. The emotion ideology of DW is based on the principles of 'working on energy' and 'working on love'. In addition, in order to transform emotions, participants have to learn how to align themselves with the divine will through meditation. The goal is to let emotions flow smoothly in daily life. My analysis of the feeling rules that DW conveys shows that the following two guidelines are dominant.

### ***Keep Emotions in Stability and Balance***

DW teaches participants to become aware of their emotions and to remain in a state of peacefulness: a state of being stable and in balance. Such a state is described as 'as you reach higher planes of reality, your emotions

become so calm they are like the still lake that reflects back every cloud and tree' (Sanaya Roman, 1986a). A male participant expressed how he felt about practising the DW:

*As I was used to relying on my mind and was less active, I felt that I experienced many changes in the mental body and the emotional body. I can keep my emotional body in a state of stability; it helps me think positively. It provides me with love and joy, and helps me view everything from a higher point of view. (06/02/04, P14)*

Most interviewees who have participated in DW or other forms of meditation which are part of the Orin systems have mentioned the way in which they keep their emotions in a state of balance and stability. For example, a female interviewee who has had a few years of practising meditations from Orin, such as *Divine Will* and *Light Body*, told me about the way in which she keeps her emotions stable and balanced:

*As I have said...we are human beings, it is impossible to live without any emotions; but they (emotions) have become a smooth flow. You are aware of each kind of your emotions when they come; then, when they go, you know it. That is it. You would not be stuck and feel trapped in your emotions. And I feel that it (light body) helps me to be free quickly from those emotions. (27/09/03, P1)*

On the other hand, there is a method for keeping oneself in a state of balance when interacting with people, as the following extract of messages from Orin by Sanaya Roman indicates (1986a):

*'Stability comes from an attitude of balance. ...Observe those situations in which your balance is disturbed by another's lack of balance. The next step is to tell yourself that you can keep your balance, ...As his (imbalance) energy comes into you... see that you are resonating with that unbalanced part in him. To stop responding in this way, send him love. (pp.123-124)*

### *Increasing Positive Emotions and Reducing Negative Emotions*

In addition to keeping emotions in stability and balance, DW emphasises the importance of positive emotions. Therefore, participants learn three points about maintaining positive emotions and reducing negative emotions. The first is to increase positive emotional vocabularies and decrease negative vocabularies. This reminds people that their attitude and perspectives create their own reality: ‘your attitude determines how you experience the world. ...Your attitude is the words you use when you talk to yourself. ...If your joyful self speaks words of praise it helps you bring more of the same to yourself’ (Sanaya Roman, 1986a, p.123). In the session that I hosted, I asked participants to share what kind of negative and positive emotions they are often aware of in their daily life. The most common negative emotions for them are ‘anxiety, sadness and depression’, and positive emotions such as ‘love, peace, calm, happy and delightful’.

In addition, focusing on positive emotions in terms of transformational experiences for New Age people is also reported by many of my interviewees, which is not a characteristic limited only to participants in DW. For example, a female interviewee from ACIM said that ‘the experience of transformation for me is in the aspect of emotions...I would feel harmony and calm’ (11/12/03, P19).

Second, DW teaches participants to relax their body by deep breathing, which is often practised in guided meditation. This skill is used as a way to work on emotions by working with divine will. Although each session of DW has a different theme,<sup>48</sup> each of the themes will be connected to the seven

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<sup>48</sup> For example, the themes for each session in Part II of DW are: Becoming Your Soul;

qualities of DW during meditation at the final stage in a group meeting. Therefore, in the session ‘transforming your emotions’, participants worked with the seven divine wills by following seven steps. Each of the steps aims to achieve the purposes summarised below (Sanaya Roman, 2001, pp.19-22):

*Will to Initiate: to purify your emotional body and to release lower energies.*

*Will to Unify: to absorb qualities of love and unity. It unifies emotional body and soul.*

*Will to Evolve: to stimulate the use of your creative mind to evolve your emotions.*

*Will to Harmonize: to achieve balance between the dualities of feeling up and feeling down, of feeling good and feeling bad. To know that you are not your emotions; you are a greater self; you are a soul.*

*Will to Act: Let that brilliant light of your mind, energized with the Will to Act, dissipate negative emotions, fear-based emotions, doubts, pride, separate feelings, and feelings that make you feel bad about yourself.*

*Will to Cause: to understand your soul desires and release your personality desires. To enable your emotional body to become a state of smooth flow, clear and evolution.*

*Will to Express: you can express loving, calm, and flowing emotions in our daily life.*

The final point about transforming emotions from negative to positive is to use affirmation to increase positive feelings, because ‘the ability to make

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Awakening Divine Love; Strengthening Self-Love; Transforming Your Emotions; Illuminating Your Mind; Knowing Your Life Purpose; Increasing Abundance and Prosperity; Receiving Clear Inner Guidance; Expanding your Creativity; Evolving Your Body; Creating a Supportive Environment; Living a Soul Live.

yourself right rather than wrong will help you grow faster' (Sanaya Roman, 1986b, p.92). In this regard, participants can look at different themes of affirmation from the official website of Orin & Daben under the subheading 'Daily Affirmation Room'.<sup>49</sup> For example, people will receive an affirmation relating to the theme of 'flowing emotions' every time when they click the link connected to the title. The following lists contain some affirmations linked to the 'flowing emotions' from the website, which I further categorise into sub-themes that emphasise specific rules of feelings, including 'acceptance of oneself', 'radiating positive feelings', 'reflexivity of the self', 'working on daily life', 'working on energy' and 'working on relationship'.

— *Acceptance of oneself* —

*I love all my emotions. I let my emotions flow through me.*

*I am comfortable with my feelings.*

*I let my emotions flow through me without attaching negative thoughts to them.*

*All my feelings are a part of myself. I accept all of them.*

*I accept and love myself for who I am right now.*

— *Radiating positive feelings* —

*I am relaxed and at peace with the world and myself.*

*Serenity and tranquillity flows through my body.*

*I radiate self-esteem, inner peace, love, well-being, and happiness.*

*I smile and laugh often.*

*I replace all negative thoughts with positive ones.*

*I radiate peace and serenity no matter what is going on around me.*

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<sup>49</sup> Please see <http://www.orindaben.com/db/dbaffirm/affirmations.php>

*I smile often. I feel happy when I smile.*

*I am calm and peaceful.*

*I have many good qualities.*

*I live in a state of love.*

*I give myself permission to be happy.*

*I follow my highest joy.*

*I love all my thoughts and my feelings.*

*I have frequent feelings of well-being.*

*I feel good, calm, and at peace with myself.*

*My body is filled with joy and aliveness.*

*I am calm and peaceful.*

*I choose my emotions. I choose to feel calm and good.*

*I love all my thoughts and my feelings.*

*— Reflexivity of the self —*

*I send love to my fears. My fears are the places within me that await my love.*

*I listen to my emotions. I receive their messages.*

*I listen to any messages that my emotions are giving me.*

*I let myself feel my emotions.*

*— Working on daily life —*

*I can tell this is going to be a great day.*

*I am taking many steps to make my life better.*

*I let go of any burdens that are not mine to carry.*

*I am relaxed and at peace with the world and myself.*

*I love change. I embrace the new.*

*I stop and smell the flowers. I walk barefoot in the grass. I feel the sun on my face.*

— *Working on energy* —

*I draw in an unlimited supply of universal energy right now. I am recharging myself with energy and light.*

*I have many moments of feeling energetic.*

*With each breath out, I release anxiety. With each breath in, I breathe in peace.*

*With each breath out, I send light out to the world.*

— *Working on relationships* —

*I back up my feelings with my words and actions.*

*I am aware of other people's realities. I stay centred in my own calm, clear energy.*

*I am generous with my love.*

*Joy flows through me and radiates out to others. I lift the burdens of others through my radiance of joy.*

## Conclusion

My discussion of the issue of emotions and embodiment arose from the work of Paul Heelas and Anthony Giddens, as I outlined in Chapter 2. I suggest that we should extend the issue of emotions in late-modernity to the New Age, and in a way my observations and discussions of emotions and embodiment in New Age courses such as ACIL and DW in this chapter are an extension of the idea of self-religion.

Emotions are an extremely important issue when dealing with the

experiences of self-transformation in the NAM. Although the experience of self-transformation can also be seen in many religions, it is not regarded as the most important characteristic. By contrast, self-transformation is the most important characteristic to people in the NAM, and this has much to do with changes of emotions. In addition, the experiences of self-transformation for people participating in the NAM are connected to New Age practices. This chapter draws several conclusions about the way in which people change their emotions by participating in New Age practices in terms of the reflexivity of the self and of feeling rules.

First, my interview material reveals that New Age practices help participants experience self-transformation in the dimensions of body, emotions, mind and spirit. The changes of the body and emotions are much more obviously illustrated and expressed than the other dimensions by participants in my interviews. Many interviewees feel that their physical illnesses are caused by emotional problems, while a few others with chronic illnesses held the reverse opinion.

I participated in two New Age courses, *A Course in Light* (ACIL) and *Divine Will* (DW) in order to observe the way in which people interact with each other during sessions, and in order to examine the way in which participants deal with the issues of emotions. From my observations I noticed that there are two levels of dealing with emotions for participants. At the personal level, the reflexivity of the self played an important part pertaining to transforming participants' emotions. Self-transformation for participants was also a process of emotional identification, displays and experiences. The three ways of changing emotions relied on the reflexivity of the self. Secondly, in



respect of the interaction level, emotion work — such as the act of ignoring outbursts — is used in New Age courses such as ACIL when dealing with emotional conflicts between members. Participants were encouraged to be mindful of their emotions as well as to express their feelings, and to give their emotions positive meanings.

In the case of DW, I looked at the way in which participants learn to experience the changes of emotions, from which I aimed to examine whether or not there is a set of feeling rules in New Age practices. The analysis of one session of ‘Transforming Your Emotions’ shows that two principles, ‘working on energy’ and ‘working on love’, represent the emotion ideology of the DW. They are regarded as the foundation of the two key feeling rules: ‘keep emotions in stability and balance’, and ‘increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions’. Participants followed the feeling rules with the aid of the meditation in DW, in which they experienced the changes of emotions, that is, the experiences of self-transformation.

It is also clear that New Age courses such as ACIL and DW are connected to the idea of healing. In fact, the relationship between the self, emotions and healing in the New Age is articulated by transformational experiences. It is a process in which people learn how to be self-reflexive, as a result of which they are able to identify, and express their emotions. In other words, for participants the experiences of transformation include three elements: reflexivity of the self, changes of emotions and a sense of healing.

Having discussed the issue of emotions and brought it back to ‘Self-religion’, we have highlighted the role of emotions and feelings in the experience of self-transformation. However, this chapter has not dealt with

one particularly important issue, which is: what else does self-transformation mean for participants in the NAM? I will examine this question and link it to the issue of late-modernity in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

# **Transformation II: Healing, Self-Identity and Expert Knowledge in New Age Practices**

### Introduction

This chapter continues to look at the issue of self-transformation for people who participate in the NAM in Taiwan, regarding healing, self-identity and expert knowledge. I examine questions relating to how they became involved in the NAM, and what they experienced from New Age practices. The first question is about the motivation of people who dedicate themselves to the Movement or its practices. I will then review the issue of self-reflexivity in New Age practices, because it is the first step for participants in understanding their transformational experiences, as I argued in Chapter 4. The way in which they interpret the meaning of their transformation will be analysed in the light of my interview material. Next, I will examine the idea of healing in New Age practices, which is regarded as one of the most important phenomena in the late 20th century for the NAM, and it is close to the experience of transformation. For the issue of healing, I will mainly take the example of A Course in Light (ACIL), which I have participated in, as a case for discussion and analysis, together with all my interview materials. My informants feel that they can 'improve' their lives in terms of spiritual transformation by changing especially the state of the body and the emotions, which is interpreted as a state of being 'healed'. Then, I will examine the issues of self-reflexivity and healing in the NAM in terms of Giddens's

analysis of late-modern society. I will look at the way in which people refer to New Age spiritualities that support various healing practices as a kind of 'guideline' for their life. I will analyze the way in which people reconstruct their self-identity with the aid of New Age practices, which is in the name of healing.

In the final section I will examine the relation between New Age and expert knowledge in accordance with Giddens's analysis of late-modernity. I will pay particular attention to the ideas of life politics, life-planning, and fateful moments while analysing my interview materials.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research questions, To what extent can New Age practices be considered as applications of expert knowledge? What is the relationship between the reconstruction of self-identity and risk in New Age circles? How far does the New Age, as a new form of spirituality, have a place in life politics? To what extent, and in what ways, does the NAM represent 'a return of the repressed' in late modernity?

## 6.1 How Do People Become Involved in the NAM?

As outlined in Chapter 4, people undergo transformational experiences in the process of certain practices, which are especially noticeable in the improvement of emotional problems. When I inquired into their history of encountering the New Age, there are two major elements that motivated people to participate in the Movement: the first is personal networks (friends, family), and the second is intellectual interests. In addition, many of them reported that New Age helped them deal with the practical problems of life.

### 6.1.1 Personal Networks

More than half of my interviewees reported that they had learned about the idea of the New Age from friends or family. Many of them were also introduced to books about the New Age. A female interviewee who is currently an amateur energy healer recalled her first encounter with the New Age; friends introduced it to her when she was a member of *X (a new religious group)*:

*I was involved in X and I met a girl at the charity music concert...she recommended me a New Age book, The Knight in Rusty Armor.<sup>50</sup> I liked the book very much because it was so fascinating. Then, I asked the friend for a list of New Age books; .... I indulged in reading those books during winter vacation. It seems to me that I found a direction of my life; seems like...(the answer to) what is going on with the reality of life. In fact, before (reading the book) I had noticed a book at another friend's place, The Nature of Personal Reality by Jane Roberts about Seth...it shocked me...it says, 'you create your own reality' ... this is so different from such as Buddhism... as well as the idea of Karma; because this idea is much more open. (27/09/03, P1)*

The importance of a personal network that enables people to learn about the NAM is also seen from the following extract. A female interviewee who is a retired schoolteacher mentioned that she became involved in ACIL because the spokesperson of the *Course* was a close friend of hers:

*I got involved in A Course in Light because Vicki and I were very good friends with each other .... I met her when her younger brother was in the high school... he was my student. You see, the fact was that the student acted as a bridge to bring us closer, which means there must be something about life lessons for us to learn together.*

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<sup>50</sup> A Chinese version that has been published in New Age series in Fine Press.

(23/10/03, P10)

In the case of being introduced to the New Age by family members, a good example concerns a female interviewee who encountered the New Age over ten years ago:

*My husband was reading books on Seth. He was reading the book...and it seemed that the book was very interesting to him...so I took the book from him and read it. It was interesting to me, so we both decided to attend the study group. (05/01/04, P25)*

It would be a mistake, as Wallis and Bruce (1982) cogently argued, to believe that social networks ‘automatically’ lead people into the NAM – or any other social movement. The availability of networks is merely one factor among others, but it is certainly common for participants in New Age activities to emphasise the importance of personal relations and social connections in ‘exposing’ themselves to the ideas, practices or people that eventually proved attractive. These personal ‘channels’ often created or stimulated intellectual curiosity about the New Age.

### 6.1.2 Intellectual Interests

There are more than ten other interviewees who reported that they had learned about the New Age while shopping in bookstores, in addition to being introduced to books about it by personal networks. These interviewees explained that their intellectual interests had led them to the New Age. A 37 year old interviewee, a male salesman, for example, briefly stated how his interest in reading books on spirituality when he was an undergraduate student led him to New Age:

*I encountered New Age when I was an undergraduate student... I liked to read these (books on spirituality)... I was naturally attracted*

*to them when these books were published. I looked for these books by myself. Then, maybe it was because undergraduate students had more freedom (compared to high school)...I could choose those books that I really wanted to read. (16/11/03, P17)*

A few other interviewees mentioned how they encountered the New Age by accident, as a result of seeing books in bookstores such as *Seth Speaks: the Eternal Validity of the Soul* by Jane Roberts. A 37 year old female interviewee who is working as a business manager recalled:

*It is when I was a high school student that I saw the book, Seth Speaks, which is translated by Mrs Wang; and then I wrote a letter to her, expressing that I appreciated her translation. (28/12/03, P24)*

Similarly, a 42 year old male interviewee, who also encountered the New Age by reading the Chinese version of *Seth Speaks*, said:

*At that time I was going to join the Army; and it worried me; therefore, I went to bookstores, hoping to find a book that would comfort me...then I found the book, Seth Speaks. ...it influenced me a lot. (24/12/03, P22)*

In addition, a male interviewee mentioned his involvement with the NAM because of his intellectual interest in knowledge such as soul study and Thanatology:

*I heard about New Age...from books; and I met those pioneers in the NAM at the time when they were promoting the idea of New Age. ...These people led me to know more about the New Age. However, I myself was studying the knowledge about souls before I learned about New Age; I was especially interested in the study of souls and Thanatology. (05/11/03; 06/02/04, P15)*

In short, many interviewees encountered the New Age through informal relationship such as friends and family, while others found New Age books in

bookstores by chance and then were impressed by the topics. Whether it is by personal networks or by self-exploration that my informants learned about the New Age, it is clear that publications play an important part in their encounter with this spirituality. Nevertheless, it is impossible to know how many other people were exposed to the influence of existing New Agers and/or to New Age publications without taking any interest in them. My evidence allows me to claim only that personal networks and intellectual interests were widely cited as important factors in leading my informants to take an active interest in the New Age.

### 6.1.3 Problems with Life

55 per cent of my informants reported that their participation in New Age practices had helped them resolve their problems in life. These problems are various, including such issues as existential questions, physical, emotional and personal problems, relationships and work.

