

Religion in Taiwan and China: Locality and Transmission

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A Resurgent Temple and Community Development: Roles of the Temple Manager, Local Elite and Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

This paper investigates how religion is embodied and transmitted in a specific location in contemporary southern Taiwan. Fengtian Temple re-emerged in 1988 as a destination for approximately one hundred thousand Mazu pilgrims from around the island. It successfully transformed itself into a temple associated with a strong sense of environmental protection and prosperous cultural industries. While bringing together local businesspeople, entrepreneurs and traditional intellectuals, the temple committee has worked together to further the goal of “comprehensive community development”. As a result, not only has the temple attracted and maintained an annual flow of pilgrims from all of Taiwan, it has also helped regenerate traditional industries. Many traditional artists and craftsmen have found successors, and new opportunities have emerged for young people to stay in their hometown.

Key words: Fengtian Temple, Xingang County, Goddess Mazu, comprehensive community development, cultural industry.

Taiwan: From Authoritarian State to Democratic Society

Folk religion has been repressed to various degrees in China since 1949, where its superstitious qualities and backwardness have been seen as harmful to the Chinese Communist Party's nation-building project (Yang 2008). It is still banned in most Chinese provinces, except for those areas that have frequent contact with overseas Chinese and Taiwanese (Dean 2010, Oakes and Sutton 2010). By contrast, in Taiwan folk religion is now embraced as a foundation of local society and a symbol of local culture. However, there was a time when its folk religion was seen as an obstacle to colonisation and modernisation, and it was curbed in different ways during the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) and the early stages of the Kuomintang regime (1945-1960s). To understand the present flourishing state of folk religion in Taiwan we need to look at religious policy and socio-economic development in Taiwan since World War II: in doing so can better understand the different circumstances of folk religion there and in China.

This paper will focus on a local community temple in southern Taiwan — Fengtian Temple (奉天宮) in Xingang, Jiayi County (新港鄉,嘉義縣) — where the author has been engaged in fieldwork since 2010. The author has maintained contact with temple committee members and continues to observe the temple's new transformations. This temple has adapted to the many political, social and economic changes since martial law was lifted in 1987, something not all temples in Taiwan have been able to do effectively. Most successful have been the Mazu temples that have been able to create connection with NGOs. This paper will not generalise this case to all community temples in Taiwan. Rather, Fengtian temple is a successful case that is studied and admired by many other temples, and is thus particularly worthy of research.

I. The lifting of martial law

After China was taken over by communist forces in 1949, the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, KMT, 國民黨) withdrew to Taiwan, which had been under its control since 1945. In order to maintain and strengthen its control and in response to civil unrest, the KMT (led by Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 1887-1975) imposed martial law on the island. After 1950, it used its political power, police system and military to consolidate its regime and achieve security. With protection and assistance from the United States, Taiwan was able to maintain a wary peace with China and devote itself to economic development. From 1950 to 1980, land reforms brought economic benefits and stimulated rapid growth. Taiwan's growing economy fostered national security and social stability, and laid the groundwork for the development of democracy. With the improvement of national education, the literacy rate climbed, incomes rose steadily and rural inhabitants moved to the city, bringing urbanisation and the rise of a middle class.

David Jordan proposed that since 1945 there have been four major transformations in Taiwan that have affected its religious development: increasing wealth; specific differences in government policy from the earlier Japanese period, such as the implementation of land reform; increasing education; and increasing social and geographic mobility (Jordan 1994). This paper confirms the accuracy of Jordan's observations, and presents further consequences of the transformations he discusses. For example, he points out that land reform drastically reduced the land held by temples. I suggest that land reform also caused the collapse of the ritual sphere (*jisi quan* 祭祀圈, Chang 2002) and induced temples to rely on donations and festival income, which has given them an incentive to change their organisational structure from being a management committee to being a legal person (*caituan faren* 財團法人), with earning funds as one of its important tasks.

Running a temple can now be likened to running a business. In recent years, this has also made it possible for NGOs to get involved in temple affairs.

In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904-1997) embarked on economic reforms and declared a goal of peaceful unification with Taiwan, which placed great pressure on its government. In addition, in 1979 the US accepted the admission of China to the United Nations, following Taiwan's withdrawal from the organisation in the early 1970s. This move isolated Taiwan diplomatically and threatened the domestic legitimacy of the KMT regime. Forced to reform, it announced an end to the ban on other political parties, permitted the formal establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party in 1986 and rescinded martial law in 1987. The implementation of the Civil Organization Law in 1989 also eliminated restrictions on free association, and a large number of religious groups and public organisations were subsequently established or expanded.

These reforms were followed by increasing democratisation, which took the form of constitutional reform, more popularly elected legislators, flexible diplomacy, the approval of trips to mainland China for the purpose of visiting relatives and easing controls on foreign trade. By opening up the full range of possibilities for democratisation and globalisation, the lifting of martial law was a key moment in these reforms. By granting people the right to free speech, democratic activity and the discussion of theory, policy and platforms, political democratisation, economic liberalisation, social pluralism and cultural globalisation became possible. These in turn released plentiful, bold and unrestrained social forces (Rubinstein 1994).

In recent years, new legal codes, such as the Cultural Properties Reservation Code (1982-2012) and the Cultural Creation Code, have been created to encourage people to invest in cultural industries, and the National Culture and Arts Award and National Heritage Preservation Award have been established to promote

various cultural preservation and education activities. In addition, the Small & Medium Enterprise Administration in the Ministry of Economic Affairs has established national-level incentives, such as the National Quality Award, to encourage upgrading among small and medium-sized enterprises. Small and medium-sized enterprises have long been the mainstays of Taiwan's growth and economy, and we will see the cultural industries in Xingang all began with individual entrepreneurs who relied on their personal experience and skills.

II. Promulgation of the Civil Association Act

The implement of Civil Association Act in 1989 provided the legal foundation for the establishment of new religions and religious organisations. According to estimates made by Chiu Hei-yuan, the number of registered religious organisations (including new religions) grew by 952% between 1989 and 1998, which contrasted with the growth rate of 179% for other social organisations (Chiu 2001:273). Before 1989, no religious organisation was allowed to register unless it owned a temple or a monastery. In 1980, there were only ten legal religions in Taiwan. After 1989, however, there were 26 authorised nationwide religious groups. Since the religious market in Taiwan has become intensely competitive, every temple must pursue the modernisation of its organisation and rituals to survive.