Concerning existential questions, a 47 year old male interviewee told about the changes in his career from the field of computer science to being a New Age practitioner:

*After the workshop of human potential training, I suddenly felt that, hmm, this is another new way of educational training, and so I started to be interested in the topic (New Age). Then, there was a practice that is similar to the children's game such as 'the eagle catches the small chicken,' which made me quite happy; then I started to rethink what do I want for my life. I had been thinking of this question for three months; and then after another activity I felt that the way I lived by following what I had learned from these activities was not bad, therefore, I decided to quit my job. It was probably in around 1987 or 1988; then, ... I walked along a path from*



*which there is no return! (laughing) (22/10/03, P7)*

Another interviewee, a 35 year old male who is working as a marketing consultant, recounted his questioning of life when his best friends had both died young; at that time he encountered channeling in the New Age:

*I had three close friends; we met when we were students in high school. When I was going to study my BA degree in 1989/1990...in the same year, two of them were suddenly killed in different car accidents. Before, I was an atheist, but their accidents made me scared; and I wondered if there was anything that is destined to happen in our life. Otherwise how come two out of three of my best friends would die if life itself would only be an issue of probability? ...It was a big impact on me... Before, I was always confused with my life and was once not happy with the result of the 'college entrance examination'. All of a sudden, I felt that all those concerns were not important to me anymore. ...And then, it was the time when I started to contact psychics. (03/01/05, P39)*

A few other interviewees encountered the New Age through a serious life crisis. For example, a 42 year old male marketing manager, described how he started to read New Age books:

*It's five years ago. I had a problem with my marriage; I had been married for ten years, but had had an affair from the fifth year. After that, I felt very guilty and could not bear it; then I started to participate in...a New Age...the course consisted of three levels and it takes nine days to complete; it aims to deconstruct yourself, to destroy your rigid thinking. ...Then, one day when I stepped into a bookstore, I noticed that a book glittered to me; all the environment around it was in the dark but the book was shining: The Conversations with God, volume 1. I took the book home and read it through the night. When I finished reading the book...Ah ha! This is the answer...it made me feel joyful, and I felt that I had found it...then I started to read other related books...Seth...then...anyway,*

*it is that (New Age) series in Fine Press. (22/10/03, P8)*

Similarly, a female interviewee encountered the idea of New Age while struggling with her job:

*At that time my work/career was stuck...I was very upset and could not find the reason for being stuck; I was working in the field of direct marketing. I once thought of attending courses such as... human potential. However, I did not attend because the course fee was too expensive. Then, a friend of mine who was my classmate ten years ago...she introduced me to a book entitled Living with Joy when we had a dinner in Skylark. ...I read it and found that it touched my heart. Therefore, I started to know more about Orin and attended the Light Bogy course. (26/10/03, P12)*

28 per cent of interviewees explained how they searched for the meanings of their physical ailments and suffering, and then came upon the New Age. A female interviewee who runs a medium-sized business company, for example, talked about the way in which she had dealt with cancer:

*I was diagnosed as having cancer in 2000. Then, I felt something was wrong; why did I get cancer? I thought that it must be something to do with inside myself...because everything in my life was fine...my husband was very nice to me, and our financial circumstances and social relationships were all right as well...Therefore, it must be something to do with my own thinking... I hadn't encountered New Age at that time, but I knew that there must be something wrong with my mind, and then my body was influenced by it.... Then, a friend of mine introduced me to the doctor Hsu in the Chinese New Age Society... I was very happy and looked forward to attending his group therapy; that is it. (16/02/04, P33)*

A similar experience occurred to a male interviewee who recalled the time when he started to read books about Seth, which was a period after he had undergone major surgery:

*It's because I needed it. In the beginning, I got a feeling that I had found the answer. ...It answered so many questions that I had in my mind. ...I spent a lot of time on reading Seth because...I believed what it conveys... Later I kept reading because I encountered many problems with applying those principles to my daily life. For example, it is one thing to understand it and believe it, but until now I still feel that it's not that easy to practise in daily life...however...I cannot find any other way that is better than Seth. (24/11/03, P18)*

Regardless of the specific reasons people stated in my interviews for learning about the idea of the New Age, the motivation for them to participate in various NAM activities was that it led them to think/rethink about themselves and helped them resolve the various problems in their life. However, it must be noted that their accounts of becoming involved in the NAM are shaped by their experiences — either by knowledge or practices. The way in which participants elaborated about the New Age helping them deal with problems in life was reconstructed on the basis of their memories and experiences since they had first become involved in the New Age. In this regard, for example, Beckford (1978a) argues that the Watchtower movement (Jehovah's Witnesses) helps converts to piece together highly distinctive and consistent accounts of how it had enabled them to deal with problems such as difficulties in their state of mind or personal and social relationships. These accounts drew on personal recollections but reconstructed them into narratives that reflected the movement's teachings. Given the fact that most New Age groups and organisations are much less formally and rigidly structured than the Watchtower movement, it is unlikely that New Agers receive deliberate 'coaching' or encouragement to account for their self-transformation in uniform ways. Nevertheless, New Age groups undoubtedly foster

‘appropriate’ forms of personal testimony.

The accounts of ‘self-transformation’ or ‘conversion’ of New Age people, or of recruits to religious movements such as the Watchtower movement, are actually examples of what Peter Berger (1963) terms ‘biographical reconstruction’. This is regarded as a prominent feature of converts’ speech and reasoning, and has been acknowledged by research on religious conversion in NRMs (Snow and Machalek 1984, p.173). People recount their past in remarkably consistent ways when they have experienced a transformation in their identity and self-image. Berger indicates that this kind of reinterpretation of the past (one’s biography) is ‘an act in which the past is dramatically transformed’ (1963, p.62) and is especially important in the case of religious conversion. It refers to ‘a double-edged process involving the dismantling of the past, on the one hand, and its reconstitution, on the other. ...One’s biography is...reconstructed in accordance with the new or ascendant universe of discourse and its attendant grammar and vocabulary of motives’ (Snow & Machalek, 1984, p.174).

Ideally, it would have been better if I could have interviewed my informants before they had encountered the New Age, but in reality, of course, this is not possible. Since it is not possible to analyse any informants’ previous interpretations of the past before they had encountered New Age ideas or activities, the only practical way forward for sociological analysis is to examine the way in which they interpret and account for their transformation. Bearing in mind that self-transformation for New Age people involves a process of reshaping the past, a biographical reconstruction, I will elaborate in the following section on how they interpreted their transformation experiences

as 'healing'.

## 6.2 Healing and Self-Identity

### 6.2.1 Awareness: Reflexivity of the Self

It is clear from the previous section that many people said they encountered the New Age while facing problems in their life. In a way, New Age practices and spiritualities encourage people to think of themselves reflexively in terms of spiritual growth in order to achieve self-transformation. The idea of 'awareness' is often mentioned by New Age people while talking about their experiences of self-transformation during interviews. Any change which people have experienced, no matter whether it is in the aspect of body, mind, emotions or spirit, requires them to have self-awareness. The importance of awareness for New Age people can be illustrated by the following extract: a female interviewee talked about what changes she felt for herself after practising ACIM:

*I think that I have learned something, and that is awareness. I would still make mistakes and would still do something that is not well under my control, but my sense of awareness is getting more and more keen. (24/02/04, P35)*

This kind of awareness is based on the reflexivity of the self. New Age spiritualities and practices teach participants to 'go within' to find the 'authentic' self. This may prompt people to ask questions that are centred on the self at every moment, just as the following extract, suggests:

*In the past I always viewed myself as a victim and others as troublemakers: 'you give me troubles.' And now I view myself as a troublemaker, I look at myself. This style of thinking is not*

*introspection but awareness. I look at myself and ask, 'What am I doing? What have I done?' Now I am very good at being aware of myself, ...I am doing well. The more aware you stay, the more clearly you see. You are getting more clear than you were, and know what you are doing and why you are doing this. (19/02/04, P34)*

The process of reflexivity of the self is therapeutic and helps people change; it is similar to Giddens's discussion of the issue of therapy in late modernity:

*Living every moment reflectively is a matter of heightened awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Awareness creates potential change, and may actually induce change in and through itself (Giddens, 1991, p.71).*

In this regard, most New Age practices can be viewed as healing by means of the reflexivity of the self. For example, people who participate in ACIL would be reminded to be aware of the state of their body, mind, emotions or spirit during the practice. It is regarded as a process of healing whereby people cleanse and purify the 'light energy body', uplift their minds, and achieve spiritual transformation. For example, a female interviewee recalled her experience, and said:

*ACIL helps me cleanse and purify my aura (energy field) by the vibration of light; you are able to become clear in your mind only when you are cleansed. ...I was in a mess with regard to my body and emotions during the period of practising the first four levels. ...after that, I was getting more intuitive. When I moved on to practise the Planetary Lessons of ACIL, my emotions, perceptions, and my body were all transformed into a much better condition. It is especially when I was practising Planet 2 that I became much more stable than before. And then, I achieved a state of extreme happiness when I*

*moved on to Planets 3 and 4... I healed every aspect of my past, my previous lives, and my spiritual will during the 3-year period of practising light meditation (13/10/03, P5).*

The above example illustrates the point that healing is embodied when participants become aware of the subtle changes in their bodily, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions. It is manifested through their accounts of their experiences and, therefore, can be regarded as healing experienced through the reflexivity of the self. Reiki is a similar case of a healing practice focused on the reflexivity of the self: for instance, a female interviewee, a senior Reiki healer, explained the way in which Reiki helps people heal themselves:

*Reiki can help you see physical and psychological elements of your illness. ...Reiki can help you get more clear thoughts and awareness. It enables you to know why something happened to you and how you are aware of it and deal with it... so, there are some different transformations both in body and emotion. For example, when you are healing your sore throat...you heal it, but at the same time you would see what is the problem with communications between you and someone. Or, maybe you repressed something that you didn't express...And if you feel that you have problems with communications and expressions, you give yourself more Reiki to help you bravely deal with these things and to fluently express what you want to say. (24/12/03, P21)*

Participants learn more about themselves through reflexive awareness in the process of healing. The explanations and elaborations of the process of their reflexive awareness are sometimes narrative, just as in the following extract. A female interviewee who is working as a Seth consultant said:

*Recently I looked at the shape of my body...and I found that all my family members share the same shape (being fat). If the body, mind*

*and spirit are one, and beliefs create reality, then what kind of belief shapes my body like this? I found that such a belief is deep-rooted in my mind...Isn't a rural area poor? And so we created a symbolic meaning...being fat...symbolises richness. Then, all those statues in our house including the picture on the calendar...are the same one: the Maitreya with a big belly (laughing)! This is really ...to hypnotize the body! And I never questioned such (symbolic) meaning until I grew up. Then I started to ask myself: does being fat really represent richness? And I began to explore the answer from this point: true richness lies in our mind, I am rich inside instead of having a (fat body) ... (laughing)! (11/02/04, P32)*

From the above discussion we can see that the reflexivity of the self brings self-awareness to people who participate in New Age practices, and helps them focus on themselves. It is from such self-reflexivity that people seek, and often, obtain answers to existential questions and experience self-transformation under the name of healing. For participants this is a process of reconstructing their self-identity. I will discuss this point further in the following session.

### 6.2.2 Healing as a Process of Reconstructing Self-Identity

When I examined the question of 'What do people experience from New Age practices?' I found that most people in my study mentioned the issue of self-identity. For example, one woman mentioned how her self-identity was reconstructed while describing what transformation meant to her in the process of practising ACIL:

*...It (the transformation) also includes the fact that I learned what I wanted to do in the future and what my mission in life was... I am getting clearer and clearer about myself; I know what I want to do, and what I do not want to do. ...Before I practised ACIL, I was a*



*person who did not know how to refuse demanding people, and this really exhausted me. ...I feel that the whole process of practising ACIL is to live your authentic self. Actually, I don't need to become another person; what I have to do is to return to the nature that is inside me. (13/10/03, P5)*

We can see that this interviewee asked herself existential questions such as 'What do I want to do?' and found her life purpose in the practice of ACIL.

As one of the popular practices of the NAM in Taiwan, ACIL inspires participants to think about existential questions in meditation, such as 'Who am I? Where am I going? What can I do to bring the message of wisdom to earth? What must I shed to be free? What must I gain or acknowledge to become strong? What must I see to have vision?' (Moltzan 1991, p.59). These questions recur in the text of ACIL at all levels.

New Age practices such as ACIL are widely credited with helping people know themselves and the meaning and purpose of their lives, which are still connected to existential questions:

*I had been curious and wondering about questions such as 'Where did I come from and what is my life for in the world?' since I was a child. But, these doubts have been resolved since I practised ACIL. (23/10/03, P10)*

*The greatest reward from practising ACIL for me is that I know there is a higher purpose in my life. (05/01/4, P33)*

When people start to ask themselves about existential questions, they step into a process of reconstructing self-identity. They reflect on the past, look at the present, and think about the future. All the reflections are centred on the self and the meaning of the existence of life:

*It seems that I have become mature again; it's more of a taste of*

*enlightenment. We (the self) were all conditioned by social values and have never thought of 'What do I want'? By participating in the New Age, it seems that I suddenly woke up and asked myself...who am I? I would trace back my past and re-identify my life.*

*(14/11/03, P16)*

New Age practices such as healing, to reconstruct people's self-identity, also affirm the value of life itself. A female interviewee with cancer who has participated in a healing group based on the idea of Seth, said:

*The most obvious transformation that I have experienced is the change of values for my life. In the past you did not know why you were alive. Even if you are a good person in the secular world, you do not know what is the value of your life. ...But after I participated in the group healing and consulted doctor Hsu twice, I found that being alive itself is something valuable. This is the first point. The second point is the awareness of love... That kind of so called freedom and unconditional love... (05/01/04, P26)*

The above discussions bring our attention to Giddens's analysis of late-modernity. Giddens indicates that existential questions such as 'What to do', 'How to act', 'Who to be' are focal questions for people living in late modern society (1991, p.70). These questions belong to Giddens's fourth type of existential questions (1991, p.52), which are fundamental to reconstructing self-identity. What is self-identity? Giddens says:

*Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. (1991, p.53)*

As the self can be 'reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (Giddens, 1991, p.53), it is therefore understandable that when my interviewees illustrate their stories about searching for the self, they

trace back their distant past and connect it to the present. The fact that the New Age encourages people to be self-reflexive in relation to identifying themselves cannot only be seen in my interview materials but is also implied in Heelas's (1996) analysis of the NAM. Heelas asserts that one of the major problems associated with modernity is the problem of identity, and this problem may cause some people both to isolate themselves from modernity and choose to embrace the New Age (Heelas, 1996, pp.137-138). As one form of expression of Western culture, the idea of the New Age encourages people to strive for personal growth that centres on the self. In addition, as Heelas suggests, in a broad sense, 'the entire New Age has to do with healing' (Heelas, 1996, p.81). Healing phenomena, as one of the important trends in the NAM (Hanegraaff, 1998, pp.42-61), are therefore connected to the issue of the self and self-identity, as is seen from the above discussion in this section.

However, the way in which most healing practices in the NAM differ from medical treatment is that they provide spiritual explanations for people who suffer from bodily malfunctions or emotional problems. For example, one female interviewee felt that ACIL helped her conquer feelings of grief about the death of her brother:

*My brother's death had a big impact on me...but such grief feeling didn't last long because I was working with light (18/07/04, P37).*

McGuire (1988) gives useful explanations of this in the context of her research on alternative healing phenomena in suburban America. First, she finds that 'most people seek help and healing not so much for disease *per se*, but for suffering and affliction' (McGuire, 1988, p.241). Most adherents are initially attracted to alternative healing by the larger system of beliefs, of which health-illness related beliefs and practices are only one part. This situation

contradicts the view that marginal medicine merely serves 'as an alternative healing technique to which people resort when all else fails' (McGuire, 1988, p.5). Instead, McGuire notes that only a very small number of adherents initially come to their alternative healing group or healer because of a need to heal a prior condition. The following extract from my interviews confirms this point: it is from a male interviewee who had suffered cancer, and then started to participate in New Age practices and read New Age books after major surgery. The most important benefit to him of participating in the NAM was not a cure for his physical disease but comfort for his suffering; and the end to his suffering was to answer existential questions:

*I don't trust biomedicine and Chinese medicine because I have been invaded both physically and psychologically. ...the biggest help for me is to see if I can be with myself. Later I spent some time to read Conversations with God because it talked about some...the important thing is not what you want to do but what you want to be, who you are, and what you are. ...Most people do not dare to touch these core issues...however...I have to face these issues...after the physical operation...for me, if I can resolve these issues...then I can live my life to the fullest. (24/11/03, P18)*

In addition, data from McGuire's research also reveal that beliefs and practices regarding healing for American suburbanites represent an expression of their concern for meaning, moral order, and individual effectiveness and power in their social world. In a way, it seems that beliefs and practices regarding healing can be seen as tools for self-actualisation and that the first step is to reconstruct or reconfirm one's self-identity. A female in my interviews confirmed McGuire's observation while sharing her experience of being healed:

*I looked back to those days when I was ill: I feel that it was good. It (illness) forced me to stop; otherwise it was not possible for me to stop and get a rest because there were so many social expectations of you... you were pushed to keep walking but did not know why and you couldn't stop...there were so many responsibilities. Illness helped me stop and be myself, only to be myself. I feel that only to be myself is a kind of being healed. You have to go back to the point, that is, to be yourself, and then you will know why you are here in this life. (05/01/04, P26)*

Although McGuire does not use 'New Age' as a category in her research, Heelas suggests (1996) that her research is of considerable value to the task of describing and analysing the New Age (pp.80-81). In particular, it is helpful to compare her category of 'Eastern Meditation Groups' with one of the New Age groups in Taiwan that I participated in, such as the ACIL group, because, on the subject of healing, there are strong similarities between them with regard to such notions as karma, illness and health. As one of the five main types of alternative healing, Eastern Meditation Groups adopt an Eastern spirituality that emphasises self-discipline while using Asian cosmological notions, such as karma and reincarnation (McGuire, 1988, p.97).

In examining the notion of disease or illness that is connected to the idea of healing, for example, the New Age practice ACIL asserts that the individual person, the self, creates disease or illness. It is said that, 'energy follows thought, thought directs energy, and thought magnifies energy' (Moltzan, 2001[1973], p.19). Apart from this, the idea of Karma is involved. For example, ACIL teaches that 'you choose the diseases of your life in accordance with a law that karmically connects you to the imprints and actions of your past' (Moltzan, 1991, pp.28-29). However, some interviewees use such

scientific terms as DNA to explain the idea of Karma, which is different from the original idea of Karma in Buddhism and Hinduism. As one female interviewee put it:

*Reincarnation is true, it is what DNA brought you when you were born, and it influences your life.... For me, at first I thought that I was the only one who was responsible for my consciousness and awareness, and so, ...I criticised myself because I always thought that I think too much; later I realised that, ah, there is something about myself which is unknown to me; it is derived from my previous lives or from the moment I was born, when I gathered all the energy with me to the earth..., it is possible (13/10/03, P5).*

From another point of view, the concepts of well-being and health in ACIL are associated with the idea of balance between the body, emotions and the spirit; and one has to have trust in the body. The following excerpts are from two interviews; they illustrate participants' self-awareness and sense of well-being:

*As ACIL also emphasizes the importance of attending to our bodies, I really care about my body, because my body is the site in which my soul dwells. Besides, your cellular systems will be activated if your body is healthy, and a healthy body will help you to be more aware of yourself. ...so, a deep self-awareness is derived from the activation of the organic and cellular systems; therefore, the well-being of each of the bodily, mental, and the spiritual dimensions is actually correlated. You will be healthy in your mentality if your body is healthy, and your mental well-being will give you a positive attitude toward your spiritual well-being. I treat any symptom as a signal to attend to my body. Your body itself knows better than any doctor in deciding what kind of treatment you need and how you should be treated. ...In fact, you will be healed as long as you have trust in your body (23/10/03, P10).*

*I am aware of each part of my body, emotions, mentality and spirit, and their connections to each other; thus, I can keep myself well through self-awareness (05/01/04, P33).*

It is seen from the above-mentioned examples that deas such as balance, self-awareness, trust and flexibility are related to the notion of health for New Age people. Self-awareness is regarded as a necessary precondition for true health. A female interviewee who is working as a Seth consulter implied the importance of trust in oneself and self-awareness:

*We say that your belief creates your own reality...for cancer patients we would say that all healing is centred on the belief, 'you create your own reality.' Some people would be very angry if you said that 'your cancer is your own making.' However, you cannot read this sentence literally. The meaning of this sentence is that if you can create it, you also have the power to change it! ... (11/02/04, P32)*

For New Age people, it is through self-awareness that individuals become aware that they are responsible for their state of being and illness. In the process of healing, no matter what New Age practices people become involved in, their focus is on self-transformation by means of reconstructing self-identity. Healing in the New Age not only helps participants deal with problems of self-identity through reflexivity, but it also cultivates a sensibility toward self-healing rather than creating a client-counsellor relationship, as in the case of psychotherapy. In addition, as far as healing goes, New Age practices help people focus on the present and not on the future, because they involve a spiritual transformation that is beyond any rational risk assessment of the possible outcome of an individual's 'self-reflexive project'.

## 6.3 New Age and 'Alternative' Expert Knowledge

The examination of the issue of self-identity by Giddens, as discussed in Chapter 3, helps us identify some of the ways in which the NAM responds to conditions of life in late modern societies. However, there are two questions that deserve further examination: firstly, what are the distinctive problems of late-modernity? And secondly, in what situations do people seek various types of therapy to help them to reconstruct their self-identity? In this regard, arguments over issues concerning self-identity and the therapeutic phenomena in late modernity, as described by Giddens, offer insight into issues of self-identity and healing in the New Age. I will discuss Giddens's analysis while analysing my interview materials.

### 6.3.1 Self-Identity and Life Politics

According to Giddens (1991), one of the most significant phenomena in late modernity is 'the construction of the self' (self-identity) as a 'reflexive project'. As risk culture is a fundamental characteristic of late modernity, the process involves becoming conscious of the environment of risks, and of how people make risk assessments. As discussed in Chapter 3, the third dimension of risks – 'the threat of personal meaninglessness' – directly relates to the issue of the self (Giddens 1990, pp.100-111). Personal meaninglessness becomes a fundamental psychological problem as existential issues have been institutionally excluded in late modern society (Giddens 1991, p.9). Giddens suggests that in the process of the construction of the self (the reflexive project), risk awareness induces anxieties in the self that motivate it to colonise, or seek to control, the future. In other words, people would develop a 'life plan'



based on their risk assessment and their self-identity in order to make their lives secure. Giddens indicates that the positive consequence of the construction of the self for people is the emergence of 'life politics'. In the context of existential questions related to the moral arena of personhood, according to Giddens, life politics is 'the politics of self actualisation' (1991, p.243) that involves life decisions, which in turn reflect ideas about how people should live; and self-identity is affected by these questions. In this regard, moral issues affecting, for example, the body and gender are raised as important concerns for people in identifying themselves in late modernity (pp217-223).

However, for people who have become involved in the NAM, their life politics is closer to an ethic of 'go with the flow' when they are making their life decisions, instead of judging right from wrong. Their internal referentiality is the self, which is created and based on the spiritualities they have internalised. The following extracts illustrate this point:

*I feel that what I want is a life with a constant flow of love; the flow is not physical, but a kind of rhythm that I can follow. (12/10/03, P3)*

*I would go with the flow just like water...however, the point about 'going with the flow' does not mean 'careless.'... the point is to follow my inner flow, to follow the flow of my life. (24/12/03, P21)*

The idea of self-actualisation for most New Age people in my sample is related to the issue of self-identity, such as to know oneself, to be oneself, to know the purpose of life and what one wants. For example, a female interviewee made the point that the most important thing in her life is to know what she wants:

*What I really want for my life is ...to know how to love myself and how to balance myself in the aspect of body, mind and spirit.... In the past... I ignored what I want. And now I am getting to realize what I want. (13/10/03, P5)*

Another interviewee, a male police officer, said:

*I feel that the most important thing to me is my life mission. ...there are two areas that are interesting to me, one is about the major part of my work, crime scene investigation, I want to advance myself in this field and then contribute my specialty to the society; the other is in the field of spiritual practices. I have thought that I want to be a spiritual teacher. (03/08/04, P38)*

A few interviewees are more concerned about the welfare of human beings and society; and the purpose of life for them is to bring love to the world or to help transform society:

*...that is, to extend the infinite Power, infinite love.... I hope that everyone could break the illusions of separation and boundaries, no matter what kind of boundary it is...human boundary, religious, cultural or gender boundaries, boundary between animals and plants...such a split boundary among lives. We have to know that there are no boundaries...I am working on this... (11/12/03, P19)*

*I am still in the process, that is, to help purify the whole society; therefore, what I want for my life is not only to gain personal growth but also to help the whole world progress. (27/12/03, P23)*

The life politics of New Age people in my sample are also manifested in their opinions about the idea of a 'life plan'. First, my interview materials reveal that their opinions on life plans changed after they became involved in the NAM; below is one of the examples:

*In the past I felt that it (life-planning) was very important. However, it is no longer important to me since I encountered the New Age...*

*From the perspective of New Age, human goals are artificial and not from the Universe. What the Universe offers you is to be yourself, and this is enough. You are the God! You would become mediocre if you pursued the secular goals... I feel that living in the moment and making an effort to do things for today is more important.*  
(14/11/03, P16)

Second, interviewees who had suffered from diseases and then encountered the New Age strongly opposed the idea of life-planning: for example, a 42 year old female who is a business employer and has been suffering from cancer, said:

*There is no need to plan for my life since I have got the disease. You are in the world of changes. What else can you plan for your life? I used to think...I have to buy insurances, plan for the retired life in the future, etc.. But you break down when you fall ill. Can it really allow you to plan anything? ...I feel that I can't help but happily live in the moment, and this is good enough (laughing)! (16/02/04, P33)*

A similar opinion is held by another interviewee, a 48 year old female who is well but was very ill and has had a near-death experience:

*In the past it was important (to me), but now I don't think so. In the past I was also programmed (by the society) to be a person who used to plan everything. Now I understand that it is so important to live in the moment; because we have experienced the near-death moment, we know very well ...you do not think that much anymore and you are to live in the moment to the fullest as you don't know what will happen to you in the next moment. Of course, this is not an excuse to escape.... We who have suffered from diseases... clearly see how important the present moment is. It is so important to focus on the moment. (05/01/04, P26)*

As for making a plan for the future regarding aspects that are important

to one's life, most interviewees think that it must be a plan with spiritual goals; otherwise it is meaningless. There are some reasons for people to support this opinion, according to the interview materials. The first point is that life is full of changes and unpredictable:

*OK. I think to understand the goal for your life is very important. However, it is unnecessary if you pursue a goal that requires you to go to every expedient and to secure personal gain. As the saying goes, Man proposes but God disposes. (13/10/03, P4)*

*When you are getting older and older, you realize that it is not possible to plan for your life...you are cheated by your ego to plan and to control just in order to feel secure. (16/10/03, P6)*

Second, they believe that our souls make plans and set up goals/lessons for our life before we were born. The following three extracts illustrate this:

*I often tell myself that you would secure your future as long as you do your best at every moment. Your soul knows very well about your life purpose. It would make arrangements for you to complete it (your purpose) as long as you do your jobs well at every moment. (23/10/03, P9)*

*People make plans for their life that must be something to do with soul aspiration; therefore, it is also related to soul growth. (24/10/03, P11)*

*I believe that everyone has decided his/her lessons in this life before he/she was born. If everyone could see very well his/her lessons, he/she would put himself/herself in the right place and do things he/she felt satisfied with. (24/11/03, P18)*

In addition, the issue of self-identity is considered by the interviewees to be one of the reasons for supporting life-planning with spiritual purposes:

*What I can do is to clearly know what I like to do, and I go for it.... I do what I want to do at the moment, and then God would naturally*

*lead me to the next step. (30/10/03, P13)*

*It depends on how you set up the goal. Is it what you want? Or is it set up according to social values or the expectations of others? ... when a person sets a specific goal for his life... he has to ask himself... Do you know who you are? Will you be happy and be proud of being you? (15/01/04, P29)*

The above analysis of life politics shows that my informants believe that New Age spiritualities shape their views of the self, life and the world. There is some confirmation in their statements of Giddens's notion of life politics, but there is also one striking difference. Whereas Giddens expects that self-reflexivity in a culture of risk is likely to make people adopt an instrumental or calculative attitude towards the planning of life, the response of New Agers in Taiwan to awareness of risks is to turn inwards and to allow their lives to flow in accordance with their sense of being in tune with their 'real' self-identity and their environment. So, how do New Age spiritualities and practices influence them, especially at 'fateful moments', in Giddens's term?

### 6.3.2 New Age as Alternative Expert Knowledge in Late Modernity

Giddens's analysis of late modern society indicates that expert knowledge plays an important role for people in every aspect of life, such as in the natural or social sciences, in the fields of medicine, counselling and therapy, and in high tech. It is regarded as an important source of guidance to people when they are facing various options in life and trying to make decisions. It is especially at 'fateful moments' that threaten ontological security and involve a new life-plan that people supposedly refer to expertise to make choices. According to Giddens, people encounter expert systems such as counselling or therapy when the decisions to be taken at fateful moments seem to have highly

significant consequences (Giddens 1991, 143).

My interview materials reveal that the New Age does play an important role for participants in providing the resources to guide them in making important decisions in their life. These decisions are various, such as changing careers, dealing with the death of loved ones and conquering grief feelings, changing major fields of study for students, retiring early from work, ending/rescuing broken marriages, or dedicating oneself to the NAM (such as leaving a prosperous career and working as a consultant in the New Age, contributing professional skills or material sources). Examples of each of the above-mentioned situations will be examined below. However, one point which should be remembered here is that interviewees' illustrations of the ways in which New Age knowledge/practices helped them make important decisions in their lives are still based on biographical reconstruction, as I have explained on pages 178-179. In addition, my discussion of their decisions is based on their own interpretations, which are in themselves analytical rather than merely descriptive. I shall illustrate their reasoning processes with a small selection of responses to 'fateful' situations.

### ***Changing Careers***

A female interviewee who had worked as a social worker in a hospital for about 15 years was influenced by the idea of the New Age at the age of 35 and then, three years later, decided to leave the field of social work and join the *Chinese New Age Society* by working as a healer. She said:

*I was searching for a career in which I was interested. I was not satisfied with working in the hospital (as a social worker); but I also didn't know what kind of career would satisfy me.... Those (New Age) books gave me a lot of encouragement (to change careers)....*

*because there were so many masters who supported me from behind.  
(23/12/03, P20)*

### ***The Death of Loved Ones***

A retired schoolteacher, who was grateful for the guidance of ACIL in spiritual terms while she was facing the death of her very ill husband and dealing with various follow-up issues, said:

*It was a very big impact on me inside my heart... many people in our families thought that he committed suicide.... Maybe it was because my husband had some debts to his brother. It was not the case at all.... He was very ill and he passed away one day when I came back home. ...Then, Hakkai people often bury the body with interment. However, I asked my daughter, she suggested cremation and putting the bone ash to some temple, and many Buddhist groups came to help me. After one year the bone ash was moved to the new grave in the ancestral shrine for Yang families. ...It made me feel that, when you are walking in the path of practising light meditation, you will get many insights that guide you to deal with everything and get help. You don't have to worry about anything...now Yang families still take care of us; they all respect me and are very nice to me...everything has worked out well. (23/10/03, P10)*

### ***Changing Field of Study***

A postgraduate student recalled the time when he made the decision to change his field of study from Business to Religious Studies in the second year at university:

*I had studied in the field of Business for two years and then transferred to Religious Studies.... I didn't know that there was a field of Religious Studies until I was in the second year.... I was very interested in the field of economics and politics and was very active in related student groups... but later, after I had transferred to X*

*University to study Religious Studies, I was fully concentrated on Religions, Philosophy and Psychology. ...My life experienced a big transformation. ...and I did not participate in those student groups like I used to anymore. ...I changed my focus from outside to the inner world. (07/11/03, P15)*

### ***Early Retirement***

A 43 year old female, a home-maker, was a hospital nurse for over 20 years. She is a very active participant in New Age activities and has hosted a regular New Age study group at home since late 2002. She encountered the idea of the New Age in 2001 while she was struggling with her nursing job. Then, she decided to retire early from her nursing job in her 40s. She is sure that it was a right decision and affirms her self-identity:

*People often asked me, 'you are still young, why are you staying home?' If I hadn't encountered the New Age I would have been discouraged by this opinion and would thought that I was useless...maybe would feel unhappy too... After accepting the idea of the New Age and looking inside myself, I finally realised who I am and what my self-value is. ...Even if I don't have a job, and I stay at home, I have my value... I am the invisible power that stabilizes the home. ...I also have been moving forward; it is just that now I am doing what I really want to do, I finally can be faithful to myself. No matter what people think of my situation, I am who I am, and this is good enough. (14/11/03, P16)*

### ***Ending/Rescuing Broken Marriages***

Some people among my interviewees mentioned that the New Age had helped them make the decision to end a marriage or to make efforts to resolve marriage problems:

*It (New Age) should be helpful; for example, I decided to end my*



*previous marriage. At that time I was thinking, that is, my ex-husband was a very good person; however, in the corner of my life I would feel that, ... it seemed to me that my life should not be just working like this ... And I felt that I would make a choice at some stage of my life ...and I feel that it should be something to do with my spiritual growth. (16/07/04, P36)*

*One example is that I decided to make up with my wife; therefore, I went to south Taiwan, to the place where she lives. It happened when I had finished the fourth level of the basic lessons of ACIL. (03/08/04, P38)*

### ***Dedication to the NAM***

There are several examples among my interviewees who completely dedicated themselves to promoting the NAM. The psychiatrist, Doctor Hsu, for example, the current president of the *Chinese New Age Society*, explains the relationship between the idea of Seth and his life:

*It (Seth) influences every decision that I have made for my life; including later why I chose to work in the Banciao Branch, Taipei County Hospital ...because I can do what I want to do there (to promote the idea of Seth)! My mother asked me why did I not choose to work in Tai-Dai or Taipei Veterans' General Hospital...I would be more famous according to social reputation...but, I would be limited if I worked there. Now, there is only one psychiatrist (me) in the hospital, I can do what I really want to do (laughing)...I am a person who needs a bigger space and freedom...many decisions I have made...including taking the position of the president (for the Chinese New Age Society)...in fact, to be honest, I never enjoy power and hate to make decisions for those trivial matters... however, no people would take the position if I did not take it, this was the first reason; second, I want to do something meaningful after taking the position of the president. (15/01/04, P29)*

My observation and analysis of the way in which the New Age is said to help its participants brings me back to a reconsideration of Giddens's analysis of late modern society. Giddens regards 'expert systems' as devices that have superseded 'traditions' as guidelines for living in late modernity. For example, he argues that people regard expert systems such as counselling or therapy as an important source of guidance in life politics; it helps them make important decisions at fateful moments in their lives. However, it seems to me that Giddens's arguments omit an important aspect of late modernity, namely the New Age.

The New Age is all about self-reflexivity because it teaches people how to be themselves, how to find their self-identity and how to deal with their problems, as we have seen in this chapter. Although Giddens notes that a resurgence of new forms of spirituality and religions in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century in the West is evident, they seem to have no connection with life politics, and are only regarded as the 'return of the repressed' (Giddens, 1991, p.207). However, the above discussion and analysis shows that the New Age can function as a source of guidance for my interviewees in many aspects of their lives. My informants credit the NAM with helping them to resolve many issues, from answering questions about the meaning of existence to reconstructing their self-identity; from shaping social concerns in terms of spiritual perspectives to constructing a whole picture of the reality of life.

In addition to individuals' knowledge of the New Age, other aspects of 'expert systems' are also evident in the NAM in, for example, the teaching functions of organisations. In their research on Pranic healing in the Philippines, Beckford and Suzara (1994) examine the importance of teaching

functions designed by the organisation for assisting participants to gain and improve their skills through seminars, workshops, conferences and demonstrations of healing. However, some New Age practices in Taiwan are much more informal than Pranic Healing; participants are more focused on their personal knowledge and learning than on teaching them to others.

Taking the examples of two popular New Age practices in Taiwan, ACIL and ACIM, workshops or seminars are organised to help participants improve their understanding of spirituality instead of training potential teachers, which is different from the case of Pranic Healing. For example, the spokesperson as well as the translator of the Chinese version of ACIM host seminars once or twice a year. People who have participated in the study groups of ACIM are encouraged to attend these seminars only if they want to learn more about the theory and the practice of ACIM. In addition, no formal system of membership, certificates or training programmes are established for participants in either ACIM or ACIL in order for them to be trained to become 'teachers'. This is different from other forms of New Age healing such as Reiki, Bach Flower Remedies or Aura Soma Therapy, all of which require certification for would-be healers or consultants. Instead, those who became teachers of ACIL or ACIM are merely enthusiastic volunteers. With respect to the certification of teachers, the translator who introduced ACIL to Taiwan stated that:

*It is impossible to verify who is a teacher, and who is not. It is impossible to verify how much love the teacher has; there is no measure to assess it; people's minds are always changing... Some people perhaps have strong egos at this moment, but you don't know... perhaps when he/she begins teaching ACIL and at the time when his/her love comes out because of a deeper understanding,*

*his/her own problems are healed. Therefore, ... as I said, this is the karma between his/her (the teacher's) soul and students', which is not what we can assess. Therefore, I absolutely object to issuing any certificate, or to setting any rules for teachers of ACIL. The point is, just as the Bible, you cannot say that A can preach the Bible and B cannot. (13/10/03, P4)*

It is clear, then, that many New Age activities in Taiwan involve study and group discussion, but the NAM is also quite varied in terms of (a) the formality with which such learning processes are conducted and (b) the extent to which New Age organisations train and certify their own teachers, healers or therapists. Regardless of these differences, however, it remains the case that New Age knowledge does function as an expert system for participants in New Age activities. The New Age can therefore be regarded as an alternative source of expert knowledge in late modernity in the sense of claiming to provide well-founded principles that can allegedly explain the meaning and purpose of life – including its problems and hardships. These claims to knowledge are 'alternative' to the understandings of life that not only permeate Taiwan's social institutions but are also reproduced in accredited educational institutions.

## Conclusion

This chapter looks at the transformational experiences reported by New Age people with special reference to healing, self-identity and expert knowledge. I have examined the accounts given by my informants of their reasons for becoming involved in the NAM and of their experiences of New Age practices regarding healing, and the role of New Age spiritualities in their

lives. The interview materials were analysed in the light of Giddens's analysis of late-modernity regarding the self, in particular his concepts such as reflexivity of the self, self-identity and expert knowledge.

My first conclusion is that most people account for their involvement in the NAM in terms of attempts to resolve their problems in life. These problems include many aspects of life, such as existential questions, physical, emotional and personal problems, relationships and work. In the process of resolving their problems, my informants report experiencing self-transformation and healing. However, since I was not able to interview participants before they encountered the New Age but only after they had become involved in the NAM, the interpretations and analysis of their transformational and healing experiences must be considered as part of their 'biographical reconstruction'.

The second conclusion is that New Age is all about 'self-reflexivity', and encourages people to think reflexively of themselves in the name of spiritual growth if they wish to achieve self-transformation. The reflexivity of the self prompts people to answer existential questions. This is especially noticeable in some New Age practices regarding healing, such as ACIL, Reiki, or healing groups for Seth, where people rethink themselves, their life meanings and purposes, and therefore reconstruct their self-identity.

One of the core concepts in Giddens's analysis is self-reflexivity, which is also an important characteristic of the NAM. The fact that the New Age is all about 'self-reflexivity' corresponds to his characterisation of late-modern society. But I also use other ideas from Giddens regarding the self in late-modernity, such as life-politics and expert knowledge, to throw light on the

New Age. I was able to show that these two concepts required a degree of modification before they succeeded in making sense of the New Age in Taiwan.

The life politics of my sample of New Age participants is embodied in their attitudes towards self-actualisation and life-planning, and both are in turn connected to their self-identity. Self-actualisation for them is to know oneself, to be oneself, to know the purpose of life and what one wants. As for life-planning, my interview materials reveal that most people are opposed to the statement that 'life-planning is important to each person in modern society'. What they value is the attitude of 'living in the moment'. When life-planning is defined as 'making a plan for the future regarding aspects that are important to one's life', most interviewees think that it must be a plan based on spiritual goals. Three points are implied in their opinion: (1) life is full of change and is unpredictable; (2) our souls make plans and set up goals/lessons for our life before we are born; and (3) self-identity has to be constructed with spiritual goals well before making a plan.