Paradoxically, older religions (in this case, community temples) have also benefited from the post-martial law easing of restrictions and the promulgation of the Civil Association Act. A great number of non-profit organisations (NPOs) and non-government organisations (NGOs) have registered after 1989. With the assistance of these new NPOs and NGOs, some of which are involved in community affairs, many traditional community temples have experienced a revival and have become drivers of local cultural industries. Fengtian Temple in Xingang is one such example.

There are 481 nationwide religious corporations registered with the Department of Social Affairs and 152 nationwide religious foundations registered with the Department of Civil Administration (Chang 2007:24). All of these recently-approved organisations have helped foster a religious revival and the emergence of rich religious cultures, and the thriving religious culture has been a source of cultural creativity and promoter of tourism in Taiwan.

Robert Weller argues that sectarian religions and Buddhist organisations have demolished traditional regionalism, contributed to pan-Taiwanese nationwide ties and helped provide a basis for civil society (Weller 1999a, 1999b). Similarly, I argue that traditional community temples have gone through a process of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation. Some, such as Taichung's Dajia (大甲) temple, have expanded their territory to the whole of Taiwan, while Fengtian temple in Xingang has spread from its traditional territory to include the whole of Chiayi County. A large number of temples have lost their land, symbolic territory and believers, and have therefore deemed the whole island as their territory. Furthermore, many NPOs and NGOs are centred on certain traditional temples, and have also contributed to building civil society in Taiwan.

Before 1989, the few voluntary associations that had registered in Xingang Township consisted of the Youth Corps, the Veterans Council Centre, the Rotary Club and the Lions Club. In 2012, Xingang had 39 registered voluntary associations, including the Phoenix Chinese Orchestra, Dancing Phoenix Beiguan Club,¹ Voluntary Firefighters Club, Aixiang Charity Club, Xinyuan Seniors Club, Xinyuan Singing Club and Fuyuan Disabled Persons Club. Although these voluntary associations were initiated to pursue their own interests, they ended up supporting the Fengtian Temple without any sponsorship from the temple.

¹ Beiguan (北管) is a type of traditional Chinese temple music with a majestic, martial sound.

Gradually, the temple and the associations started helping each other, and their memberships came to overlap. As it now stands, while these associations have their own budgets and activities, Fengtian Temple can readily mobilise them when needed, which shows that the temple has won the support of the county's residents. We can also see that the numerous NGOs have served as intermediaries and lubricants between the national government and folk religion. For example, many NGO projects to help local temples have received government funding. The most important NGO in Xingang Township is the Xingang Cultural Educational Foundation (XCEF, 新港文教基金會), which, as discussed below, has played a crucial role in the re-emergence of Fengtian Temple. Today's community temples are places where local residents display their strength and where various kinds of interests can be integrated.

III. Temple festivals: from superstition to cultural heritage

During the post-war period, temple festivals in Taiwan were labelled superstitious and wasteful by the KMT government and modernised local elites. For example, as early as 1968, the Ministry of the Interior issued the "Guidelines for Encouraging Frugality in Folk Religious Ceremonies" to regulate temple affairs. The main purpose of the nation's cultural policy at that time was to reclaim Chinese culture, and the definition of culture was "artifacts and lifestyles that belong to the great traditions of the elite and China." After 1978, facing the growing strength of the Beijing regime and the failure of international diplomacy, the KMT under the leadership of Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國 (1910-1988) was forced to come to terms with local Taiwanese culture and work with Taiwanese elites. The local culture of Taiwan thus became a focal point of cultural policy and the definition of culture shifted to the artifacts and lifestyles of the peoples of Taiwan.

In 1981, the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA) was established to better meet the need for a democratic cultural policy. Dr. Chen Chi-nan 陳其南, an anthropologist, served as vice-chairman in 1993, and urged the CCA to accept local temples and religion as essential elements of folk culture. This transformed the central government's cultural policy from reforming and regulating local religion, to appreciating and sponsoring it.

In 1995, the cultural policy of Taiwan underwent a major transformation in which the central government's standardised authority over counties and towns was modified to accommodate local specialties, including skills and performances characteristic of various counties and towns. Coexistent with this transformation was the establishment of cultural centres in major towns and the growth of the CCA (Wu 2011:107). In addition, in line with the concept of cultural property and intangible cultural property proposed by UNESCO, the CCA replaced terms such as traditional folk skills or folk arts with the designations intangible cultural heritage or cultural property, and the CCA took charge of most of the tasks related to the investigation, registration, and designation of cultural properties (Wu 2011:108).

Folk customs and festivals are seen as the sources of local culture, are among the most important items within the category of cultural properties, and account for the largest share of registered intangible cultural heritage items. Since 2008, the CCA has designated seven intangible cultural heritage items, including the Ghost festival in Keelung, Incense-offering in Xigang, the Procession and Incense-offering for Dajia Mazu, the Ritual for Drowned Ghosts in Kohu, Incense-offering for Baishatun Mazu, the Procession of Beigang Mazu, and the Ritual of Cosmic Renewal in Donggang. While the revival of these temple festivals since 1990 were spearheaded by the temples themselves, and not sponsored by the CCA, the official designation of these festivals by the CCA has given the temples greater

prominence and encouraged more temples to seek a higher profile, including Fengtian Temple in Xingang.

The CCA was upgraded to the Ministry of Culture (MOC) in 2012, and then-President Ma Ying-jeou 馬英九 (1950-) declared at the ceremony at its inauguration that “The Ministry of Culture... will spread Chinese culture with Taiwanese Characteristics” throughout Taiwan and the world. The Department of Cultural Resources and the Department of Cultural and Creative Development are under the MOC, and bear responsibility for supervising and assisting religious cultural industries, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

As Paul Katz pointed out, one of the main problems confronting Taiwan’s post-war rulers has been how to maintain a measure of state control over local religious traditions in the face of increasing democratisation and cosmopolitanism (Katz 2003). He is correct in pointing out the influence of the state over local religions and emphasising the role of the CCA’s cultural policy. However, Katz did not have the opportunity to examine the vast power local temples have gained from the state or the support of the CCA/MOC in the present. Popular power has never been so great, nor have local religions flourished so mightily in the history of the Chinese world.

The Temple Manager and Temple Territory: From De-Territorialisation to Re-Territorialisation



Map 1 Location of Xingang Township

Xingang Township is located in southern Taiwan, and has an area of 66 square kilometres. It is divided into 23 villages, and had a total population of

33,278 in 2014. The township's largest industry is agriculture, and its main economic products are rice and vegetables. Fengtian Temple was founded in 1811 and is the largest and oldest community temple in the area. Its main deity is the Goddess Mazu (媽祖, the Heavenly Mother). In traditional Han Taiwanese society, community temples have been always centres for exchanging opinions and enjoying entertainment, and Fengtian Temple has also served these functions.

Fengtian Temple has been a public entity since the temple was built in 1811. The construction money was collected from the township's 18 former villages, which included four wealthier commercial villages and 14 humbler agricultural villages. In those days, the temple's rule was that temple *raojing* (繞境, territory inspection tour) festivals must be sponsored by all residents of the four commercial villages, and that a procession bearing the Goddess would perform an annual tour of the four villages on the fifteenth day of the first month of the lunar calendar. In addition, the Goddess would tour the 18 villages every four years on the fifteenth and sixteenth days of the first lunar month. The manager of the temple was chosen from the four richer villages. Assistants to the manager for each year's festival were chosen by the Goddess by throwing divination blocks (擲杯), and could be from any of the 18 villages. It was considered a great honour to be chosen by the Goddess to arrange the festival. Usually the temple manager would donate a larger sum of money than others to cover the whole expenditures of the festival, and, in return, this service was expected to bring him great symbolic and material rewards.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month of each year, Fengtian temple collected money from each household in the closest four villages for the procession. Volunteer groups specialising in performing traditional Chinese music, opera, dancing and related arts escorted the Goddess's procession as she inspected her territory. Believers would hold

feasts for relatives and friends coming from other towns. On the next day, the Goddess would tour the other 18 villages (done once every four years), and give blessings to her believers. Compared with the procession tour, the Goddess's birthday (celebrated on the 23rd day of the third lunar month) was a simpler affair at Fengtian Temple. Xingang Mazu does not leave the temple on her birthday but instead remains in the temple waiting for pilgrims to come and bring her birthday greetings. Since 1988, the largest group of pilgrims attending this event has been from Dajia.

A rebellion against the local government led by Dai Chaochun 戴潮春 broke out in 1862 and evolved into an ethnic feud between immigrants from the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou areas of China. Both Xingang Township and Fengtian Temple were seriously damaged in this rebellion. The Tongzhi Emperor suppressed the revolt in 1865 and suspended Fengtian Temple's procession tour. Fengtian Mazu's procession tour was also stopped during the Japanese colonial period under their policy of suppressing local religion. Not until 1975 did Fengtian Temple resume a procession tour of nearby villages. As a result, there was no procession tour from 1862 to 1975.

Like other community temples in Taiwan, Fengtian Temple underwent a difficult period after World War II. Many believers moved to urban areas to find jobs and household earnings tended to be invested in capital such as tools and equipment instead of being donated to the temple. As required by local KMT government, in 1952 the Fengtian Temple organised a management committee consisting of one chief manager and eight committee members chosen from the 18 villages. During the 1960s, when Taiwan's economy was beginning its upsurge, although many railways and highways were built to transport agricultural products to markets in urban areas, Xingang was left isolated outside the highway and railroad network. Without modern transportation, Xingang remained a backwater

and thus retained its rural lifestyle. We can see similar situations in other villages in central Taiwan (Gallin 1966).

The Goddess Mazu's 1975 procession tour was a modest affair and only voluntary donations from the closest four villages were collected, although donations had once been mandatory. In the old days, each household member had had to pay a certain amount of money called a *ding-kou* fee (丁口錢)² to the temple in order to obtain the Goddess's blessing. In addition, voluntary entertainment groups had once been organised by landlords and tenants. But after the land and property owned by landlord members had been confiscated over the years, group members were dismissed. When the Goddess's procession tour was revived in 1975, some of the voluntary entertainment groups were re-established; at that time they were managed by Fengtian Temple instead of the landlords. When we conducted interviews in 2012, most residents no longer remembered the exact boundaries of the original 18 villages. We may see this as de-territorialisation. Not only had the Goddess lost her close connection with the 18 villages but she also lost the obligatory donations from everyone in the four closest commercial villages.

When the processions resumed, voluntary donations were insufficient to support the temple's ordinary expenses, let alone festival spending. In addition, more assistant managers had to be chosen from the 18 villages in response to migration and depopulation. From various perspectives, the temple needed to expand its membership and sources of income. This gave Fengtian Temple the incentive to change its management structure from a management committee to a legal person in 1974. The legal person is headed by 15 directors and five supervisors. According to the new rules, Fengtian Temple can accept donations

2 *Ding* is male, *kou* is female. The temple required ten NTD from each male resident, and five NTD from each female resident in the village.

from the whole island, and can expand the Goddess's procession tour to other areas outside the original 18 villages.

After Fengtian Temple was severely damaged by an earthquake on 21 September 1999, it initiated an island-wide fund raising campaign for the purpose of restoring the temple, and engineers and technicians were invited to help with reconstruction. Mr. Ho Ta-huang 何達煌 was a successful businessman and technician in Taipei. He and his siblings were born in Xingang and migrated to Taipei in the 1960s where they established a construction company. After years spent working and accumulating a good reputation at Fengtian temple, Ho was elected one of the 15 directors of the temple legal person and showed so much enthusiasm for temple reconstruction that he was promoted to vice-president in 2001.