New Age spiritualities shape my informants' views of the self, life and the world. In addition, such spiritualities also help them to make important decisions at fateful moments, such as changing careers, dealing with the death of loved ones, changing their field of study, taking early retirement or resolving broken marriages. According to Giddens's analysis of late-modernity, people increasingly resort to expert systems such as counselling or therapy when the decisions to be taken at fateful moments are highly consequential. My informants gave plenty of evidence of believing that the New Age also helps them make important decisions in many aspects of life. But the knowledge

that was authoritative in their eyes was on the margins of mainstream ‘expert systems’. My findings therefore point to the need to supplement Giddens’s analysis with a recognition that expertise can be either mainstream or alternative. Indeed, the argument could even be extended in the direction of claiming that alternative expert systems – such as New Age healing – are called into operation by the failures, omissions or weaknesses of the mainstream systems.

The discussion of self-transformation for participants in the NAM in Taiwan, together with the discussion in Chapter 5 about the dimension of emotions in self-transformation, point to the final conclusion that the New Age can be seen as a response to the problems of high modernity. This is because New Age spiritualities are credited with helping the self to resolve problems in people’s lives and affirming their self-identity; it allegedly helps the self to focus on the positive side of emotions such as love, hope and tranquillity; it emphasises the values of harmony and situates the self in the cosmos; and it shows respect for the environment in terms of holism instead of mere consumerism. Therefore, New Age knowledge should be included in the category ‘expert systems’ in Giddens’s analysis, and can be regarded as an ‘alternative’ expert knowledge for people in the Movement instead of being regarded as merely the ‘return of the repressed’ in late modernity.

## Chapter 7

# **Transformation III: Organisations, Networks and Globalisation in the New Age Movement**

### Introduction

Although the spiritualities of the NAM is centred on self-improvement and self-transformation, the fact that people participate in the movement reveals their preference for change not only in themselves but also in society, as I argued in Chapter 2. The preference for change in society leads us to look at the structure of the NAM in Taiwan in terms of organisations, networks and globalisation.

First, I look at the organisations and the leadership of the NAM. I outline the types of organisations, the various New Age groups, and the practices that are representative and popular in Taiwan. Then, I will examine the characteristics and the dilemmas of the leadership. The organisations and groups of the NAM are connected to one other to some degree in terms of network. Therefore, I will next locate these organisations and groups in the analytic framework of the Movement, which I have already referred to in Chapter 2. I will show that it is a dynamic network within a religious/spiritual marketplace in Taiwan. In the final section I will look at the global dimension of the Movement. I will examine three cases in terms of ‘glocalization’, including *A Course in Light* (ACIL), *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM) and the *Chinese New Age Society* (CNAS).



## 7.1 Organisations and Leadership of the NAM

### 7.1.1 The Types of Organisations and Representative Groups

There are different types of organisations in the NAM in Taiwan, including formal/informal organisations, centres and groups. I will look at groups that are popular and representative of the NAM in Taiwan, according to each type of organisation. There are basically two types of formal organisation for the NAM in Taiwan. One type entails being registered as a non-governmental organisation (NGO): the representative groups are the *Chinese New Age Society* (CNAS) and the newly established *Taiwan Reiki Culture Research Association* (TRCRA). Usually the role of the non-profit organisations involves acting as information centres to promote the idea of the NAM, providing sites for relevant events/activities, and improving communications among members. Another type of formal organisation includes the Human Resources (HR) consultancy corporations, such as *Himalaya Living Space* (HLS) or *TOPTEC*, which are funded by private capital.

Informal organisations in the NAM include virtual centres and physical centres. The virtual centres take the form of websites and information centres, such as ACIL and ACIM. The physical centres are spaces, such as the *Buddhist Life* (BL) and the *Garden of Light Carrier* (GLC), which are open for New Age groups to meet and organise activities. For example, a physical centre such as BL is located on the 6th floor of a commercial building in a cultural and educational area in Taipei: it has two meeting rooms for group activities and one distribution centre for spiritual products.

Finally, and in contrast to the formal organisations described above, there

are many study groups which are organised by volunteers, spread over different cities of Taiwan, such as the study groups for the *New Age*, study groups for the *Conversations with God*, study groups for *Orin & Daben*, each of which focuses on specific ideas, practices or books. They have loose connections with formal organisations such as the CNAS, but are independent of them. In the following section I will describe some popular groups for each type of organisation in the NAM in Taiwan.

### ***Formal Organisations***

#### Chinese New Age Society

The *Chinese New Age Society* (CNAS) is the first formal organisation<sup>51</sup> of the NAM in Taiwan, which not only uses the term ‘New Age’ in its title but also declares that its goal is to ‘affirm life, cherish environment and promote the society toward a new age, that is, open to spirituality, and to lifting the level of life.’<sup>52</sup> The CNAS regards the term ‘New Age’ as the ‘Age of Aquarius’ in terms of astrology. It was originally registered as the *Study Group for the New Age* in 1999. Two years later, in 2001, it changed its name into the *Chinese New Age Society* and launched an official bimonthly magazine *Myths* (See Figure 7.1). The CNAS advocates the idea of Seth,<sup>53</sup> where the core formula is ‘you create your own reality’. The predecessor of the organisation,

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<sup>51</sup> According to the Civic Associations Act, civil associations are divided into three categories: occupational associations, social associations, and political associations. (See <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/Fnews/FnewsContent.asp?msgid=1261&msgType=en>) In addition, CNAS as a social association falls into the subcategory ‘social service and charity associations’, according to the Operational Regulations on Permit and Registration of Social Associations. (See <http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/Fnews/FnewsContent.asp?msgid=1267&msgType=en>)

<sup>52</sup> From the official website of the CNAS:

<http://www.cnas.org.tw/index.asp?module=OrgIntro&op=Memo3>

<sup>53</sup> The complete works of Jane Roberts on Seth, more than 20 books, have been published in the US. The Fine press of Taiwan has been publishing Seth books in Chinese versions.



*Figure 7.1 The official magazine of the CNAS, the Myth.*

the first study group for *Seth*, was composed of more than ten people, including the translator Chi-Ching Wang, and ran from 1992 to 1995 for about 3 years; then, the second study group for *Seth* was organised for some other people. After that, several study groups for *Seth* were gradually organised by volunteers; some of them had been members of the first study group. Participants were faithful readers who were interested in the idea of *Seth*, and many of them had been in touch with the translator by correspondence for a period of time during the early stages of the Movement. It is reported that over 100 people had attended a social party for New Age associates, which was organised by the first study group and the translator in 1996 (Chia-Luen Chen, 2002, p.95). These study groups spread through several cities of Taiwan, including Taipei, Kaoshiung, Taichung, Hsinchu and Tainan; and they were regarded as a part of the network of the CNAS after it became established in 2001. The founder as well as the first president of the CNAS, Mrs Chi-Ching Wang, introduced the idea of the New Age to Taiwan by translating and writing books. The book series, entitled 'New Age' in the Fine Press, which was

mapped out by Mrs Wang has attracted many readers who later participated in the NAM.<sup>54</sup>



*Figure 7.2 The entrance of the Neihu centre of the CNAS, Taipei.*

The CNAS consists of 4 physical centres. The headquarters as well as the original centre (See Figures 7.2, 7.3) is located at Neihu, Taipei; there are three local centres situated in Sinjhuang City (Taipei County), Taichung, and Kaoshiung.<sup>55</sup> The main activities in the centres include study/healing groups, various courses, and counselling/therapeutic sessions. However, it is noted that most activities are centred on the issue of healing. The current president, the medically qualified Doctor Hsu, continues the idea of the founder of the CNAS to promote the idea of *Seth* and emphasise the issue of healing. As a medical doctor who specialises in cancer diseases and psychiatry, he has published over ten books and a number of CDs. Some of them are about teaching people how to heal their emotional and physical problems through the

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<sup>54</sup> 25 of my 40 interviewees reported that they had encountered the idea of the New Age by reading Mrs Wang's translations.

<sup>55</sup> Please see Appendix 6 for the location of the cities in Taiwan.

ideas of Seth; others are about body, mind and spiritual health. He also writes columns in newspapers and talks in the media and to the public. His study groups for cancer patients as well as his publications (books and CDs) and lectures have attracted many potential participants.



*Figure 7.3 A view of the Neihu centre, Taipei.*

There were 96 people who were formally registered as members of the CNAS, according to the handbook for the 2003 annual meeting. However, the centres are open to the public; activities held in the centres of CNAS are not limited to members, and in fact have attracted many more non-members. The fact that the CNAS attracts many non-members confirms the value of Gusfield's (1981) advocacy of a 'fluid' perspective on social movements. This perspective 'is less confined to the boundaries of organisations and more alive to the larger contexts of change at the same time as it is open to awareness of how the movement has consequences and impacts among nonpartisans and nonmembers as well as participants and devotees' (Gusfield, 1981, p. 323).

### Himalaya Living Space

The HR consultancy corporation, the *Himalaya Living Space* (HLS), is a representative of another type of formal organisation in the NAM in Taiwan. Situated in Taipei, the HLS was established in June 2001 by Mrs Shell Mo, one of the first generation of teachers in the *A Course in Light* (ACIL). She is also the founder and the president of the *Taiwan Reiki Culture Research Association* (TRCRA). As a successful employer who owns a medium-sized enterprise, Mrs Mo has spent her leisure time exploring the field of the New Age for over 10 years. She had been endeavoring to promote the *Reiki* healing and ACIL by teaching and hosting groups in North Taiwan, such as Taipei and Hsinchu, and overseas (Hong Kong) for about 5 years before the HLS was established. The HLS arose from one of the ACIL groups, with about 10 people, that Mrs Mo hosted. The group members met once a week in 2000 to practise ACIL at the conference room in her company. The space of the conference room was too small to contain the rapidly-growing numbers of participants in a two-month period. Therefore, Mrs Mo decided to create a proper space for the group, and that led to the emergence of the HLS as a Human Resources Consultancy rooted in the New Age.

The HLS functions as a medium-sized centre for the New Age, where it provides a variety of courses such as ACIL, Reiki, bodywork such as Tai-chi, spiritual dances, counselling, healing, and readings such as tarot and Aura Soma (See Figure 7.4). More than 100 people had learned *Reiki* from Mrs Mo before 2004.



*Figure 7.4 A view of the HLS; a session about Aura Soma.*

### ***Informal Organisations***

#### 1. Virtual Centres:

##### *A Course in Light Information Centre*

*A Course in Light* (ACIL) is a spiritual practice in which people meditate by means of twelve colours of light energy<sup>56</sup> in order to achieve spiritual transformation. It consists of several levels, with a series of lessons. The material is channelled<sup>57</sup> by Antoinette Moltzan (Toni), an American from Texas, who has been receiving messages from ‘light beings’ since 1971, and who began to publicly introduce ACIL to people in the US in 1977.

A Taiwanese American, Vicki Yang, brought ACIL to Taiwan in the mid-1980s. Having met Toni in 1983, she began studying and practising ACIL the following year in Texas, a period when her life was described as ‘confused and frustrating’ (Moltzan, 2002, p.169). After learning levels 1 and

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<sup>56</sup> See section 5.1.2 and footnote 45 in Chapter 5 about the meaning of the 12 colours of light energy in the context of ACIL beliefs and practices.

<sup>57</sup> Channelling is a phenomenon in which an individual (the channeller) claims to be possessed by spirit entities that speak through the channeller. Channelling is normally activated when the channeller is in a trance.

2 of light meditation, she returned to Taiwan in 1986 and spent one-and-a-half years completing the other levels of the course through self-learning. Later Vicki was asked to show the material to a few friends who were interested in ACIL, and this is regarded as the emergence of the ACIL group in Taiwan.

In 1993, Vicki began translating ACIL texts into Chinese, a project which lasted several years; in the meantime, she hosted a group of some 20 to 30 people who were studying the messages of ACIL, and who were practising light meditation following her oral translation of the material (Moltzan, 2002, pp.168-183). Several other groups were gradually organised and hosted by people who had learned ACIL and had become teachers during the 1993 to 2000 period. The Chinese version of the first four levels of ACIL was published in 1996. Four years later, in 2000, a public presentation of the revised Chinese version was held in Taipei. The author, the translator and also spokesperson of ACIL in Taiwan, and ten other Taiwanese teachers were introduced to participants; it was regarded as the first formal, public presentation of ACIL in Taiwan.

The website belonging to *A Course in Light Information Centre* (ACILIC) was launched in 2003 as a virtual centre to serve as a vehicle for communication among teachers and adherents. It replaced the former, now closed, office of the 'Matrix Publishing Co'. No membership system or physical centres/organisations have been established for ACIL in Taiwan apart from the virtual centre. In addition, no formal programme has been instituted in Taiwan for people to train as teachers of ACIL.





*Figure 7.5 Toni was hosting one session for one of the ACIL groups on the Buddhist Life. Viki was helping to translate Toni's talks into Chinese for participants. 12/11/03*

As a channeller of ACIL, Toni has been invited to Taiwan once or twice a year since 1998; during her visits she has given lectures, held workshops, and conducted personal reading sessions at centres which have connections with the Course (see Figure 7.5). Since 2001 ACIL has also spread from Taiwan to Hong Kong and China.

Until early 2004, there were 25 teachers in Taiwan who maintained contact with ACILIC and regularly hosted ACIL study/meditation groups. Of these teachers, 16 are in the north (Taipei), 6 in central Taiwan (Taichung), and 3 in the south (Kaoshiung). Most teachers work in business fields or are professionals. One is retired. Their ages range between 30 and 50 years; twenty-one out of the twenty-five are females. In addition, between 200 and 325 people<sup>58</sup> are participants in group practices. As for the number of adherents of ACIL in Taiwan, i.e., those who have learned or are learning ACIL,

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<sup>58</sup> The number is an estimate based on a source from ACILIC, who reports that normally 8-13 people attend a class.

this can be roughly estimated on the basis of the volume of sales of Chinese versions of the books. By the end of 2003, about 7,000 volumes of the book describing the first four levels of ACIL had been sold since it was first published in 1996, while 400 volumes of the Chinese version of the higher level of ACIL, the first three levels of *The Planetary Lessons*,<sup>59</sup> have been sold since its publication in late 2003.

### *The Chinese Branch of A Course in Miracles*

*A Course in Miracles* (ACIM) is a well-known spiritual work in the NAM, which is presented as three volumes with almost 1,200 pages in total. It contains three parts: the long *Text*, the *Workbook for Students* of 365 daily lessons, and the *Manual for Teachers*. ACIM emphasises that forgiveness is the primary healing source for the human mind; it reminds people that everything is illusion, but the Holy Spirit as a bridge helps them to recognise true reality. Helen Schucman, a research psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Centre, New York, received the text of ACIM by channelling during the period between 1965 and 1972. Bill Thetford, Schucman's academic supervisor, typed up the channelled text for her, together with her notes on the text. Kenneth Wapnick joined them to deal with the final editing of the text (Kemp, 2004, pp.14-15). The *Foundation for Inner Peace* (FIP) of Glen Ellen, California, a non-profit organisation for ACIM, published the text in 1975. Another affiliated non-profit organisation for ACIM is the *Foundation for A Course in Miracles* (FACIM) of Roscoe, New York, founded in 1983 by the leading exponent, Wapnick, and his wife Gloria (Weiss, 1994, p. 200).

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<sup>59</sup> A Taiwanese teacher of ACIL told me that the manuscripts of the planet levels have not been published in book form in the US, they have only been released as CDs.

The FIP has published 13 different language editions of ACIM. The Chinese version of ACIM was published in 1999, along with the establishment of the *Chinese Branch for the Course in Miracles* (CBACIM). Taiwanese American Mrs Chiao-lin Wu was appointed by the FIP to translate the book into Chinese. As a professional translator and writer, Mrs Wu's major is in systematic theology; she also has profound knowledge of Buddhism. It took seven years for her to finish the translation. She is responsible for the CBACIM, as its spokesperson. Just as in the case of ACIL in Taiwan, ACIM has no formal organisation or membership apart from the virtual centre, *the Miracle Information Centre* (MIC). The FIP sponsored the cost of building the website-based centre. However, the maintenance of the virtual centre, which is independent of the FIP, has been undertaken by a group of volunteers in Taiwan since it was launched in 1999.

The CBACIM is composed of a virtual centre, a spokesperson, an executive secretary (a volunteer) and study groups. The running of the CBACIM is dependent on a number of volunteers. The CBACIM is regarded as an important channel for the study groups for ACIM in Taiwan to communicate and obtain updated information. The translator and the spokesperson of the CBACIM publishes a monthly electronic-newsletter, and more than one thousand people have joined the mailing list. The spokesperson, Mrs Wu, visits Taiwan to give lectures and host workshops once or twice a year (see Figures 7.6). ACIM has also spread from Taiwan to Hong Kong, China and Malaysia.

Study groups are the major activity of ACIM. Currently, there are about 2000 groups around the world that are registered in the list of international

study groups of the FIP.<sup>60</sup> In Taiwan, there are 19 study groups that are registered with the MIC. Some of the groups also study books recommended by the spokesperson in addition to A Course in Miracles. In addition, there are four study groups in Malaysia which are registered on the website of the MIC as a part of the network and which have connections with the CBACIM. By the end of 2003, about 4000 volumes of the Chinese version of ACIM had been sold.



**Figure 7.6** The first workshop of the 2003 annual study of ACIM. Taipei.10/10/03

## 2. Physical Centres:

### *Buddhist Life*

The *Buddhist Life* (BL) is a distribution centre for religious and spiritual products (especially for Buddhism) including books, together with two conference rooms (see Figures 7.7). The centre is located on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of a

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<sup>60</sup> See <http://www.miraclecenter.org/>. However, the actual number of study groups around the world might be much more than the registered groups in the list because there is no obligation for a study group of ACIM to submit and join the list. For example, there is only one study group shown in the list when clicking the country ‘Taiwan’ on the website of FIP. However, there are currently 19 study groups in Taiwan.

commercial building in Guting, Taipei. It was established in 1989 by a couple who are spiritual and whose aim is to spread information about body, mind, and spirit. Although it is not a centre only for the NAM, it hosted the first public lecture addressing the New Age in 1990 in Taiwan. It was a lecture that was organized by the founder of the CNAS, Mrs Wang, and by other early participants in order to promote the book series entitled 'New Age' in the Fine Press. The distribution centre provides spaces for lectures, meetings, activities and workshops and is open to any religious/spiritual groups.



*Figure 7.7 A view of the Buddhist Life.*

It is reported that the number of New Age activities in the centre has been growing since 2001, while Buddhist activities have decreased.<sup>61</sup> In addition, many people who participate in the NAM are used to purchasing books here. Some people were introduced to the idea of New Age by the site owner while they were shopping in the centre, and began to participate in the NAM. Currently, New Age activities in the centre include study groups,

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with the site owner.

courses about healing, hypnosis, Yoga, tarot/astrology and Aura Soma reading.

### 3. Study Groups:

A study group is normally hosted or organized by volunteers who are interested in a specific topic or activity in the NAM. In addition to groups such as ACIL, ACIM and Seth, which are organised by specific organisations, as I have mentioned, there are some other groups that are more independent but maintain loose connections with centres such as the CNAS. These groups are open to people who are interested in the chosen topic and materials. The numbers of groups and of people in each group are fluid and unstable. The group meeting is usually held at places provided by group members. I describe below one of the popular groups in the NAM in Taiwan, the study group for the *Conversations with God*.

#### *Study Groups for the Conversations with God (CWG)*

The translations of the book series *Conversations with God* by Neale Donald Walsch have been bestsellers in recent years in the spiritual market in Taiwan.<sup>62</sup> It is reported that in 1993 Walsch wrote a letter to God to express his frustration — and unexpectedly received a response — which was at a time when his life had been in great difficulty for a while. He then was moved to continue writing, and ended up with remarkable answers to his questions about matters such as health, money, relationships, and sexuality. Since then, the conversation has been going on between God and him, covering issues on every aspect of life for human beings. The first volume of

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<sup>62</sup> According to one of the editors who are responsible for the New Age series in the Fine Press, their bestseller is the series *Conversations with God* by Walsch, which had sold about thirty thousand volumes up to early 2004. The editor reported that readers of the *Conversations with God* series include Buddhists.