Map 2 Route of the 12 towns in the "Mountain and Sea Tour"

When Mr. Ho was elected president of Fengtian Temple in 2008, he sought to restore the temple's glory by embarking on the expansion of Fengtian Temple's territory from the old 18 villages to the 12 new towns, which included more than 60 villages, and also by extending the *raojing* festival from two days in the past to nine days starting in 2010. The festival has also been renamed the "Mountain and Sea Tour" (*Shanghai youxiang* 山海遊香) to reflect its larger scope. All 12 of the new towns are within Chiayi County, which has allowed Fengtian Temple to claim a status higher than that of any other temples in the county and assert that it is the chief temple of the county. In fact, the other major temples in Chiayi County lack the money, power or ambition to compete with Fengtian. We have observed that every one of the new towns in Chiayi County welcomes its new alliance and friendship with the temple. For a long time, Chiayi was an agricultural county, and is considerably less developed than other counties. There is an old Taiwanese saying: "Where there is a crowd there is money", which suggests that since religious festivals attract crowds, they will also draw in money. During the nine-day temple tour, Goddess Mazu's presence transforms numerous quiet rural villages into bustling, noisy carnivals. This is why most of the sixty villages welcome the tour from Fengtian Temple and are willing to become part of her territory. The religious term *jing* (境, territory) and *raojing* denote a close relation between the deity and residents inside her territory. Therefore, we can see this as the re-territorialisation of Fengtian Temple and the expansion of Fengtian Mazu's territory.

We might like to distinguish the "territory" of a temple today from the "territory" of a temple in former times. During the Qing Dynasty, the Goddess's territory was endorsed by the emperor and she was said to have absolute power over her believers. Believers under her jurisdiction in her territory were willing to give donations according to an exact quota and to provide service whenever the temple

needed it. After the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, in the name of the separation of state and religion, numerous traditional festivals and deities' birthday rituals were eliminated in China. (Goossaert and Palmer 2011:57). When the KMT retreated to Taiwan, as mentioned earlier, folk religion was regulated as well. Today, the Goddess has to compete with new religious sects and also with the government's social welfare and modern medicine. Believers used to request herbal prescriptions from Mazu to heal disease or they would receive rice and cooking oil from the temple in the winter. Now, they can obtain better medicine and social welfare from hospitals or their township office. Faith in the Goddess is not as absolute as before and believers' rights and obligations are no longer as rigid. The Goddess's territory today thus overlaps with the territories of other deities and is loosely maintained. That is why the relevant term was changed from 'procession' to 'tour', as tour expresses the wish to have communication and friendship with temples along the route.

We should also ask why Fengtian Temple has been able to extend its territory to the whole of Chiayi County and conduct a nine-day tour. Since 1988, the Dajia Mazu temple has changed its pilgrimage destination from the Beigang Mazu temple to the Xingang Mazu temple,³ and the Fengtian Temple in Xingang is now visited by the roughly 100,000 pilgrims who arrive with the Dajia pilgrimage. One of the reasons Fengtian Temple was chosen by the Dajia temple to replace the Beigang temple is that the Fengtian Temple claims that it houses the "first Mazu statue in Taiwan" (*kai Tai Mazu* 開台媽祖). This implies that Xingang Mazu is the oldest Mazu statue in Taiwan and, in folk belief, the older the statue the more blessings she can give to pilgrims. For the past twenty years, following the

3 Dajia is a town in Taichung county in central Taiwan and is famous for its nine-day walking pilgrimage from central Taiwan to Beigang in the south (7 days in 1974). Due to a temple dispute in 1988, Dajia stopped making its pilgrimage to Beigang and instead conducts a pilgrimage to the Xingang Mazu temple (Chang 2003).

shift of the Dajia temple's pilgrimage to Fengtian Temple, a growing number of Mazu temples in Taiwan have been making pilgrimages to Xingang. As a result, Fengtian Temple has acquired a reputation higher than that of the Beigang temple and was able to transform its two-day procession into the nine-day "Mountain and Sea Tour."

Mr. Ho has not only transformed the temple's ritual calendar and encouraged the expansion of Fengtian Mazu's territory to the whole of Chiayi county but he has also extended his ambitions to mainland China by promoting Fengtian Mazu across the Taiwan Strait. The first Mazu temple in mainland China that Mr. Ho and the Xingang delegation visited, as most Mazu believers do, is always the Meizhou Mazu Temple (湄洲媽祖廟), the ancestral temple of all Mazu temples in the world. Furthermore, Mr. Ho has been willing to make alliances with other Mazu temples in Fujian Province and he organises a group to visit famous Mazu temples in China every year. The result is that Fengtian Temple established a branch temple in Yongchun (永春, a rural town in Fujian) in 2011, and has held a procession tour annually around Yongchun since 2011. As Rubinstein and Sangren observed, returning to China, or conducting a pilgrimage to the ancestral temple, is one of the first responses to modernisation of Taiwan's religious organisations (Rubinstein 2001:279-291, Sangren 2003:262). We may see from this Xingang case that the second response is to establish a branch in China so as to maintain a close relationship between believers there and in Taiwan. Some believers ironically commented that, "this is a religious fight back to recover mainland China, instead of a political one."

What was astonishing to many Mazu believers was that, in 2007, Mr. Ho accepted Dr. Chen Jinhuang's 陳錦煌 advice and joined a protest sponsored by the central government of Taiwan in the square in front of the United Nations building in New York to promote Taiwanese independence and allow it to join

the United Nations. Their appeal was “UN for Taiwan.” The statue of Xingang Mazu and her sedan chair were carried to New York and had a “procession tour” through the Chinese community there. This was a big threat to the Dajia Mazu and Beigang Mazu temples and showed that the fame of Xingang Mazu was the greatest of all the Mazu temples in Taiwan (Chang 2013:139).

The ambitious Mr. Ho and his vigorous team are largely responsible for the expansion of the temple’s territory and Fengtian Mazu’s enhanced reputation. However, the team supporting the “Mountain and Sea Tour” extends far beyond the temple’s administrative organisation. In order to encompass the whole area of Chiayi County, Mr. Ho enlarged his team to include more members and helpers from the county. For example, he invited the president of the Chiayi Mazu Temple to be one of the four vice-managers of the festival team. In addition, the president of the Lifesaving Society of Chiayi County was invited to be the commander of the firefighters’ team and coastal patrol team, which assume escort duties throughout the entire festival event. The mayors of the 12 towns and chiefs of the 12 police stations were also invited to take part in the activity. Furthermore, the four procession stops at the villas of major company bosses or business owners in Chiayi to encourage these rich people to donate large sums of money to Fengtian Temple. Mr. Ho further invites reporters and media units to publicise the event. In order to preserve documents and old records concerning Mazu worship, Mr. Ho established the Archival Center for the World Studies of Mazu in 2010. For all these efforts intended to revive and preserve this folk religion, Mr. Ho won the Ministry of Culture’s Cultural Heritage Preservation Award in September 2014.