*Conversations with Gods* was published in the USA 1997, and soon became a bestseller. The next parts of the conversation was published as Book 2 (1999) and Book 3 (1999). Since then, the *Conversations with God* series has achieved remarkable success: Walsch had published 22 books for the series up to March 2006.<sup>63</sup> The *Conversations with God* has been published in 33 other languages around the world.<sup>64</sup>

The first study group in Taiwan for the *Conversations with God (CWG)* appeared in 1998 when the Chinese version of Volume One was published. It was a group with about five to ten people who were interested in reading and discussing the book. They met each other once a month in a group meeting. Currently, there are six study groups for the *Conversations with God* series in Taiwan: five of them are in Taipei, one is in Kaoshiung. However, the emergence and the survival of each group is fluid; therefore, it is difficult to estimate the number of people in each group and how long each group has lasted.

In addition to physical study groups, there are five virtual groups for the *Conversations with God*, whose members participate in user groups on the Internet. The original website for the CWG was built in 2000 as a part of the network of the CNAS. Two years later, in 2002, an independent website for the CWG was launched to replace the original website. The new website is regarded as an information centre, and the website manager is a volunteer. According to the website manager, about 170 people have registered as members of the virtual centre and have joined the mailing list. 50 out of the 170 registered members are from China. Having been sponsored since

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<sup>63</sup> See <http://www.cwg.org/main.php?p=About&sub=Books> for a list of publications by Walsch.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.cwgwebstore.com/store/foreignpublishers.html>.

mid-2004 by a faithful reader of the books, the website manager is optimistic about the future, and expects to introduce more information about the *Conversations with God* and to communicate with the *Humanity's Team* (HT) in the US. The HT is one of the organisations that have been established by the books' author, Walsch, in order to promote spiritual life around the world. Although it is in the early stage of planning, the goal for the CWG is to establish an NGO in Taiwan as a local organisation of the HT.

### 7.1.2 The Dilemma of Leadership

Leadership in each group/organisation is another important issue which reveals some distinctive features of the NAM in Taiwan. Research on the NAM in the West shows that characteristics such as 'seekership' and 'decentralised authority' protect the Movement from formalisation and hierarchy. For example, Michael York reasons that the New Age has 'no central authority' and consequently means many things to many different people; and this is also evident in the various claims made to spiritual leadership in New Age organisations (York, 1995, pp.34-35). Similarly, Steven Sutcliffe's examination of the seekers and gurus in the modern world indicates that seekers 'actively...undermine institutional forms', and either 'struggle to maintain organisational structures or repudiate them altogether' (Sutcliffe, 2000b, p.29). The underlying issue is what Wallis (1974) called the 'epistemological individualism' of those religious and spiritual movements that lack unambiguous sources of collective authority. Where 'clients' of New Age products and services are free to exercise their personal choice in a market situation, the producers have relatively little control over them (Wallis, 1974 p.97). It is only sect-like groups with charismatic leaders and/or authoritarian



forms of organisation that can overcome the precariousness of the market. In Wallis's (1974, p.304) terms:

*Where the sect is 'epistemologically' authoritarian, the cult is 'epistemologically' individualistic. The individual member determines what components of the belief system offered to him he will accept. There is no locus of authority beyond the individual which is vested with the right to determine heresy.*

There is no evidence that any organisations in the NAM in Taiwan, however, are likely to develop in a sectarian direction.

In Taiwan, those people who are responsible for groups/organisations emphasise certain values in New Age spiritualities, such as the self and freedom, and are aware of the risk of formalisation; therefore, the development of organisations in the NAM has been limited especially by the leadership style of the first generation of its spokespersons. For example, the CNAS rejected commercial advertisements, under the influence of the leadership of the founder, Mrs Wang, between 1999 and 2003. She expressed this opinion about the development of the organisation:

*What I don't like about things commercial is ...it is to sell things to you...such as ..marketing...I don't feel like supporting such ideas...*

*Many people have said to me, there is no promotion at all if you insist on doing things in your way; you are just individualistic if you reject organisations.... If it (New Age) is good and you want to try, then you are welcome! If you don't want to try...then it is your responsibility but not mine... That is to say, everyone takes responsibility for himself. You cannot say that it is my fault not to bring it to everyone. I have done this (to establish the CNAS and to map out the book series in Fine Press), but it is your choices to take it or not. (08/01/04, P27)*

In addition to this kind of resistance to formalisation, group-leadership in the process of decision-making is also evident in the NAM in Taiwan. For example, the spokesperson of ACIL, Mrs Vicky Yang, explained how they run ACILIC:

*I have been against the idea of institutionalization since a long time ago...as I feel that organisations would corrupt it once it became institutionalized and then a hierachy would show up...therefore, at this stage, what we need is a group-leadership... and so I invited some early participants who had practised the Course with me in the beginning in the 80s....together we six people formed a sort of committee to promote the Course... any public activities or policies related to the Course would have to get the permission of over two-thirds of people to proceed. (13/10/03, P4)*

In one sense, these leaders in the NAM are aware that the nature of organisations and the spirit of the movement are incompatible with each other, and therefore they reject the strategy of commercialisation and bureaucratic organisation. In another sense, however, they still have to rely on structures (groups or organisations) in order to transmit or promote the idea of New Age. This seems to be a continuing dilemma for leadership in the NAM. Nevertheless, the situation could slowly change once leaders recognise the importance of public promotion. For example, the founder of the CNAS, Mrs Wang, did not do much public speaking during her leadership. But she encouraged the current president, Doctor Hsu, to promote the idea of Seth through a circuit of public speaking in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, the US and Canada. I will explain this situation later in the section on globalisation. At present, the NAM in Taiwan does not contain any organisations that approximate to Heelas's (1991) category of 'cults for capitalism'.

## 7.2 Networking in a Spiritual Marketplace

It can be seen from the previous section that the organisations of the NAM in Taiwan are relatively loose in terms of structures and systems. Moreover, there are various connections between groups and organisations in the Movement, which is, however, dynamic and fluid. Therefore, a more useful concept for analysing the connections between groups in the NAM is 'network'. John Barnes (1954) was the first scholar to propose the idea of a 'net' when examining informal social relationships. He suggested that a net was constituted of lines and nodes: the former refers to individual relationships while the latter represents the points where the lines intersect (the individuals involved) (Hirst, 2003). In the field of New Age studies, Michael York (1995) uses the word 'network' to describe the five types of linkages that operate in the New Age movement and the Neo-pagan movement, as I outlined in Chapter 2. However, he did not specify his understanding of 'network' clearly enough to allow me to test it in connection with the NAM in Taiwan. Therefore, my aim in this section is to examine the network of the NAM in Taiwan according to the analytic framework that I proposed in Chapter 2.

It is essential to emphasise the diversity of types of organisation in the NAM in Taiwan, including formal and informal organisations. As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the formal type of organisations can be divided into two sub-types: not-for-profit and profit-seeking organisations. On the other hand, the informal organisations include virtual centres, physical centres and study groups. The way in which participants, groups and associations connect to each other is the key to the type of networks at work in the NAM. In fact, these organisations and groups are not independent of each

other in terms of marketing but are interwoven into an invisible but dynamic web. The NAM in Taiwan can be understood as a fluid spiritual social movement with three levels (NAM, NAMOs, and NAMPs), and can be regarded as a loosely structured network. In the following section I will illustrate each of the levels and explain the dynamic of the network.

### 7.2.1 Dynamic of the Network of the Movement

As discussed in Chapter 2, McCarthy and Zald's (1977) three-level analysis of social movements is applicable to the NAM in relation to its ways of mobilising resources. The first and most abstract level is the NAM, representing a set of values, opinions and beliefs that favour changes (transformations) for participants that promise to improve themselves, aspects of their life or the whole of human existence. Therefore, people participate in their chosen practices or groups in the movement, such as ACIM, ACIL, the CWG or the CNAS, in order to achieve transformations. In this sense of the term, a social movement is merely a 'collective preference for change'. The second level is New Age Movement Organisations (NAMOs), and we have looked at these representative organisations of the NAM in Taiwan in the previous section. Each of the organisations has a set of goals and shares the broad preference for change of the NAM. Most groups in the NAM share the idea of spiritual growth and the concepts of the New Age, but have their own specific goals and methods of pursuing them. For example, the CNAS defines the New Age as 'the age of Aquarius', and the purpose of establishing the CNAS is to 'affirm life, to cherish the environment, and to promote the

society toward a New Age when human minds are wide open and raised',<sup>65</sup> although the organisation advocates the idea of Seth above all else. The third level is the New Age Movement Participants (NAMPs), who consume and/or produce New Age products and services. They are the 'deployable agents' who are mobilised by the NAMOs in pursuit of the NAM's general preference for change. The three levels of the movement are, of course, interdependent, but for analytical purposes it is useful to distinguish between them.

The network of the NAM is the flexible structure that holds all the elements of the three levels together. The point where NAMPs meet, congregate, interact and consume products is a Node, including primary nodes and secondary nodes, as I explained in Chapter 2. Lines connecting nodes represent communications between centres and groups in the network of the NAM. Connections among centres and groups in terms of communication can be divided into three degrees: strong, weak and fluid connection. In addition, personal networks and Internet interactions are also part of the dynamic of the network of the NAM in the religious and spiritual marketplace in Taiwan. They contribute heavily towards the expansion of the NAM to overseas.

### ***Primary Nodes***

Primary nodes are important to NAMOs and NAMPs because they are points where many participants congregate and attend workshops and activities about the New Age. Formal organisations such as CNAS and HLS, fall into this category. Some NAMOs without physical centres, such as ACIL, ACIM, CWG, sometimes use other primary nodes for group meetings, workshops or

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.cnas.org.tw/index.asp?module=OrgIntro&op=Memo2>

cross-group activities. Primary nodes are more difficult than secondary nodes for non-participants to gain access to, unless they have connections with NAMPs.

### *Secondary Nodes*

Secondary nodes are points where people congregate or consume spiritual products. They are open not only to participants of the NAM but also to potential participants. Some physical centres such as the *Buddhist Life* (BL) have the characteristics of secondary nodes because they also function as distribution centres for spiritual products, including books. Secondary nodes can be bookstores, shops for organic/vegetarian products, or various New Age shops. There are a few New Age shops in Taiwan. In addition to New Age shops where all products are related to the movement, people might occasionally encounter the New Age at general bookstores and then become involved in the movement.

Although it is difficult to estimate the numbers of people who have been attracted to the NAM via a secondary node, I indicated in Chapter 6 that some of my interviewees encountered the New Age while shopping for books. Some of them, for example, were introduced to reading books about the New Age at BL by the storeowner. In addition, people could also encounter the New Age at shops for organic/vegetarian products because they might pick up brochures or messages about the New Age there and then become interested. In this regard, one informant in my research did mention that he had encountered the New Age (ACIL) while having lunch at a shop for vegetarians. He reported that he read an advertisement for ACIL in a free booklet in the shop and was attracted to the message. He then contacted the translator of

ACIL and started to practise it.

It is also common for people to get information about other religions/spiritualities at secondary nodes such as BL or shops for organic/vegetarian products because there is no obvious segregation between New Age, Buddhism, and popular religion in terms of spiritual/religious marketplace in Taiwan.

### ***Lines: Communication between Centres and Groups***

Although each centre or group has its network for the NAMPs, they are connected with each other to different degrees in terms of communication. Some are strong connections: for example, CWG is registered as a part of CNAS, and therefore information exchanges between them are more frequent than with other groups. A weak connection refers to when communication takes place between centres and groups as cross-boundary activities. For example, CNAS would support groups such as ACIL or ACIM when they wanted to use its centre for cross-group activities. Communication between CNAS, ACIL and ACIM can be regarded as a weak connection because it only happens when there are cross-group activities. A fluid connection refers to when there is communication at a personal level between centres and groups. For example, there are no formal communications between ACIL and ACIM, but the leaders of the two groups are friends; therefore, communication between the two groups is mediated by friendship on the personal level.

Although there are connections between centres and groups in the network of the NAM in Taiwan, most connections are based on personal relationships between group leaders/teachers. This kind of network that links some New Agers together is loose, informal, and sometimes personal, which in

a way is different from the 'seekership' in the 'cultic milieu' identified by Colin Campbell (1972). Campbell argues that the cultic milieu, as a deviant and counter-culture, is outside the 'orthodox' (Christian) culture, and that seekership is the common characteristic among cultic organisations (1972, pp.122-124). However, when the NAM as a part of the 'cultic milieu' of the West was introduced to Taiwan, it developed different styles and features. The characteristics of counter-culture are not evident in the case of the NAM in Taiwan, as I indicated in Chapter 4. It is regarded as a part of the plural spiritual/religious market, where the distinction in Campbell's analysis between deviant and orthodox is absent. Neither the NAM nor Christianity is mainstream in Taiwan; both are 'deviant' in this market, compared to the high percentage of believers in Buddhism and folk religion.

### ***Personal Networks***

As I mentioned in Chapter 6, some people encountered the idea of the New Age through personal relationships with friends, classmates, or family. In addition, another kind of personal relationship, such as with individual practitioners and group leaders, can also function as the agent between Nodes, especially in the case of secondary nodes. These people sometimes contact each other in order to organise a larger activity or workshop that is not limited to group members. Moreover, it is in such cross-group activities that NAMPs would be likely to introduce potential participants to the NAM. This kind of connection is based on a personal network because the resources mobilised for activities are not organised at the level of NAMOs but by NAMPs. In short, the NAM in Taiwan is a decentralised, networked movement in which personal, voluntary mobilisations are more important than organisational mobilisations.



For example, Mrs Wu, the spokesperson of the CBACIM, started a schedule of annual study meetings in 2003, which aims to help participants understand the theory and practice of ACIM. As there is no physical organisation but only a virtual centre, MIC, and volunteers for the CBACIM, all the preparation and administrative work for the 2003 annual study meeting was supported by volunteers. Volunteers were sought on the basis of the personal network of the secretary. She mobilised volunteers from study groups for ACIM to organise the two-day annual study meeting.

### ***Internet Interaction***

Online communication is an important and economic medium through which New Age groups try to spread information, to expand and to promote the Movement. Internet communication includes personal email exchanges, user groups, mailing lists, personal websites, and public websites such as virtual centres, and the official websites of physical organisations/centres. In this regard, York (1995, pp.88-9) and other scholars note the importance of the 'worldwide communications network' in their analysis of the NAM without exploring the issue in depth. York merely made a brief observation that, 'with the world network growing at an unprecedented rate, a technical basis alone is being established for the expected and extreme shift in consciousness that comprises the New Age with its millennial overtones' (p.89).

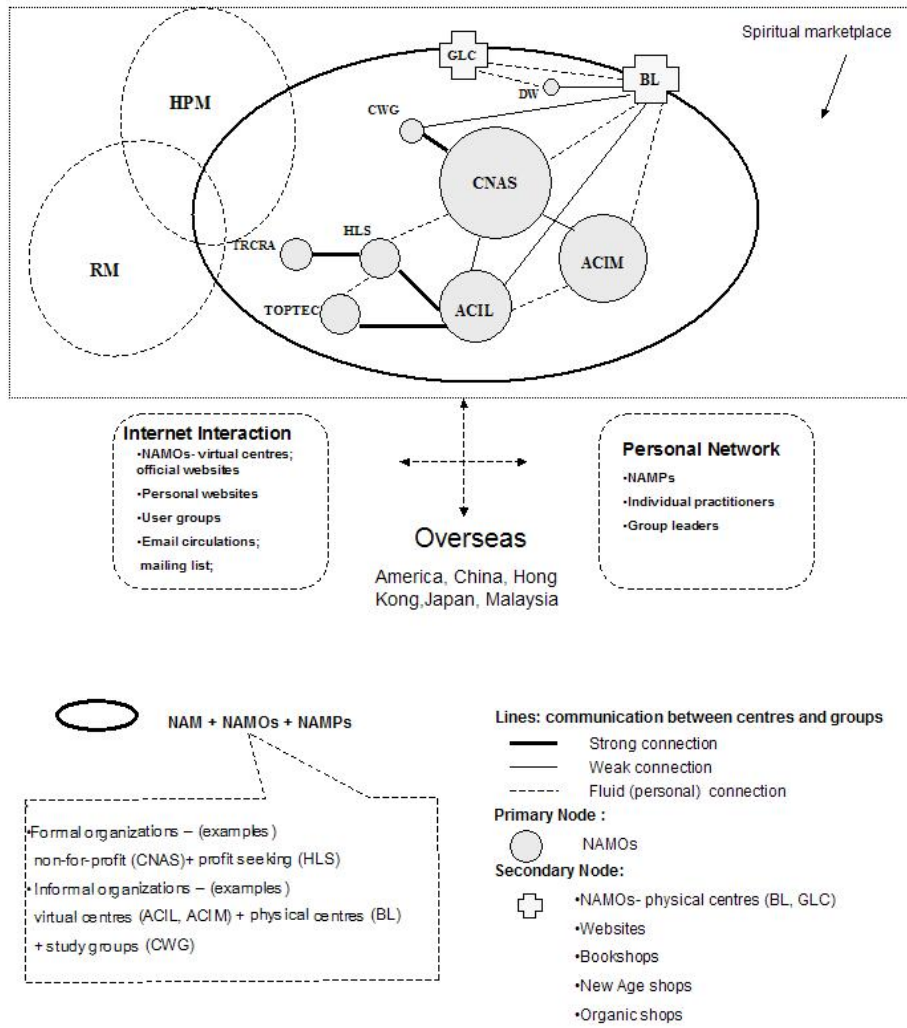
The importance of the internet in the network of the NAM in Taiwan is felt not only by virtual centres such as ACIL and ACIM but also by other New Age groups. Most groups have their own official website; some groups such as CWG and ACIM have also established virtual study groups by creating a message board for discussions on their official website. In addition, the

internet also helps the NAM in Taiwan to contribute establishing towards world-wide communication. More details in this regard will be given in the next section.

Secondary nodes, personal networks, and Internet interactions are three important opportunities for the NAMPs to contact each other and to expand the Movement in the religious/spiritual marketplaces in Taiwan. The network of the NAM in Taiwan is mapped diagrammatically in Figure 7.11, which depicts the ways in which centres and groups connect to each other. In the next section I will show that these connections, especially through personal networks and the Internet, can also enable the movement to develop a process of 'parallel glocalization'.

In sum, I have tried to go beyond the conventional depiction of the NAM as a network. My argument has been that the NAM in Taiwan is a particular kind of network that involves a web-like structure of relations and communications at three analytically different levels: participants, organisations and the overall set of values, beliefs and practices that express a preference for change.

**Figure 7.8 The Network of the NAM in Taiwan\***



*\* This is a more elaborate version of Figure 2.1.*

### 7.3 Globalisation: Parallel ‘Glocalization’

Just as the development of high tech knowledge and skills in the field of communication has transformed the world into a ‘global village,’ the NAM in Taiwan is also inseparable from global forces. As can be seen from its history, as outlined in Chapter 4, a few people who had encountered the New Age in the US introduced the idea to this country in the early 1980s. The fact that the

NAM did not originate in Taiwan but was imported from the US is not sufficient by itself to prove the influence of globalisation. But some further features of the NAM's pattern of development in Taiwan support the general idea that globalisation is an important part of the context in which it has come to operate. Scholars in the field of New Age study who have discussed the issue of globalisation (Inoue, 1996; Frisk, 2001; Hanegraaff, 2001; Introvigne, 2001) have tended to focus their discussions on the extent to which globalisation implies cultural homogenization or cultural heterogenization, and on the role of Western culture in the process.

For example, Frisk (2001) viewed globalisation as a phenomenon that was strongly connected to increasingly worldwide communication. One of the results of globalisation is therefore the growth of cultures that he calls 'transnational cultures or deterritorialized cultures'. The New Age, according to Frisk, can be seen as a 'large-scale, decentralized religious subculture' (pp.31-32). He regards it as one of the transnational cultures that relates to accelerated eclecticism; and the emphasis is on an inner experience of the unity of multicultural elements (p.33). However, he indicates that globalisation in some respects (including the New Age) still means 'Westernisation'. In his opinion, although there are increasing mixtures of cultures in all parts of the world, the directions of this mixture are unequal because the West is more in control in the process of globalisation, and is in a more privileged position. The New Age as a contemporary transnational culture, therefore, represents Westernisation in his view (Frisk, 2001).

In addition, Hanegraaff (2001) argues that the claim that the New Age represents an emerging global spirituality is in fact an ideology ('political in

nature', in Hanegraaff's phrase, p.28). He suggests that American values of democracy and religious freedom are closely linked to the New Age phenomenon of a 'spiritual supermarket' in which people are 'free' to choose, within but not beyond the limitations and the rules of the system. Therefore, according to Hanegraaff, the New Age is more properly seen as an aspect of global Americanisation.

Introvigne (2001), on the other hand, pays attention to 'glocalization', through which the global is becoming local and the local, is becoming global. He argues that the old 'New Age' has experienced a crisis and that people in the movement have tried to redefine the term. As a result, for example, the term 'Next Age' has appeared in Italy to replace 'New Age'. In addition, he notes that the process of glocalisation can apply to areas such as Latin America or Japan, where national or regional forms of the New Age have in turn influenced the global phenomenon without disrupting it.

The term 'glocalization', which first appeared in the *Harvard Business Review*, was coined by Japanese economists, and has been discussed extensively in Robertson's work on globalisation (1992). Glocalisation means 'the simultaneity - the co-presence - of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies' (Robertson, 1997, p.221). In other words, Robertson suggests that globalisation is not only a process of 'making things the same' but also of making things different. The modern world is a place where there is a much greater interdependence at national and regional levels than in the pre-modern period. Therefore, the relationship between universality and particularity is so dynamic that universalisation and particularisation are both happening at the same time in the process of globalisation.

One of my research questions relating to the NAM in Taiwan and regarding globalisation is to examine to what extent Taiwanese people refract the influence of global forces. In my following discussions I will argue that the NAM cannot be simply regarded as a product of Americanisation or Westernisation. Instead, it is more appropriately understood in terms of 'glocalization'. And since the process of globalisation is not necessarily happening in sequence from one place to another place, but in several places at the same time, I shall consider it as 'parallel glocalization'. I devised this term to emphasise something that has been ignored in studies of the New Age, namely, the fact that the refraction of global forces proceeds simultaneously in different places where it may appear that the New Age is spreading as a homogeneous entity. In fact, when New Age ideas and practices are exported from Taiwan to Hong Kong and Malaysia, for example, they are subject to local refraction in each case. 'Glocalization' therefore proceeds in parallel rather than in series. I will use three cases as examples in the following discussions: ACIL, ACIM and the CNAS.

### 7.3.1 A Course in Light

As I mentioned in the first section, ACIL was introduced by the translator, Vicky, from Texas to Taiwan in the mid-1980s. Although the author of the course is an American who has visited Taiwan every year since 1998, the case of ACIL cannot be simply termed 'Americanisation'. There are several reasons for this. First, the author/channeller did not set out deliberately to promote ACIL in Taiwan: it was taken up there because it resonated with individuals who were already receptive to its ideas. In other words, there was an affinity between ACIL and its first practitioners. The

messages of the Course were first spread among the personal network of the ‘mediator’, who had encountered ACIL in the US that had allegedly helped her ‘heal’ herself. Second, the materials of ACIL in Taiwan show that they have been adapted to local circumstances. Although the Chinese version of ACIL is a version that conforms to the original text, the accompanying CD for guiding meditation is different from the original CDs in respect of their content as well as their number. For example, the basic level of ACIL in the US is a book together with 24 CDs. However, the Chinese version of ACIL is produced as one book with one CD. The translator produced the meditation CD in Chinese and revised its context in order to fit into the local culture:

*Toni published a set (of the CDs)...one CD for one lesson, but the content of each CD is actually repeated. However, it would cost too much if we were to produce the same kind of CDs; this is the first point. Second, we Chinese would not really follow those kinds of steps, to listen to the CDs lesson by lesson...this is my opinion.... Therefore, later I got some idea, that is, only to teach about meditation procedure...when people are getting familiar with the order of meditation, they would know how to meditate themselves. The CD is not produced to require people to follow it if they are to meditate. It is just produced as an example,...this is meditation procedure. When you get used to it, you can get rid of it...because meditation is very personalized. (13/10/03, P4)*

In addition, even the original text of ACIL does not especially emphasise the ideology of Americanisation, such as the values of democracy and of religious freedom, as Hanegraaff outlined the term. As a channelled text, ACIL contains various spiritual and occult messages from belief areas such as Christianity, Hinduism, the Yoga system, and astrology. These messages are

beyond the formal knowledge of the channeller.<sup>66</sup>

ACIL has also spread from Taiwan to other Chinese communities in other areas such as Hong Kong, China and Japan. Various ACIL teachers in Taiwan took it to these areas through their personal networks. It can be regarded as a parallel development in these areas. In Japan, it has been practised in one small Chinese group who follow a teacher from central Taiwan who has been periodically visiting Japan to host the course since 2003. ACIL has the potential to spread into Japanese communities because of another 'light' teacher in Taiwan who volunteered to translate the text into Japanese. Mrs Mo, who belongs to the first generation of the light teachers in Taiwan as well as being the founder of two other New Age organisations, took ACIL to Hong Kong in June 2000. She was invited to Hong Kong to host a small group, and it lasted for one year. Later she encouraged the group members to organise their CIL groups in Hong Kong. ACIL was introduced to China in 2002 on the invitation of Naxin Ju, the website owner of *New Age Network China* (NANC, 中華新時代網),<sup>67</sup> who has been endeavoring to promote the idea of the NAM in China. However, it was reported from a user group in Taiwan that the website had been forced to close by the Chinese government in Feb 2005. The website owner then recreated a new website and expanded the original website into a '*New Age Forum* (NAF).<sup>68</sup> However, I have noticed that the new website has posted a statement with several regulations in one of its sub-pages.<sup>69</sup> One of the points of the statement is that the website follows

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<sup>66</sup> Toni mentioned in her autobiography (1991) as well as in the public presentation of the Chinese version that she was a housewife who grew up in a traditional Christian family.

<sup>67</sup> The website, which is at <http://newage.net.cn>, was established in 2000.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.newage.net.cn/forum/ztsc.asp>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.newage.net.cn/forum/map.asp>



the relevant laws of the PRC. The development of the NAM in China at this stage might therefore be limited to some small groups and related activities which could operate in a more private way than through public promotion.

### 7.3.2 The Chinese Branch of ACIM

The CBACIM in Taiwan is one of the New Age groups that has been growing in recent years. It is based on a virtual centre (MIC) instead of a formal organisation, as I have outlined in previous sections. In addition to the Chinese version of ACIM which conformed to the original text and was published under the arrangement of the FIP in the US, the website of the CBACIM is also funded by the FIP. However, it is relatively independent of the FIP in terms of development and operations.

Mrs Wu, the translator as well as the spokesperson of the CBACIM, plays a very important part in teaching and spreading the message of ACIM across Taiwan and to other areas such as Hong Kong, China and Malaysia. She updates the website information of the CBACIM monthly, and organises several columns on the website alongside the contributions of other volunteers. In addition, she visits Taiwan at least once a year to host annual workshops.

It is reported that there were once study groups of ACIM in Hong Kong in 2000, but that they did not last long. In China, it was actually some Taiwanese who took ACIM with them when they moved to China on business. These businessmen were not group members of ACIM when they were in Taiwan but heard about the book while participating in some activities of the HPM.<sup>70</sup> However, ACIM is not only spreading among the Taiwanese in China but also among other Chinese who are interested in the NAM. Just as

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<sup>70</sup> I mentioned in Chapter 4 that at first ACIM was introduced to Taiwan by the HPM.

in the case of ACIL, ACIM was formally introduced to China in 2002 on the invitation of the website owner of the NANC. It was a meeting for New Age associates who had met each other via the NANC website in China. Some leading people of the NAM in Taiwan were invited to attend the meeting to give talks. In 2003, Mrs Wu held the first annual workshop in Shanghai, China, following the workshops in Taiwan. There were about 20 participants in the workshop, some of whom had come from other areas such as Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, and Shenzhen in Guangdong.

Some Malaysian Chinese who had visited Taiwan in 2002 took ACIM back to Malaysia. They were social workers in Malaysia who had come to Taiwan to visit associated institutions in order to learn about Taiwanese experiences in relation to their work. At that time, they heard about ACIM by attending one of Mrs Wu's talks. Therefore, they invited Mrs Wu to give several talks in Kuala Lumpur after they had returned to Malaysia.

For areas such as China or Malaysia, according to Mrs Wu, the best way to spread the message and the teachings of ACIM is to provide information via the website of the CBACIM instead of through her personal teaching. On the one hand, it is difficult for Mrs Wu to make frequent visits to these areas as a voluntary spokesperson of the CBACIM, owing to financial constraints. On the other hand, the Internet breaks the limits of time and space, and enables people to obtain information no matter how far away their locations are.

### 7.3.3 Chinese New Age Society

The CNAS is the first formal organisation of the NAM that was established by Mrs Wang, the pioneer of the movement in Taiwan. The CNAS advocates the idea of Seth because Mrs Wang regarded it as the most

complete and undisputed wisdom in the NAM. Seth is believed to be the ‘energy essence personality’ that was channelled by Jane Roberts (1929-1984), an American poet and science-fiction writer. Roberts started to receive messages from Seth in 1963 and continued for about 10 years in the course of over 900 sessions (Chi-Ching Wang, 1999, p.14). Seth materials are regarded as ‘undisputed classics of modern channeling’ (Hanegraaff, 1998, p.37) and have been published in the US alongside Roberts’s own work on Seth. Mrs Wang has been introducing these books to Taiwan through translation and writing. She has also published an introductory book on Seth; her interpretation of Seth and her ideas for practice are called the ‘essence of Seth’. No materials or research reveal whether or not there is any organisation or study group concerned with Seth in the US. Therefore, the CNAS in Taiwan can probably be regarded as the first New Age organisation for Seth — although of course it is also a ‘product’ from America.

However, as I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Mrs Wang did not actively expand the CNAS during her leadership between 1999 and 2004. The main network of CNAS was centred on study groups during this period. The current president, Doctor Hsu, was inspired by Mrs Wang’s translations of Seth in 1988, one year before he commenced his medical studies. He was elected as the second president at the general meeting of CNAS in late 2003, but his leadership is different from Mrs Wang’s in terms of the policy towards the operations of the organisation:

*In the past these centres were running like a department store, that is, they were regarded as physical spaces that are used by anyone who would like to develop their idea or activities...however, I hope that these centres will positively promote our ideas instead of embracing*

*various activities in the NAM. My plan is to actively promote the idea of Seth and holistic health; I won't promote other courses but create opportunities for other course teachers to know about Seth. The role of active promotion is very important. And this is what the organisation lacked in the past. (15/01/04, P29)*

The current president Hsu has published over ten books as well as several CDs, which are about how to apply the philosophy of Seth in order to regain health in terms of physical diseases or emotional problems. During my interview with him, he explained the connection between the ideas of Seth and his profession as a medical doctor:

*Perhaps the most distinctive difference between the other medical doctors and me is that my core idea is based on Seth, and the medicine is second. Therefore, I am supposed to be a researcher in the field of the body, mind, and spirit. As for biomedicine, it is just a convenient practice. I help people by means of the idea of Seth when I am working as a medical doctor...it is much better than as a general medical doctor. (15/01/04, P29)*

Doctor Hsu's publications and public speaking (often in the name of his profession as a licensed doctor at a hospital in Taipei county) have attracted not only many people to the NAM but also the general public. It is through the personal network of Mrs Wang and Doctor Hsu that the CNAS has been able to spread the idea of Seth to other areas such as Hong Kong, China, the US and Canada. By 2005 there were 15 translations of Seth in Chinese, together with two introductory books on Seth by Mrs Wang and Doctor Hsu.

However, just as in the above-mentioned cases of ACIL and ACIM, Mr Ju also invited Mrs Wang as well as a few members of CNAS to the NANC meeting in China in 2002. It was the first time that Seth had been formally introduced to China. Later Mrs Wang referred invitations from overseas, such

as the US, to Doctor Hsu, who visits the US and Canada once a year. For Canada, this originated from the invitation of one of his cancer patients, who organised a study group in 2002. At that time, he was invited to Vancouver to host a study group, and he held seven speaking sessions. It has since become a regular schedule. In the US, there are a few people in Los Angeles who would like to promote Seth and who wish to learn from Doctor Hsu. Concerning Hong Kong, he has been a visitor there once a month since 2002. He hosts a study group in which the participants are interested in Seth, a healing workshop, and he also engages in personal counselling. He named all the groups for studying Seth as 'Seth School'.

As for China, Doctor Hsu was invited by one of his students who is a business employer, to give a public talk to over one thousand employees in his company in Zhuhai, Guangdong, under the heading of HR training. It is reported that these employees come from different provinces of China; and this experience strongly influenced his opinions about the relationship between China and Taiwan,

*At that time I got an idea, that is, the way to actual resolution for a true peace relationship between China and Taiwan is to improve the quality of existence for human beings. OK, then I went and took very good ideas to there (China)...I feel that what I was doing is an effort for peace. (15/01/04, P29)*

From the above discussions it is clear that there are similarities between the three cases in respect of their engagement in the process of globalisation. First, the spiritualities or practices that they advocate are originally from the US, but have been subject to a few modifications/inventions in terms of forms/practices/interpretations designed to adapt them to local culture.

Second, the personal networks of spokespersons have functioned as opportunities for the three cases to develop into other Chinese societies such as China, Hong Kong, or among overseas Chinese communities in Malaysia, Japan, the US, and Canada. Third, the developments of the three cases in terms of glocalisation are parallel: that is, each case has had its own route towards connecting, developing, and expanding to other areas outside Taiwan; but their routes and timings are coincidentally similar to each other. Last but not the least, Internet communications enable the three cases to promote their ideas/practices to other regions of the world, especially to areas working with the Chinese language. In addition to New Age groups that rely on virtual centres instead of physical organisations such as ACIL and ACIM, formal physical organisations, such as the CNAS have also launched their official websites. Moreover, information on the websites of the CNAS is more influential and productive than its physical centres in terms of resources mobilised and network communication. The situation in which New Age groups rely heavily on virtual spaces on the Internet facilitates the globalisation of spiritualities. It is especially notable that China first encountered the NAM in Taiwan by means of the Internet and that the physical connection was put in place later — just like the case of the NANC.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the structures of the NAM in Taiwan by looking at organisations, the network, and their global dimension. First, it was pointed out that the NAM in Taiwan has different types of organisation, including formal and informal organisations, virtual centres and physical

centres.

Second, it was argued that the leadership of the first generation of the NAM in Taiwan was caught on the dilemma of whether to seek commercial promotion and the associated risk of formalisation. However, the direction of the development of the NAM in Taiwan in this regard is still changing, because it involves factors not only in the leadership but also in the financial/economic situation of these groups. In addition, it is noted that the New Age pioneers in Taiwan are women who have helped to make translations of New Age books.

Third, all the above-mentioned types of organisations have become interwoven in a fluid and dynamic web of networks. The network of the NAM in Taiwan includes three elements (NAM, NAMOs and NAMPs), which constitute the connecting lines and nodes of the network. The lines represent the intensity of communication between centres and groups, while the nodes indicate the forms of communication on particular sites. Potential participants are likely to be introduced to the NAM by means of the personal network of NAMPs as well as through secondary nodes such as bookshops or organic shops. In addition, the Internet plays an important part with regard to connecting groups, circulating information, and expanding the NAM overseas.

Finally, three cases (ACIL, ACIM, and the CNAS) have been examined in order to demonstrate how far global forces influence the NAM in Taiwan. In this regard, I contend that the NAM in Taiwan cannot be viewed as a pure case of 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation', but is properly understood as one of 'parallel glocalisation'.

Part III

**An Assessment of the New Age Movement in  
Taiwan**



## Chapter 8

### **Conclusions**

This thesis is a sociological study of the NAM in Taiwan, examining the ways in which some Taiwanese people use ‘New Age’ beliefs and practices in order to respond to the challenges of life in a rapidly changing world. I have endeavoured to tackle the problems of the research by focusing on the question ‘How can the meaning of New Age beliefs, practices and organisations in Taiwan be understood sociologically?’ This concluding chapter is a summary of the main issues discussed in the previous chapters and of the answers to my research questions. On the basis of my reflections on the research findings of the thesis I will also address the relative weaknesses of the entire project, and possible directions of future research on the NAM in Taiwan.

The two main aims of this research project were:

- 1) To explore the development of the NAM in Taiwan in sociological terms, with special reference to physical and emotional healing;
- 2) To examine the usefulness of the theoretical ideas about ‘self-religion’, ‘reflexive modernisation’ and ‘globalisation’ that underlie many sociological accounts of the New Age phenomena and late modernity.

The purpose of these two main aims of the research project was to fill important gaps in the existing literature relating to the NAM, as I outlined in Chapter 2.

## 8.1 A Summary of Research Findings

My research project was designed to fill gaps in the literature by testing influential theoretical ideas about the New Age and late modernity in the light of my empirical data. These ideas fall into four categories: 1) Self-religion; 2) Reflexive Modernisation; 3) Emotions and Embodiment; and 4) Globalisation. I have explored these issues through the analysis of relevant literature, in-depth interviews with forty active participants and participant observation in two New Age groups regarding healing. My study of the New Age phenomena in Taiwan was a constructionist ‘conversation’ between relevant theories and empirical evidence. I employed a dual research methodology — emotional and constructionist models — to look at both the meaning of the NAM to its participants and at their social interactions. Accordingly, I have not only integrated the New Age into the context of late-modernity and globalisation but have also placed the issue of emotions at the centre of the study of the New Age.

As the concept of the ‘New Age/New Age Movement’ has been the subject of intense debate among scholars in recent years, an overview of important relevant literature was the first task of the thesis before I presented my empirical data. Therefore, in Chapter 2 I reviewed a range of research on the NAM and grouped it into several categories in order to understand what is the cause of the ambiguity or controversy attached to the use of the term among scholars. These categories were: 1) New Age as one whole movement; 2) Network or Milieu; 3) New Age and Alternative Healing; 4) New Age Religion and the New Age Movement; 5) New Age as Popular Religion; 6) New Age as

New Spirituality Movement and Culture. I concluded from my review of scholarly arguments that many works take the meaning of the concepts of ‘religion’ and ‘movement’ for granted, and that this has prevented scholars from achieving a possible common view of the concept of the ‘New Age/New Age Movement’.