The temple’s mode of operation is completely different from how it used to be. In the past, the whole town of Xingang was mobilised and every decision concerning the procession tour needed to have the Goddess’s consent. Today, most of the operation, including the manpower, the personnel and the budget,

all come from Mr. Ho or his administrative team, and Mr. Ho is responsible for the outcome. Decisions made by the Goddess have been reduced. To some extent, this is the result of the general transformation of temple organisation in modern-day Taiwan. A legal person authorises a temple president to run a temple like an enterprise. The temple president plays a more essential role in the temple organisation than before. In contrast, the modernisation of local temples has made local residents feel somewhat more distant from the temple.

We can also observe how the “public” nature of a community temple has also shifted to a certain degree. In imperial times, each community had only one temple and it would be the centre of local public opinion. But now a community temple does not hold absolute power. Residents may organise different associations and work for different interests. Yet, ironically, when we investigated articles concerning community development in Taiwan published by social scientists (Li 2004, Chang 2011), we found that most failed community projects were those that did not involve the community’s temple. Community temples were a crucial factor in whether a community development project was successful or not. This implies that if there is no community temple, it does not matter, but if there is a community temple, development projects had better involve it. A further implication is that the community temple is still the only organisation that earns the trust of a majority of residents.

We also noticed this tendency in Xingang Township. Although Fengtian Temple has had conflicts with different environmental associations and industrial associations in Xingang, it is still the indispensable organisation for integrating different opinions and interests. In this respect, we suggest that folk religion is not as detrimental to the construction of a civil society as some scholars suggest. On the contrary, more and more local elites and entrepreneurs are trying to work with local temples as they attempt to introduce progressive ideas into the community.

Local Elites and NGOs: Xingang Culture and Education Foundation

After the dispute between Dajia and Beigang from December 1987 to February 1988 concluded with Dajia unexpectedly deciding to change the destination of its pilgrimage to Xingang, Fengtian temple only had about 50 days to prepare accommodation and food for roughly 100,000 Dajia pilgrims. This was a chance to improve Xingang's economy and an opportunity for Fengtian temple to retaliate for years of humiliation from Beigang. Almost all Xingang residents were mobilised: all the elementary and middle schools were cleaned to receive pilgrims, housewives near Fengtian temple cooked for them, fire fighters and policemen were on duty to maintain order and civil servants in the township office helped with the accounting, registering and reception of the pilgrims. All of Xingang Township sprang into action in response to this rare and extraordinary event.

However, most Dajia pilgrims complained about this sudden change and felt uncomfortable in Xingang. One of the Dajia temple committee members, Mr. Dong, instructed Fengtian temple on how to improve its facilities and equipment. Most school teachers, retired teachers, medical doctors, and members of the local elite were aware of the necessity of establishing various voluntary associations (which later became NGOs) to help if they wanted to keep the Dajia pilgrims coming back every year. Among the members of the local elite, Dr. Chen played a unique role.

Dr. Chen Jinhuang graduated from the College of Medicine in National Taiwan University, the most eminent medical school in Taiwan, yet gave up his successful practice in Taipei to return to his hometown of Xingang in 1981. To celebrate the lifting of martial law in July 1987, and to benefit from it, Dr. Chen

and his friends from Taipei established the XCEF in October of that year; Dr. Chen was elected as the first president. In its first few years, this foundation assisted the studies of young students, and strove to maintain a clean and neat environment in Xingang Township.

When the nearly 100,000 pilgrims who accompanied the Dajia Mazu poured into Xingang in 1988, this simple rural township was immediately paralysed and when they left there were countless piles of rubbish. As a result, Dr. Chen called on XCEF members to “clean our Xingang”. Thanks to live television coverage of the immense Dajia pilgrimage, the “clean our Xingang” activity made XCEF the best-known local NGO in Taiwan. Doctors have always had high social prestige in Taiwan and Dr. Chen thereupon became a respected figure from the town. He is also a representative of the local elite, a mediator in affairs beyond the town, and the so-called “conscience of Xingang”. After two years of fieldwork we discovered that these titles are justified; almost all the new major projects and organisations in Xingang have been established with input from Dr. Chen.

A growing number of elite members and professionals have returned to Xingang and joined XCEF, following Dr. Chen’s example. To maintain the quality of members, Dr. Chen established a book club in 2004. There were about 20 members in 2011 when we joined the club. Participants included members of XCEF, Xingang town mayor Mr. Qiu, Secretary General of Farmers Association Mr. Lin, former town mayor Mr. Zheng, entrepreneur Mr. He and *koji* pottery (交趾陶)⁴ expert Mr. Xie. Each month a different person led a discussion of a book, following which there would be food and drink. This was an occasion for

4 *Koji* is a special type of low temperature pottery first made in south China during the seventeenth century. It became famous and received the name “Koji” — a term used by the Japanese to designate southern China — after merchants brought this type of pottery from China to Japan. *Koji* pottery techniques in Taiwan were originally passed down by immigrants from the Fujian region.

sharing new knowledge, improving mutual understanding and absorbing the latest information concerning the external world. Food and drink also united the members and provided them with strong bonds of mutual affection. Members told us that they joined the club in order to improve Xingang and their knowledge.

Dr. Chen and XCEF have been successful in applications for local and central government funding for many projects because of their good reputation. These projects included the National Cultural and Arts Festival sponsored by the CCA in 1993, an international community art festival project, an exhibition of the work of *koji* master Lin Guangyi, an exhibition at the Xingang cultural center and cultural carnival projects. Most of these exhibitions and performances were held at or near Fengtian temple, works displayed in the exhibition of Master Lin, for example, included statues of Mazu. Thus, Xingang and Fengtian temple have attracted extensive media attention. Thanks to the special honours it has received, Xingang has become an art and culture model community. XCEF even won the Presidential Award as an excellent foundation in 2003 and Dr. Chen was hired as one of the members of the Executive Yuan from 2000 to 2003.