Nevertheless, the purpose of the overview of these arguments on the ‘New Age/New Age Movement’ in Chapter 2 was not to propose an approach to replace the widely accepted explanations for the New Age. Instead, my intention was to support the argument that the term ‘New Age Movement’ is appropriate when investigating the phenomenon in Taiwan, according to my particular analytical framework. I argued that the NAM in Taiwan can be understood as a loose network — composed of (primary and secondary) nodes and lines (various degrees of communication) — at three levels: NAM, NAMOs and NAMPs. This analytical framework was the foundation for constructing the network of the NAM in Taiwan in detail later in Chapter 7

Chapter 3 was an introduction to my theoretical framework for the analysis of the NAM in Taiwan. I employed three sets of theoretical ideas (self-religion from Paul Heelas, reflexive modernization from Anthony Giddens and globalisation from Roland Robertson), together with the issues of emotions and embodiment mainly derived from my discussions of both self-religion and reflexive modernisation, in order to guide the design of my research questions.

My first research questions were connected to Heelas’s ideas of ‘Self-religion’, through which I aimed to clarify the connection between the self and authority in the New Age, which was not as clear as it should be in

Heelas's arguments. The next set of theoretical ideas for my thesis was Giddens's theory of reflexive modernisation, in which I paid special attention to his arguments relating to the issues of the reflexive self, therapies and expert systems. My research questions regarding Giddens's theory were designed to examine to what extent the New Age can be regarded as a form of expert knowledge for its participants. As Giddens excludes holistic healing (a part of the New Age) from his definition of 'therapies' and regards new spiritualities such as the New Age as a 'return of the repressed', the reason for my examination of the NAM in Taiwan in this respect was therefore to argue that the New Age can be usefully understood as a part of late-modernity.

The third set of my research questions was centred on the issues of emotions and embodiment in New Age practices. I indicated that both Heelas and Giddens notice the importance of the issue of emotions in their theories, but there was a 'missing link' in this respect, which was about the role of emotions in the New Age in late-modernity. Most studies of the New Age do not deal with the issues of emotions, and therefore my research questions were designed to examine emotions and feelings rules in New Age practices in terms of a social constructionist approach.

The final set of my research questions was about the issue of globalisation. In this respect I intended to examine the sociological meaning of the NAM in Taiwan, because the Movement did not emerge in this country but was introduced from the USA. Therefore, I found it useful to employ to Roland Robertson's theory of globalisation, especially his ideas of 'glocalization', in order to reveal to what the extent the NAM in Taiwan refracted the influence of global forces.

All of these research questions — stated in full in Chapter 1 — have been carefully examined in sequence in terms of my fieldwork data; and the findings have been reported and analysed between Chapters 4 and 7.

Chapter 4 is an overview of the NAM within the social context of Taiwan, including the history of the movement, the social and previous religious backgrounds of participants and the characteristics of New Age spiritualities. In respect of the history of the NAM, I concluded that the translated books and study groups were important in the early stage of the Movement in Taiwan. Later, in the middle of the 1990s, the issue of healing and related practices had become much more important because they were the preferences of certain pioneers. The phenomenon also echoed the characteristics of the NAM in the West in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. With regard to participants, the majority of the informants in my research fall into the age group between 30 and 49. Females are more numerous than males. Most of them are well-educated people, and work in the field of business and in professions. In addition, the interview materials reveal that they are open to various religions and have profound knowledge of their previous beliefs. More than one in four of the interviewees had participated in more than one Buddhist group before they joined the NAM. Another quarter of the interviewees had participated in more than one religion. The diverse backgrounds of participants in my research also reflect the religious diversity of Taiwan.

In respect of the characteristics of New Age spiritualities in Taiwan, I examined the five characteristics of ‘Self-religion’ presented by Paul Heelas. I found that most of my interviewees acknowledged the values of self-ethics,

self-responsibility, freedom and perennialism. However, most interviewees were not really against tradition, which is different from the situation in the West. Most importantly, the idea of holism became clear when making comparisons between the self/ego and authority (God). The self/ego and authority (God) simply co-exist in their view. Heelas did not elaborate on the connection between the self/ego and the authentic Self (God) in his theory; but my research has indicated that the connection between the self/ego and the Self is a process, rather than a relationship of opposition. The interviewees in my research constructed their own 'self-religion' according to a positivist approach; that is to say, they adopted those elements of 'self-religion' that could be applied to their life but they also revised a few points that were incompatible with their life experiences.

In respect of New Age spiritualities, participants in the NAM in Taiwan regarded the movement as a way of life instead of as a religion. They were spiritual but not religious, which is evident from their hostile attitudes towards religious authoritarianism, formalisation, exclusiveness, dogmatism, and ritualism. However, although most of them did not participate in religions after they had become involved in the NAM, they still respected the existence of religions and others' choices. Another characteristic of the spirituality of the movement is that it is 'transformational but not salvational'. In this regard, New Agers emphasised the experiences of self-transformation, which were not regarded as evidence of salvation or empowerment through a transcendental force. Self-transformation was regarded as an active process of self-reflexivity influenced by self-awareness that emerges from New Age practices, where the self reconstructs its self-identity, including the past, the

present and the future.

It is clear from my analysis of the range of the NAM in Taiwan in Chapter 4 that, compared to the New Age in the West, the relatively distinctive features of the Movement in Taiwan are its partial compatibility and continuity with traditional forms of spirituality and religion, its positivistic approach to life, and its emphasis on transformation of self and society.

In Chapter 5 I dealt with the issues of emotions relating to self-transformation in two healing practices in the New Age: ACIL and DW. Although the issues of emotions and embodiment arose mainly from my review of works by Paul Heelas and Anthony Giddens when I pondered the connection between the New Age and late-modernity, they were also salient features of my interview materials. The issue of emotions in New Age practices is important, because on the one hand it is the key element in understanding the experiences of self-transformation for participants in the Movement; on the other hand, it has remained in an underdeveloped state in most relevant studies of the New Age — even though they acknowledge self-transformation is the most important characteristic in the New Age. Therefore, my observations and discussions of emotions and embodiment in New Age courses such as ACIL and DW in Chapter 5 are an extension of the idea of ‘self-religion’, from which I drew several conclusions about the way in which people ‘manage’ and change their emotions by participating in New Age practices in terms of the reflexivity of the self and of feeling rules. Most importantly, the findings of Chapter 5 answered my research questions about emotions and embodiment: how do participants deal with the issues of emotions in New Age practices? Are there ‘feeling rules’ in New Age

practices? If so, how do New Agers express the feeling rules? What are the relationships between the self, emotions and healing in New Age practices?

First, my interview materials confirmed that participants experienced self-transformation in New Age practices, in which changes of the body and emotions are much more obviously illustrated and expressed. Second, there are two levels of dealing with emotions among participants in New Age practices. At the personal level, the reflexivity of the self helped participants by means of three ways of changing emotions: emotional identification, emotional displays and emotional experiences. At the interaction level, emotion work such as the act of ignoring outbursts could be applied to a situation when emotional conflict happened between members, as in the case of ACIL. The act of ignoring outbursts was employed in order to encourage participants' expressions of various emotions and their reflection on the positive meanings of these expressions. Participants learned that each kind of feeling is natural, and is neither good nor bad. Whether a specific emotion is defined as positive or negative depends on the interpretations of the people concerned. This embodied the view that it is not necessary to repress, reject or lacerate negative emotions such as anger, loneliness, grieving, hate and emptiness, because there were positive meanings behind them. In addition, emotion ideology — 'working on love' and 'working on energy' — were regarded as the foundation of a set of feeling rules in New Age courses such as DW. The feeling rules — 'keep emotions in stability and balance' and 'increase positive emotions and reduce negative emotions' — helped participants to change their emotions, that is, to experience self-transformation. As New Age courses such as ACIL and DW are connected to the idea of



healing, therefore, the relationship between the self, emotions and healing in the New Age is articulated by transformational experiences. People learn how to be self-reflexive in the process of healing practices, as a result of which they are able to identify, express and change their emotions. In sum, for participants the experiences of transformation include three elements: reflexivity of the self, changes of emotions and a sense of healing.

Chapter 6 was an examination of the broader meaning of self-transformation for New Agers. It involved examination of my informants' accounts of their reasons for becoming involved in the NAM and their experiences of New Age practices regarding healing, and the role of New Age spirituality in their lives. The interview materials were analysed in the light of Giddens's analysis of late-modernity regarding the self, in particular his concepts such as reflexivity of the self, self-identity, and expert knowledge. My research findings answered the following research questions about the issue of 'reflexive modernisation': to what extent can New Age practices be considered as applications of expert knowledge? What is the relationship between the reconstruction of self-identity and risk in New Age circles? How far does the New Age, as a new form of spirituality, have a place in life politics? To what extent, and in what ways, does the NAM represent 'a return of the repressed' in late modernity?

My first conclusion was that most people account for their involvement in the NAM in terms of attempts to resolve their problems in life. In the process of resolving their problems, my informants report experiencing self-transformation and healing. However, since I was not able to interview participants before they encountered the New Age but only after they had

become involved in the NAM, their interpretations and analysis of their transformational and healing experiences must be considered as part of their 'biographical reconstruction'. The second conclusion was that New Age is all about 'self-reflexivity,' and encourages people to think reflexively about themselves in the name of spiritual growth if they wish to achieve self-transformation.

I also used other ideas from Giddens regarding the self in late-modernity, such as life-politics and expert knowledge, to throw sociological light on the New Age. I was able to show that these two concepts required a degree of modification before they succeeded in making sense of the New Age in Taiwan. The life politics of my sample of New Age participants is embodied in their attitudes towards self-actualisation and life-planning, and both are in turn connected to their self-identity. Three points stand out: (1) life is full of change and is unpredictable; (2) our souls make plans and set up goals/lessons for our life before we are born; and (3) self-identity has to be constructed with spiritual goals well before making a plan.

New Age spiritualities shape my informants' views of the self, life and the world. In addition, such spiritualities also help them to make important decisions at fateful moments. In this regard, my informants gave plenty of evidence of believing that the New Age also helps them make important decisions in many aspects of life. But the knowledge that was authoritative in their eyes was on the margins of mainstream 'expert systems'. My findings therefore point to the need to supplement Giddens's analysis with a recognition that expertise can be either mainstream or alternative.

The discussion of self-transformation for participants in the NAM in

Taiwan in Chapter 6, together with the discussion in Chapter 5 about the dimension of emotions in self-transformation, point to the final conclusion that the New Age can be seen as a response to the opportunities and problems of high modernity. This is because New Age spiritualities are credited with helping the self to resolve problems in people's lives and to affirm their self-identity; it allegedly helps the self to focus on the positive side of emotions such as love, hope and tranquillity; it emphasises the value of harmony and situates the self in the cosmos; and it shows respect for the environment in terms of holism instead of mere consumerism. Therefore, New Age knowledge should be included in the category of 'expert systems' in Giddens's analysis, and can be regarded as an 'alternative' expert knowledge for people in the Movement instead of being regarded as merely the 'return of the repressed' in late modernity.

As a fluid social movement, the NAM expresses a preference for change in society, as I argued in Chapter 2. Therefore, in Chapter 7 I examined the structure of the NAM in Taiwan in terms of organisations, networks and globalisation. First, I pointed out that there are different types of organisation, including formal and informal organisations, virtual centres and physical centres. Second, the leadership of the first generation of the NAM in Taiwan was caught on the dilemma of whether to seek commercial promotion and the associated risk of formalisation. In addition, the New Age pioneers in Taiwan are women who have helped to make translations of New Age books. Third, all the various organisations have become interwoven in a fluid and dynamic web of networks, as I illustrated in Figure 7.11, in which the Internet plays an important part with regard to connecting groups, circulating information and

expanding the NAM overseas. The final point of the conclusions in Chapter 7 was about the dimension of globalisation of the Movement. I examined three cases (ACIL, ACIM and the CNAS) in order to answer my research question on globalisation: that is, to what extent do global forces influence the NAM in Taiwan? In this regard, I argued that the NAM in Taiwan cannot be regarded as a pure case of 'Westernisation' or 'Americanisation', but is properly understood as one of 'parallel glocalisation'.

My choice of research methods was dictated by the research questions and did not give rise to any significant innovations or problems. Collecting empirical information about the NAM in Taiwan was no different from the majority of qualitative sociological studies of religious or spiritual movements.

From the above summary I conclude that this thesis has made the following contributions to the study of the New Age. First, I have enhanced Paul Heelas's theory of 'self-religion' with regard to the case of Taiwan by clarifying the way in which the 'self/ego' and 'Self/God/authority/traditions' connect to each other in the New Age. Second, I have successfully integrated New Age phenomena into the context of late modernity, where they function as an 'alternative' expert knowledge for the NAM's participants. Third, I have brought the issues of emotion and embodiment into the sociological study of the NAM and have identified some of the feeling rules in New Age practices. Finally, my example of Taiwan has demonstrated that the direction of globalisation and 'glocalization' in the New Age is not necessarily linear but parallel.

I would like to stress that each of these contributions involves a complex interaction between concepts, theoretical ideas and empirical investigation.

Sociological analysis works best, in my opinion, when these three components are integrated into research. In this thesis, I have also tried to maintain a balance between them.

## 8.2 The Past and the Future: Limitations and Prospects

As indicated above, I believe that this thesis has enhanced the sociological understanding of New Age phenomena in general and of the NAM in Taiwan in particular. It has made significant contributions at the conceptual, theoretical and empirical levels of analysis. Nevertheless, no research is perfect, and mine is no exception. I also wish to share my view of the possible prospects for future research on the NAM in Taiwan.

First, my thesis paid attention to relatively experienced participants in the NAM but ignored a possibly large proportion of participants, that is, people who merely consume various New Age products but who do not dedicate themselves to spiritual practices. My ‘purposive sampling’ was required by my research design and theoretical framework. As a result, I could not obtain information about the characteristics of the possibly large number of New Age consumers in Taiwan who are not usually present in study groups or centres. Access to such consumers would have required interaction with them in bookstores, other commercial outlets for New Age products or through magazines. Another possibility might have been to post a notice on New Age websites or user groups inviting ‘consumers’ to contact me. I rejected these strategies partly because they would have exposed me to unacceptably high levels of personal risk and partly because they would not have led to empirical data that could have answered my particular research questions about the

NAM.

Second, I did not collect information about those who had once dedicated themselves to the NAM but later left. Therefore, the conclusions I have reached in my thesis about the influence of the New Age on its participants are centred on the positive side. It would have been a more complete picture of this study if I could have interviewed those former participants, but, again, it is not clear how evidence concerning ex-practitioners could have significantly affected my analysis of self-transformation and healing among active participants in the NAM. In any case, my background knowledge of the NAM in Taiwan had shown that, since ‘cult controversies’ were not a feature of its history or present-day operations, it is unlikely that the testimony of ex-practitioners would have been revealing.

This point about ex-practitioners is closely related to a broader consideration about the dimension of time in sociological research. My investigation was necessarily a ‘snapshot’ taken of the NAM at a particular moment in its development. Ideally, repeated returns to fieldwork over many years would test my generalisations, but such a strategy lies outside the limits of what is possible for doctoral research.

Third, research indicates that most practitioners in the New Age are females, and therefore the gender issue seems to deserve special attention. In my observations of the NAM in Taiwan as well as the proportion of the genders among my interviewees, female participants indeed outnumber male participants. However, the percentage of male and female interviewees in my research was not sufficiently different to prompt me to ponder gender issues at length. In addition, New Age spirituality emphasises holistic values and

encourages people to question and transcend differences and boundaries such as gender, ethnicity and nationality, which was another reason for not focusing on gender issues in this thesis. But these reasons are not an excuse for denying the importance of the issues of gender in the New Age. Instead, I suggest that the changing proportion of men and women in the NAM deserves continuing observation, and that related issues should be explored in future study of the subject.

As for the prospects for the future of research on the NAM in Taiwan, current studies or discussions are so few that a wide range of issues can be explored. I suggest that the following selection of issues deserve attention.

First, as the Movement in Taiwan is still young, it is worth observing its development in the context of 'parallel glocalisation', as I argued in Chapter 7. For example, will New Age practices such as ACIL, ACIM or Seth be introduced from Taiwan to Chinese communities in other Asian countries such as Korea, the Philippines and Thailand, in addition to China, Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia? If so, how will they develop in these countries? Will there be different forms of practices in different areas?

My second suggested prospect for future research is about the relationship between the NAM and other religions in Taiwan. My thesis shows that my informants have profound knowledge of other religious beliefs and have participated in more than one religion before they joined the NAM. In fact, aside from Christianity, there are no rigid religious disciplines or taboos that would prevent believers in other religions in Taiwan, such as Buddhism, folk religions or some new religions, from participating in the NAM. In fact, I have learned from some of my informants that some Buddhists or other

religious people may have joined the NAM either by attending specific workshops or by reading New Age books. As the NAM in Taiwan is not regarded as a 'religion' but a way of living, some participants believe that it is possible to combine the idea of the New Age with religions to some degree. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore to what extent and in what ways the NAM can be mixed with religions in Taiwan.

My final proposed issue for future research on the NAM in Taiwan is about the issue of alternative healing and therapies. My thesis focused on the issue of healing only in so far as it is connected to one of the healing practices, that is, meditation groups. However, various other healing practices have been introduced to Taiwan, and some of them are 'expensive' practices such as Bach Flower Remedy, Reiki, Aura Soma Therapy and many other therapies related to the HPM or the RM. In addition, some new 'native' healing practice/groups have emerged from Taiwan, such as 'Flamma, Flower Essences of Taiwan' (祈光台灣花精), and they are becoming popular. Therefore, it is worth exploring the sociological significance of the wider healing movement in Taiwan. In addition, it is also worth exploring the issue of emotions in the healing movement from several different perspectives on emotions.



# Appendix 1: Letter of Introduction



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WARWICK

Department of Sociology  
Coventry CV4 7AL, England

您好，請容許我先自我介紹。我叫陳淑娟，是英國華威大學的博士研究生。我的研究主題是有關台灣人參與新時代團體及活動的情形。冒昧寫信給您，希望您能協助我的研究。(Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Shu-Chuan Chen, a PhD student at the University of Warwick. The topic of my doctoral research is the participation of Taiwanese people in New Age groups and activities. I am contacting you in the hope that you will be willing to help me with my research.)

請您幫忙填寫這份問卷，填寫時間約需五到十分鐘。問卷採匿名方式，所以請您放心填寫，謝謝！這份問卷主要是想了解台灣新時代活動的發展情形。您填完之後，請將問卷回傳至我的電子郵件信箱：[shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk)。(I would be grateful to you for taking about 5 to 10 minutes to answer the questions in the attached, anonymous questionnaire. They are designed to generate some basic information about the range and extent of New Age activities in Taiwan. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me: [shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk).)

此外，如果您有興趣了解這份研究計劃的其他部份，那麼，請您同意接受我的訪談，分享一下您參與新時代團體或活動的經驗。如果您願意接受訪談，請務必填寫問卷第四題。我非常歡迎您的參與，也期待認識您。(If you are interested in other aspects of my research, I hope you will agree to be interviewed about your own involvement in New Age groups or activities. If so, please complete Question 4 in full. Your participation in my project would be most welcome, and I look forward to meeting you.)

請您放心填寫這份問卷，您所提供的一切訊息，我會謹慎處理，並且只以匿名的方式供學術研究使用。(Finally, let me assure you that all information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used, anonymously, for academic purposes only.)