After the decline of traditional Beiguan (北管) music in Xingang threatened to tarnish the reputation of Fengtian Temple, XCEF applied for funding from the CCA in 1994 to help re-organise a local Beiguan troupe renamed the “Dancing Phoenix”. The Beiguan troupe was originally established when Fengtian Temple was built in 1811. However, the troupe stopped functioning between 1950 and 1990 because no young students wanted to learn Chinese temple music instruments. The XCEF recruited sixth generation students from Xingang to reorganise the troupe, and invited an old Beiguan master from Tainan to teach every week. Furthermore, the second president of XCEF, Mr. Qiu, applied for NT\$3 million in funding from the central government for the establishment of the “Xingang Industry Strategic Alliance”, which offered classes on creativity, marketing,

packaging and promotion. Members of this alliance also visited Japan to learn various modern skills. The Alliance's achievements included the establishment of a *koji* pottery workshop and tourist vegetable gardens in 2004 and 2005.

XCEF runs a public library that houses more than 30,000 volumes for teenagers. In addition, it manages a seedling nursery for reforestation and cooperates with the local farmer's association to produce organic rice for sale in the XCEF restaurant. This restaurant is run jointly by XCEF and the Xingang Town Administrative Office. It is located in a remodelled dormitory originally belonging to the Taiwan Sugar Company and it provides people in Xingang with a place to entertain their guests. It also provides jobs for unemployed woman aged between 45 and 60. XCEF currently has the following five major goals: popularisation of reading, provision of cultural activities and arts exhibitions and performances, protection of the Xingang environment, caring for the Xingang community, and promotion of international cultural exchange. The foundation's goal is to transform Xingang's image as a culturally deprived area with the help of local residents.

We have already mentioned that after 1987 there have been numerous NGOs registered in Xingang, and a large number of these NGOs were initiated by XCEF either directly or indirectly. Many of them were established to assist with the annual activities of Fengtian temple. XCEF has also promoted local cultural activities by training performers. The following associations are listed in order to demonstrate the high level of involvement of Xingang residents. In addition to the Beiguan Music Troupe, other NGOs include Phoenix Chinese Orchestra, Gumin Elementary School martial arts troupe, Xinyuan Singing Club for adults, XCEF Singing Club, Xingang Children's Chorus, Xingang Junior High School Symphonic Band, Wenchang Elementary School Chinese Orchestra, Xingang Elementary School parent-child opera troupe and the Dance Club for teenagers

in Xingang. Using Fengtian Temple as a performing venue, XCEF has created a folk cultural centre differing from the government's system of cultural centres. Over the course of 30 years, nearly a thousand performances have been held with assistance or sponsorship from XCEF. Local villagers can appreciate international performances, experience new Western music and dance and enrich their rural lives with many forms of recreation.

Apart from organising performing associations, XCEF also encourages villagers to write their own stories and community histories as a means of promoting Xingang to visitors. Subsidised by the CCA in 2002, XCEF published a book entitled *Strolling in Xingang*, which introduces historical sites, social life and customs, local products, local snacks and folk crafts using vivid and lively drawings and pictures. This visitor's book was published in order to encourage tourists to stay a few days in the area. The book also contains transportation information, lodging information, dining recommendations and shopping routes, and lists Fengtian Temple as the foremost local destination.

XCEF has been closely involved in the political and economic development of Xingang Township. As mentioned earlier, the first XCEF president (1987-2000) was Dr. Chen, who developed the concept of XCEF and its institutional framework and regarded the comprehensive development of Xingang Township as his personal duty. The second president, Mr. Qiu Jin-huang (2000-2006), was elected the mayor of the township (2006-2014) after six years' service at XCEF, and has successfully completed two terms in that office. The third President, Mr. Chang Jui-long (2006-2012), is an educator who emphasised environmental protection and education for adolescents. Dr. Chen has returned as the fourth president (2012-).

The 2008 essay "Promoting Xingang," published by Dr. Chen in the XCEF Proceedings, reveals his plan and ambitions for the development of Xingang.

Using Fengtian Temple as a tool, his aim is to make the rural countryside the best place for villagers to live, children to have an education, young people to have jobs, women to have work, and old people to enjoy the company of their descendants. Dr. Chen urged Xingang Township to offer a platform for different industries to attract investment, and called on Fengtian Temple to provide traditional culture and crafts so as to attract crowds of pilgrims.

In 2010, President Ho of Fengtian Temple invited several scholars to propose an Archival Centre for the World Studies of Mazu, and to organise an International Conference on the Mazu faith. I was one of the scholars involved in this work. At the opening ceremony for the Centre, we discovered that the idea of fostering relationships with the academic world was approved by Dr. Chen. In his inauguration speech at the International Conference Dr. Chen hoped that the scholars from Europe and the US would appreciate the beauty of Xingang and study the folk religion of Fengtian Temple. Dr. Chen is not a member of the Fengtian Temple legal person but he is consulted concerning every project connected with the temple. With Dr. Chen's approval, Fengtian Temple maintains a close cooperative relationships with most NGOs in Xingang.

Local Entrepreneurs: The Xingang Incense Arts Resort and *Koji* Pottery

Temple construction uses traditional architectural techniques and temple festivals are associated with traditional foods and crafts. In the old days, the temple was surrounded by incense shops, joss paper stores, bakeries, food stores and peddlers, *koji* and *jian-nian* (剪粘)⁵ stores, stone and wood carving stores and

⁵ *Jian-nian* (剪粘) porcelain is a special variety used for temple decoration. Literally means

blacksmiths' shops. During the festival season, even more handicrafts and folk arts and toys could be seen and purchased. Many once-endangered handicrafts and folk arts are being revived in the wake of the resurgence of Fengtian Temple. In the following paragraphs I will describe two temple-related cultural creative industries, namely incense-making and *koji* pottery, and show how these two industries have not only survived but have also generated many related enterprises.

As mentioned earlier, Xingang is a relatively backward and conservative rural area with an economy largely reliant on agriculture and traditional handicraft industries. Most local farms and factories are household-based, small-scale and low income. What is new about the following cases includes their large investment, new techniques and multifaceted operations. Cases such as these have involved the enlistment of family members and relatives, hiring of employees and the activation of neighborhoods.

I. Xingang Incense Arts Resort

Mr. Chen Wenzhong 陳文忠 joined XCEF in 1996. Although he inherited an incense factory from his father, he also leased a block of land to develop into an organic farm, because incense-making was a demanding yet low-income job. Dr. Chen of XCEF proposed that,

Your family has been making incense from generation to generation, so it is better that you continue your involvement in the incense business. You might as well take the idea of comprehensive community development and rely on your existing craftsmanship to establish an

“cut and glue” , it involves cutting glass, porcelain or pottery into pieces, and gluing them on clay.

incense resort.

Accepting this advice, Wenzhong established the Xingang Association of Cultural Recreation Industries in 2004, was elected as one of the 20 directors of Fengtian Temple in 2008 and helped Fengtian Temple to organise the “Goddess Mazu Eight-day and Seven-night Procession Tour” in 2009. In addition, he also appealed to Vice President of Taiwan Vincent Siew 蕭萬長 (1939-) for funding to widen the bridge from Xingang Township to Beigang, to the Water and Soil Conservation Office for funding to accelerate basic improvements to the rural environment for the Bantou Community in Xingang, and to the Physical Culture and Sports Commission for funding to rebuild the railway right-of-way for recreational purposes in Xingang in 2009.

After having participated in these community undertakings, Wenzhong ran for mayor of Xingang Township in 2009 but was not elected. He was very disappointed, and complained: “The voters are unable to understand my vision, and they don’t appreciate my politics”. He appealed to his constituency,

To build a community economic zone for everyone, and to provide everyone with a fine, environmentally-friendly area for prosperity. I wish to bring people back, to ask people to participate in this community together, and manage our natural resources ourselves.

Wenzhong and his family opened a fresh direction for the traditional incense industry in 2008. Advertising “the first theme resort for culture and incense in the whole country: providing deep encounters with fragrance and incense,” and assisted by the Executive Yuan, the Cultural Bureau of Chiayi County and the Tourism Bureau of Chiayi County, the theme resort is divided into five sections:

1. An incense factory (further divided into a retail area, DIY area, experience area, world fragrance exhibition area and production line area);
2. An ecological garden (various fragrant trees are planted in the garden, including sandalwood, eaglewood, cinnamon wood, Japan cypress, cedar, beech, calocedrus, large-leaved Nanmu, orchid tree and *Murraya paniculata*);
3. The Eight Diagrams blessings (various fragrant grasses and flowers planted in eight blocks: vanilla, rose, rosemary, lavender, cloves, lilac, anise, mint, lemongrass, basil, coriander and celery);
4. A restaurant (the dishes contain fragrant grasses and plants from the garden, and visitors can enjoy their meal in a fragrant space with exquisite decoration, while savoring the scents and flavors of natural plants); and
5. A guesthouse where the rooms are named after such fragrances as frankincense, ambergris, rosemary, sweet gum, osmanthus, white sandalwood, cloves and fennel.

Wenzhong went to school again after several years in business and earned a master's degree in cultural design in 2011. His team at the theme resort is continuing to create new incense products, including new flavors, new styles and new models of incense. Thanks to their combination of traditional Chinese incense culture with young, urban, and western tastes, a dying industry is rising again, and their incense products are indeed worthy of the title of cultural creative products.

Wenzhong's forays into local politics have included membership in the Fengtian Temple legal person and a stint as the vice-president of the Xingang Village Council (in spite of his failure in the mayoral election), and he simultaneously manages a traditional incense firm, a garden resort with a theme restaurant and guesthouse, a cultural creative enterprise and community development projects. He is an example of the new style of businessman in Taiwan, after a shift away from

the low-capital, low-education and single-product enterprises of the 1990s and earlier. This case also shows how Taiwan's small and medium-sized enterprises are transforming themselves, and quite successfully so in this instance. Wenzhong can apply for funds from the Chiayi County Government and CCA for many of his undertakings, and can obtain manpower locally in Xingang. I was surprised to see publicity concerning the Xingang Incense Arts Resort in Taipei, and a related essay competition on fragrance on a national website in 2012. Wenzhong expanded his efforts to Guangdong in China during 2010, and he owns an eaglewood plantation and exhibition hall in Dongguan, Guangdong. He was also one of the participants who escorted Fengtian Mazu on procession tours in Fujian, China in 2011 and 2012.

Wenzhong was elected a member of the Chiayi County Council in December 2014. With his new political position, we can look forward to his business operations achieving even greater success in the future.

II. Koji Pottery Kilns

Koji has been made and used for temple decorations in Xingang for hundreds of years. The history of Xingang *koji* can be traced back to last century, when two earthquakes caused severe damage to Fengtian Temple in 1904 and 1906. In the wake of these disasters, Fengtian Temple hired the distinguished *koji* master Ah-hog 阿福 from Quanzhou(泉州) in Fujian to repair the temple. Master Ah-hog selected and trained apprentices from Xingang, and these individuals passed on the technique in Xingang and the surrounding areas. During the 1960s, young boys did not want to learn handicrafts anymore. While this industry has declined since then, there are still dozens of *koji* kilns in the Xingang area, and it is the centre of *koji* production in Taiwan.

Chen Zhongzheng 陳忠正 was born in Xingang's Bantou village, and he

followed his uncle in learning *koji* pottery making and other temple decoration skills after graduating from junior high school. Zhongzheng's relatives and family members purchased a new kiln and adopted new techniques in 1987, and Zhongzheng joined them and established the Yichang Pottery Art Factory to mass-produce *koji* pottery, *jian-nian* porcelain, tiles and mosaics. At one time approximately 70% of the *jian-nian* porcelain sold in Taiwan was produced by the Yichang Factory.

As mentioned earlier, the earthquake of 21 September 1999 inflicted serious damage to Fengtian Temple. Zhongzheng and his uncle jointly repaired the temple, and soon afterwards opened the Yichang Pottery Art Factory to visitors in 2002. They later established the Bantou Tourist Kiln in 2007. It is a novel idea to combine a pottery factory and recreation spot. Zhongzheng knows that while *koji* had been an outstanding industry in the Xingang area, *koji* pottery is not as popular as before. Feeling a sense of responsibility to pass down this traditional art and preserve the industry, Zhongzheng and his family gradually developed the Bantou Tourist Kiln into a recreational resort. Like the Incentive Resort, this it has five areas: a factory, restaurant, accommodation, tourist area for DIY and souvenirs, and a craft museum and art space.