萬分感激您的幫助！

**陳淑娟 Shu-Chuan CHEN**

**英國華威大學社會學博士候選人 PhD Candidate in Sociology, University of Warwick**

Email: [shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:shu-chuan.chen@warwick.ac.uk)

**A. General information (基本資料)**

1. What is your gender? (您的性別) \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your age? (年齡) :

20 以下 \_\_\_\_\_ 21-30 \_\_\_\_\_ 31-40 \_\_\_\_\_ 41-50 \_\_\_\_\_ 51-60 \_\_\_\_\_ 61 以上 \_\_\_\_\_

**B. New Age practices and spiritual interests (參與新時代活動的情況)**

1. For each of the following groups or centers, please tick one box to indicate the extent of your past and/or present involvement: 請評估自己 (過去以及/或目前) 對於以下各團體或中心的投入程度, 在空格處一一勾出您的情況 (無參與, 弱, 強): (\*由於電腦鍵盤限制, 您可以用各種方式標示。例如: 刪去空格, 然後在您要打勾之處用任何符號標示。)

**Degree of involvement (投入程度)**

無 弱 強

none weak strong

**a) Taiwan 台灣地區**

- |                          |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese New Age Society (中華新時代協會)                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Color Miracle Academy / Neo-Spirit New Age Shop (色彩奇蹟學苑 / 超心靈新時代商店) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Enlightenment Center (創見堂身心靈整合中心)                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Garden of Light Carriers (荷光靜心花園)                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Himalaya Living Space (喜馬拉雅生活空間)                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Miracle Information Center (奇蹟資訊中心, 《奇蹟課程》或其他相關書籍之讀書會)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Osho Meditation Association (奧修台北靜心中心 / 中華民國奧修靜心協會)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | TOPTEC (群傑成長空間)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The Transcendence Classroom (先驗講堂)                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 小海豚意識研究機構   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 示如全人成長網群  |

**Any others (其他未列出之團體或中心, 請說明機構名稱):**

- |                          |                          |                          |       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

**b) Abroad 國外地區**

Please state the name of the activities and the institute (請說明活動與機構名稱, 含國別): \_\_\_\_\_

2. For each of the following activities, please tick one box to indicate the extent of your past and/or present involvement: 請評估自己(過去以及/或目前)對於以下各項活動的投入程度,在空格處一一勾出您的情況(無參與,弱,強):(\*由於電腦鍵盤限制,您可以用各種方式標示。例如:刪去空格,然後在您要打勾之處用任何符號標示。)

**Degree of involvement (投入程度)**

無 弱 強

none weak strong

- |                          |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A Course in Light (光的課程)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A Course in Miracles (奇蹟課程)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attending speaking or workshops on topics of body-mind-spirit and spiritual development (有關身心靈主題的演講或工作坊) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Aura Soma Therapy (靈性彩油)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bach Flower Remedies (巴赫花朵能量精華)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chi-Gong, Tai Chi or Taichi Dowing (氣功、太極或太極導引)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crystal Healing (水晶療法)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | CWG Study Group (與神對話系列讀書會)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Divine Will (神聖意志)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dream-work (解夢或瞬夢課程)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | HoChi Universal Love (和氣大愛)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Kryon Study Group (克里昂讀書會)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Massage (按摩)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Osho Meditation (奧修靜心)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Orin & DaBen/Divine Will (歐林/神聖意志讀書會或相關活動)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Complementary medicine(such as homeopathy, acupuncture) (其他另類醫療,如順勢療法、各種針灸療法等)                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | hypnotism or past-life regression (催眠或前世回溯)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reiki (靈氣)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Seth /Jane Roberts (賽斯系列讀書會)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Spiritual practices involving dances (涉及舞蹈的靈修活動)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The Law of One (一的法則相關讀書會)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yoga (瑜珈)  |

**Any others (其他未列出之身心靈活動;請說明)**

- |                          |                          |                          |       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

**C. Personal assessment of the term ‘New Age’ 對新時代一詞的看法**

3. If you consider yourself as a ‘New Ager’, please tell me what this term means for you 如果您認為自己是新時代人士，請分享一下您個人對新時代的看法。

**D. In-depth interview 深度訪談**

4. If you are willing to be interviewed about your involvement in the New Age, please write your name, e-mail address or telephone number below: 如果您願意接受我的訪問，談談您的相關經驗或心得，請在以下空格內填寫您的姓名、電子郵件地址或是電話號碼：

## Appendix 2: A List of the Interviewees

Interviewee	Sex	Age (in 2005)	Education	Occupation	Residence	Role in New Age activity	Interview Date
P1	F	39	BA	Government employee	Taipei	Teacher/ Healer	27/09/03
P2	F	39	BA	Translator	Taipei	Devotee	04/10/03
P3	F	34	BA	Secretary	Taipei	Healer	12/10/03
P4	F	58	BA	Writer/Translator	USA	Leader	13/10/03
P5	F	43	College*	Book designer	Taipei	Teacher/ Healer	13/10/03
P6	F	55	MA	Writer/Translator	USA	Leader	16/10/03
P7	M	47	College	Self-employed	Taipei	Teacher/ Healer	22/10/03
P8	M	42	Msc	Marketing manager	Taipei	Devotee	22/10/03
P9	M	53	BA	Business employer	Taipei	Teacher	23/10/03
P10	F	60	MA	School teacher(retired)	Taipei	Teacher	23/10/03
P11	F	33	MA	Self-employed	Taipei	Teacher/ Healer	24/10/03
P12	F	48	MA	Business employee	Taichung	Devotee	26/10/03
P13	F	51	BA	Business employee Translator	Taipei	Teacher	30/10/03
P14	M	43	College	Storekeeper	Taipei	Site owner	05/11/03 06/02/04
P15	M	33	PG Student	Student	Taipei/ Taichung	Devotee	07/11/03
P16	F	43	High School**	Home maker (former Nurse)	Taipei	Teacher	14/11/03
P17	M	37	BA (unfinished)	Salesman	Hsinchu	Devotee	16/11/03
P18	M	40	BA	Receptionist	Miaoli	Devotee	24/11/03
P19	F	46	BA	IT manager	Taipei	Devotee	11/12/03
P20	F	48	BA	Self-employed	Taipei	Teacher	23/12/03
P21	F	53	College*	Business employer	Taipei	Leader	24/12/03
P22	M	42	MA	Self-employed	Taipei	Massager	24/12/03
P23	M	32	BA	Self-employed	Taipei	Hypnotist	27/12/03
P24	F	37	High School	Government employee	Taipei	Devotee	28/12/03
P25	F	38	BA	Magazine editor	Taipei	Healer	05/01/04

Interviewee	Sex	Age (in 2005)	Education	Occupation	Residence	Role in New Age activity	Interview Date
P26	F	48	College	Secretary	Taoyuan	Devotee	05/01/04
P27	F	64	MA	Writer/Translator	Taipei	Leader	08/01/04
P28	F	38	MA	English teacher	Taipei	Devotee	09/01/04
P29	M	37	MD	Doctor	Taipei	Leader	15/01/04
P30	F	49	High School	Government employee	Taipei	Devotee	02/02/04
P31	F	51	High School	Executive secretary	Taipei	Devotee	10/02/04
P32	F	31	BS	Nurse	Taipei	Consulter	11/02/04
P33	F	42	College	Business employer	Taipei	Devotee	16/02/04
P34	F	55	BA	N/A	Taipei	Consulter	19/02/04
P35	M	44	BA	Trainer (HR)	Taipei	Teacher/ Healer	24/02/04
P36	F	48	College	Business employer	Taipei	Teacher	16/07/04
P37	F	40	College	Ministrator (Planning department)	Taipei	Devotee	18/07/04
P38	M	35	MA	Police officer (Crime scene investigator)	Taipei	Devotee	03/08/04
P39	M	35	PhD (unfinished)	Marketing consultant	Taipei	Web Organiser	03/01/05
P40	M	34	Msc	Research assistant	Taoyuan	Web Organiser	06/01/05

\*College: two years. \*\*High School: 16-18 years.

#### Summary Statistics:

1. Female (F) 26 / Male (M) 14
2. Age 30-39: 15 / 40-49: 16 / 50-59: 7 / 60-69: 2
3. Education: High School 4 / Further Education 8 / Higher Education 28

## Appendix 3: Interview Questions

### *A. Personal experiences of New Age/Spiritual Practices*

1. Could you please tell me about your experiences in New Age/Spiritual practices? 請您談談接觸新時代活動的始末。
2. When did you first hear of them (ideas and practices)? 您最早是在何時得知這方面的思想?
3. How long have you participated in these activities? 參與約多久了?
4. In what situation do you participate? 在什麼情況下參與的?
5. Which activities impressed you the most? 令您印象最深刻的活動或團體是?
6. Which of them (X) do you practise regularly? 您選擇長時期參與或實修的是(X)?
7. When did you first get involved in X and how often do you attend/practise X? 您最初修習 X 是在何時? 您有多常參加/修習 X?
8. In what situation did you encounter X? 您當初是如何接觸到 X 的?
9. Why did you decide to regularly practise X? 什麼原因讓您決定持續修習 X?
10. How much time do you spend on X in an average week? 您一星期投入多少時間在 X 上?(包括團體活動, 個人修習以及相關閱讀等)
11. How much do you use Internet to obtain information about New Age knowledge or activities? 您多常使用網際網路來獲取新時代知識或活動?

### *B. Personal assessment of the connection between X and social life*

12. Can you remember what was happening in your life at the time when you first got involved in X? 您是否記得在最早修習 X 的當時, 您生活中所發生的事?
13. In your opinion, what does it mean to you to practise X? 您覺得 X 對您的意義是什麼?
14. Did any transition or transformation occur in your life after you practised X? 與沒有修練 X 之前相比, 您在修習 X 之後有什麼樣的改變嗎?

15. Did any change in the state of the body, emotions, mentality and spirit occur after you practised X? 修習 X 之後，您在身體、情緒、心智與精神這幾方面有沒有什麼變化？
16. Could you please describe what you feel when you practise X? 請您描述一下在修習 X 時，有什麼感覺？
17. Are there any connections between X and the state of your emotions and your life/health? 您覺得它與您的生活/健康有什麼樣的關連性？
18. How do you handle negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, depression, disappointment, envy, fear, pain, and sorrow in your daily life? Was X helpful or influential to you in this regard? 我們在日常生活中難免遇到心情不好的時候，您是如何處理這些負面情緒呢？如憤怒、焦慮、抑鬱、失意沮喪、嫉妒、恐懼、痛苦、悲傷等等。在這方面，X 對您有沒有幫助或影響作用？
19. How important is the maintenance of physical and mental health to you? What did/would you do to improve/maintain it? 您覺得身心健康對您有多重要？對此您有沒有採取什麼行動來改善或維持身心健康？
20. What is your opinion of mainstream biomedical health care in Taiwan? 您對台灣的主流醫療體系有什麼看法？
21. How much do you socialize with other people who are involved in X? 您經常與修習或參與 X 的其他朋友往來嗎？(有多頻繁？)
22. Do you feel that each person has a unique character and special potentialities that may or may not be fulfilled in modern society? 您是否覺得，每個人都有其獨特的個性與潛力，但是可能會也可能無法在現代社會中得到充份發揮？
23. Everyone faces many choices, and has to make their own decisions; in your experience, was X influential or helpful to you in making important decisions in your life? 每個人都會面臨許多選擇，而且必須做出決定；在您的經驗裡，X 是否對於您生命中所做的重要決定有所影響或幫助？
24. What are the most important things in your life? 對您而言，生命中最重要的是什麼？
25. What do you want for your life? 您想要什麼樣的生活(生命)？
26. Do you feel that life-planning (making plans for your future regarding aspects that are important to your life) is important to each person in modern society? 您是否覺得，為生命作規劃，對現代社會中的每個人而言是重要的一件



事？

27. Do you feel that people alone are responsible for their own lives? 您是否覺得，只有自己能為自己的人生負責？

28. Do you feel there are aspects of your life over which you do not have sufficient control? 您的生活中有沒有哪些面向是您覺得比較無法掌握的(身心健康、個人/家庭關係、社會/人際關係、工作/生涯成就/財富)？

29. What did/would you do to improve your situation in \_\_\_\_\_ (any one of the above-mentioned aspects) over which you feel less in control? 對於以上您覺得比較無法掌握(不確定)的面向與處境\_\_\_\_\_，您曾經如何因應或是您會如何因應？

30. What do you think are the main problems facing Taiwanese society that concerns you most? What actions would you take in response to them? How have they affected your life? 您最關心的台灣社會問題是什麼？這方面您有沒有什麼因應之道？這些問題如何影響您的生活？

31. How much interest do you take in Taiwanese politics? 您對於台灣政治有多大的興趣？

### ***C. Personal assessment of New Age spirituality, transcendental world, and religions***

32. How do you respond to the following ideas that are part of some New Age ways of thinking? 以下是部份的新時代思想，您有何看法？

1) We should let go of our ego to experience our authentic Self. 我們應當釋放自我(小我)，以經歷我們真實的大我。

2) To experience the 'Self' itself is to experience 'God', the 'Source', 'Christ Consciousness', etc. 經歷我們的大我，就是去經歷神、源頭、基督意識，等等。

3) Our lives do not work because we are conditioned by our ego/tradition 我們的生活不順利是因為我們被自我(小我)/傳統給限制(制約)住了。

4) We should listen to our inner voice/intuition because the truth lies within; we alone are our own source of guidance. 我們應當傾聽內心的聲音/直覺，因為真理來自於內在，我們自身才是指引的來源(源頭)。

5) All life is interconnected energy. 一切生命都是習習相關(互相聯繫)的能量。

6) We can know the future by using divination/Tarot cards/astrology/etc. 我們可以藉由運用一些占卜方法、塔羅牌、占星學等來得知我們的未來。

33. Could you please describe what it feels like to you when you experience positive emotions such as love, peace, and joy while participating in New Age practices? 能否請您描述一下（可以用物象，用比喻），在參與新時代活動(或特定的 X)時，當您在過程中體驗到諸如愛、平靜、喜悅等等正面情緒時的感受？

34. Do you feel that all is ultimately one and thus everyone has a sense of responsibility for others and the earth? 您是否覺得因為萬事萬物都是一體的，因此我們每個人對於他人以及這個地球都有責任？

\* Responsibility: a moral obligation to care for others and the earth, including 1) being active doing something for the problem; 2) take responsibility for one's own actions

35. What do you think of the relationship between secular achievement and spiritual growth? 您覺得世俗成就與靈性成長之間有什麼樣的關係？

36. Do you feel that prosperity contradicts spiritual growth? 您覺得財富與靈性成長彼此抵觸嗎？

37. Do you feel there is an absolute truth in life waiting to be found and followed? 您是否覺得，生命中有一個絕對的真理等著我們去發掘以及遵循？

38. Do you feel there is a higher power guiding our lives? Could you please share an experience that can demonstrate the relationship between our life and the higher power? 您是否覺得，有一個較高力量在指引我們的生命？這方面您有沒有什麼經驗與體會可以用來說明二者之間的關係？

39. What do you think of religions? Are you involved in any religious groups? How would you compare these New Age practices to other religions you have known or in which you have been involved in Taiwan? 請談談您對宗教的看法？您是否參與任何宗教團體？您覺得新時代(靈修)活動與您所接觸過的台灣社會中其他宗教有何異同？

#### ***D. Background Information***

Gender?

Age?

Birthplace?

Residence?

Work/Title? Parents?

Schooling? Parents?

Marital status?

Children?

## Appendix 4: A Selection of Photos from My Fieldwork



1. A view of the small meeting room in the BL.



2. A view of the short break during the final session of DW Part II in the big meeting room of the BL. 13/02/04



3. A seminar on 'Memory Transplant' and 'ACIL'. 29/10/03



4. The speaker is a surgeon who was invited by Vicki to give a talk about some cases of memory transplant in his professional life. 29/10/03



5. A poster was put outside the place where the first (two days) workshop of the 2003 annual study of ACIM was held. 11/10/03



6. A view of the place where the ACIM workshop was held. 11/10/03. Place: China Youth Corp in Shihlin, Taipei.



7. A view of the first workshop of the 2003 annual study of ACIM. 10/10/03



8. The participants in the first workshop of the 2003 annual study of ACIM. 11/10/03.



9. A musical performance during the 2003 annual meeting of the CNAS. 20/12/03



10. This couple performed dances in the 2003 annual meeting of the CNAS. 20/12/03



11. A view of a corner of the CNAS.



12. A view of one of the workshop rooms in the CNAS.





13. A view of the street, in which the Sinjhuang centre of the CNAS is located on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of the building on the right.



14. A view of the main room at Sinjhuang center of the CNAS.



15. A view of the opening of the GLC.  
11/05/02 (preliminary fieldwork)



16. A view of Aura Soma workshop in the HLS.  
29/05/02 (preliminary fieldwork)



17. The healer was demonstrating the way of using Aura Soma.  
29/05/02 (preminarily fieldwork)



18. Translated books about Seth published by Fine Press.

## Appendix 5: A List of Pin-Yin System

注音符號	Pin-Yin1 (Hanyu)	Pin-Yin2 (Tongyong)
ㄅ	b	b
ㄆ	p	p
ㄇ	m	m
ㄏ	f	f
ㄉ	d	d
ㄊ	t	t
ㄋ	n	n
ㄌ	l	l
ㄍ	g	g
ㄎ	k	k
ㄏ	h	h
ㄐ	j	ji
ㄑ	q	ci
ㄒ	x	si
ㄓ	zh,zhi	jh,jhih
ㄔ	ch,chi	ch,chih
ㄕ	sh,shi	sh,shih
ㄖ	r,ri	r,rih
ㄗ	z,zi	z,zih
ㄘ	c,ci	c,cih
ㄙ	s,si	s,sih
空韻	-i	ih
ㄚ	an	an
ㄛ	en	en
ㄜ	ang	ang
ㄝ	eng	eng
ㄞ	er	er
ㄟ	yi,-i	yi,-i
ㄠ	wu,-u	wu,-u
ㄡ	yu,-ü	yu
ㄩ	a	a

注音符號	Pin-Yin1 (Hanyu)	Pin-Yin2 (Tongyong)
ㄛ	o	o
ㄛˊ	e	e
ㄛˊˊ	ê	ê
ㄛˊㄨ	ai	ai
ㄛˊㄨㄣ	ei	ei
ㄛˊㄨㄛ	ao	ao
ㄛˊㄨㄛˊ	ou	ou
ㄩ	ya,-ia	ya,-ia
ㄩㄛ	yo	yo
ㄩㄛˊ	ye,ie	ye,-ie
ㄩㄛˊㄨ	yai,-iai	yai,-iai
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄛ	yao,-iao	yao,-iao
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄛˊ	you,-iu	you,-iou
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄢ	yan,-ian	yan,-ian
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄣ	yin,-in	yin-in
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄛˊ	yang,-iang	yang,-iang
ㄩㄛˊㄨㄣˊ	ying,ing	ying,-ing
ㄨㄚ	wa,-ua	wa,-ua
ㄨㄚㄛ	wo,-uo	wo,-uo
ㄨㄚㄨ	wai,-uai	wai,-uai
ㄨㄚㄨㄣ	wei,-uei	wei,-uei
ㄨㄚㄨㄢ	wan,-uan	wan,-uan
ㄨㄚㄨㄣ	wen,-un	wun,-un
ㄨㄚㄨㄛˊ	wang,-uang	wang,-uang
ㄨㄚㄨㄣˊ	weng,-ueng	wong,-ong
ㄩㄝ	yue,-üe	yue
ㄩㄢ	yuan,-üan	yuan
ㄩㄣ	yun,-ün	yun
ㄩㄣˊ	yong,-iong	yong

## Appendix 6: A Map of Taiwan



# Bibliography

This bibliography has three sections:

- (a) English Language Printed Materials
- (b) Chinese Language Printed Materials
- (c) Online Documents

## (a) English Language Printed Materials

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