In order to attract young urban tourists, Zhongzheng researches and develops many new goods, and strives to create even more exquisite and individualised merchandise, such as wall decorations, cell phone accessory, murals, toys and dolls, in addition to traditional large public temple decorations. Zhongzheng also combines modern themes, such as cartoon characters and Hollywood movie heroes and heroines, with traditional Chinese legendary heroes. The traditional Chinese concerns of joy, luck, fortune and longevity are often seen in his pottery themes, where they are blended with the Western spirit of challenge and enjoyment. Zhongzheng derives much of his knowledge and technique from

collaboration with university professors, which also shows how guidance from external professionals and funding from government organisations (such as the CCA) are crucial to the transformation of private enterprises.

Zhongzheng has also participated enthusiastically in comprehensive community development. Thanks to his efforts, a lot of intriguing murals hang on homes, the walls of community facilities, and in vacant village lots. In 2011 County Chief Zhang Huaguan 張花冠 was invited to give a speech at the inaugural ceremony for a huge wall mosaic and *koji* painting on the bank of the Beigang River. Community development associations mobilised villagers to offer meals and agricultural products for exhibition and sale on the same day. This mural, railroad bed recreation path and iron bridge crossing between Xingang and Beigang are unique to this resort, and attract many visitors through the Internet, which has increased the popularity of Bantou village. Zhongzheng is dedicated to establishing an art village in this community in the future and said:

I have found my life's purpose and self-esteem by helping my hometown transform itself to a beautiful and confident community. Bantou village was the poorest part of Xingang in the past, but has now become the public face of Xingang.

Conclusions

The lifting of martial law in 1987 was a breakthrough moment for popular religion and community development in Taiwan, and enabled community temples to be revitalised through infusions of funding, energy and new blood. As a result,

community temples have become centres of public opinion. Local temples can be considered among the last preserves of traditional Chinese culture and ethics (which have been challenged by Western cultural influences), and have become sources of inspiration and knowledge for cultural creative industries. In this paper I have focused on the organisational and community economic aspects of the resurgence of Fengtian Temple.

When scholars explore the complex processes of modernisation and secularisation most of their studies are culturally and geographically limited to the Western world (and its perceived influences). If we widen our scope to the study of non-Christian religions, including Chinese folk religion, we obtain different perspectives (for example on the distinction between the sacred and the secular) and hence acquire a better understanding of the interrelationship of secularisation and religious re-emergence in the Chinese world. In Taiwan, as in China, we see that folk religion may be politically suppressed or economically deprived, but it has never died out. It has survived under the state's authority and adapted to continuing socioeconomic changes.

In contrast with institutional religions, folk religion is a diffused religion, and its secular and religious functions are intermingled. Even old and disused community temples may still be centres of village life. When the Taiwan government implemented its community construction program in 1990, community temples re-emerged as public opinion centres. Through the revival of temple festivals and ritual processions, these temples inspired community solidarity and a feeling of belonging, and members of the local elite gathered again under the auspices of local temples to discuss the future of the community. Voluntary associations and NGOs were established to involve more residents and enhance the functions of local temples.

We often see temples and NGOs working together to improve the local

community. We also see the interplay of politics, temple and NGOs. This occurs both directly (such as NGO leaders running for office) and indirectly (as when NGOs receive government grants for their projects). Compared to the early days after World War II, when local Taiwanese were shut out of politics, they now commonly engage in local politics to fight for various rights. The traditional handicrafts that once surrounded temple areas and supported temple culture are now being revived under the title of “cultural industries.”

Focusing on the interactions between a temple, the community, and various agencies, this paper has examined religion and locality in daily life experiences and narratives. The microhistory of Xingang township and Fengtian temple has offered us a better understanding of religious changes in post-martial law Taiwan.

Among other factors, Fengtian Temple's process of resurgence can be traced back to various crucial individuals and events. Dr. Chen, the founder of XCEF, temple president Ho and entrepreneurs Chen Wenzhong and Zhongzheng are striving to empower Fengtian Temple in order to develop Xingang Township, and the temple is considered by many to be an indispensable factor in the community's development. Through their assistance, Fengtian Temple has been able to obtain generous funding from entrepreneurs and businesspeople, and it now also raises money from new festivals, as opposed to obtaining money from donations, as it did in the past. An independent budget allows the temple's management freedom from the supervision of local residents. Fengtian Temple can also engage capable personnel from outside to implement projects, such as the design and establishment of a new “Mountain and Sea Tour” unit or new Archive Centre, which has promoted the temple's modern transformation.

Fengtian Temple has offered opportunities for culturally creative enterprises, and successful entrepreneurs have become active in temple administration and have helped enhance the temple's reputation, creating a win-win situation for the

temple and local industry. It may also be the case that, after the industrialisation and urbanisation that began in the 1960s, people in Taiwan have become alienated and do not trust each other as much as before. Fortunately, folk religion still holds a position of trust for many people; when a promise is sworn before a deity, no one dares break it. This moral foundation perhaps provides a strong starting point for democratic society in Taiwan.



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公廟振興與社區發展： 新港鄉地方頭人的角色

張珣

摘要

本文探討民間宗教如何在當代臺灣的一個社區內實踐與傳承。媽祖繞境儀式與信仰的在地實踐因為融合有在地的歷史記憶而給予在地人生活的支柱。嘉義縣新港鄉奉天宮在 1988 年成為大甲鎮瀾宮與全台媽祖數萬香客的目的地，重新崛起於南臺灣成為媽祖信仰重鎮。這一座清朝時期建立的老廟在沉寂一段時期之後，以嶄新的面貌成功再現，在環境保護，文化創新產業方面相當耀眼。廟方董監事結合了地方菁英、企業家、文創實作者，共同參與社區總體營造，建設新港家鄉。其成果是不但每年維持十數萬香客前來進香，也振興了傳統產業。讓傳統工藝匠師找到了傳承者，也讓年輕學徒在家鄉得以安身立命。

關鍵字：新港鄉，奉天宮，媽祖，社區總體營造，文化產業

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