

## ***Religious Renaissance and the Growth of Civil Society in Greater China***

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Draft: not for citation

Shortly before 2:00 AM on September 21, 1999, a devastating earthquake struck central Taiwan, killing about 2400 people, injuring tens of thousands, and leaving over 100,000 homeless. In Puli, a mid-sized town close to the epicenter, the chairman of the local section of the "Buddhist Compassion Relief Association", commonly called Tz'u-chi, was shaken out of bed. His house almost collapsed and would later have to be torn down. He could not know the full extent of the disaster because there were no electric lights and no phone service. But he knew what he should do. He headed to the Tz'u-chi headquarters, a small wooden building next to the Puli high school. Twenty or thirty other Tz'u-chi members had also spontaneously headed to the center. Using emergency supplies stored there, supplemented with food brought from their own homes, they began cooking hot breakfasts for earthquake survivors. By dawn, a long line of people had gathered in front of the center for comfort and meals. There had been no way for the Tz'u-chi center to announce that it was going to carry out earthquake relief work, but people knew that Tz'u-chi was the natural place to turn for help.<sup>1</sup>

By 5:00 AM a specially equipped truck had arrived from the large Tz'u-chi branch in the central city of Taichung and began to report on the extent of the damage by radio telephone (ordinary cell phones did not work) to the Tz'u-chi headquarters in Hualien. Later in the morning Tz'u-chi began delivering medical supplies and personnel. Eventually, Tz'u-chi would raise more than 250 million dollars for earthquake relief. In addition it mobilized more than 100,000 volunteers to help in rescue, cleanup, and reconstruction.<sup>2</sup>

Tz'u-chi was the largest and most sophisticated non-governmental contributor to the earthquake relief, but it was by no means alone. Monks and nuns and many lay volunteers from the organization called "Buddha's Light Mountain" or Fokwangshan, were also a highly visible and effective presence. A somewhat smaller community, "Dharma Drum Mountain", set up "comfort the heart service teams" to provide psychological counseling from a Buddhist perspective. The "Performing Heaven's Business" (Hsing Tien Kung) Daoist temple in Taipei donated 6 million dollars for earthquake relief.

Besides providing material help, some of these organizations played a crucial public role in providing meaning to a stunned population. In Taipei subway stations and on full page ads in the newspapers, there were huge pictures of Dharma Master Sheng Yen, the master of Dharma Drum Mountain, with the slogan "Get going Taiwan!" In widely broadcast TV lectures, Sheng Yen encouraged Taiwanese not to think of the disaster as the result of bad karma for previous sins but as an important opportunity to make Taiwan safer and better for future generations. Meanwhile Master Hsing Yun of Buddha's Light Mountain was offering similar reassurance, while Master Cheng Yen of Tz'u-chi urging Taiwanese to show one another compassionate care in this time of trial.

Such activities were a powerful public display of a remarkable religious renaissance that has been taking place in Taiwan from the mid-1980s down to the present – a time period that, not coincidentally, corresponds to Taiwan's transition to economic prosperity and political democracy.<sup>3</sup> Taiwan has always been an island full of folk religion. Even today, in a cosmopolitan city like Taipei, practically every block as at least a small shrine and every district at least one large temple. In rural villages and towns, temples are even more prevalent. The months of the lunar calendar are punctuated with many festivals. All phases of the life cycle are marked with colorful rituals. But until recently, popular Taiwanese religious practices have mostly represented the parochial, particularistic, habit-driven aspects of traditional Taiwanese life, rather than the cosmopolitan, rationalized, reflexive aspirations of its modernizers.<sup>4</sup>

The Daoist (and sometimes Buddhist – because Taiwanese folk religion is often syncretistic) deities housed in spectacularly cluttered local temples were local gods, who took care of their own. Though the temples carried out works of charity, these were usually confined to their particular communities. Deeply embedded

in the social and political life of their communities, such temples were a nexus of those informal, particularistic, clientelistic relationships that political reformers usually label "corruption." To this day, such temples are not infrequently accused of being conduits for money laundering and political patronage. Popular religious activities have been focused on rituals for bringing personal good fortune and a happy afterlife, not on organized efforts to improve one's moral life and change society.<sup>5</sup>

The past two decades, however, have witnessed the rapid rise of new forms of religious practice with broad appeal to Taiwan's emerging middle classes. These are based on "humanistic" (*renjian*) efforts to reconcile traditional beliefs with modern science and technology, to provide answers to the moral dilemmas presented by mobile, urban lifestyles, and to provide solutions to the social problems faced by a dynamically industrializing society. These new forms of religious practice are propagated by sophisticated organizations, employing the latest advances in information technology and reaching out into the Taiwanese diaspora around the world.

It has been a renaissance mostly of Buddhism and Daoism. Despite the considerable efforts of foreign missionaries, the combined presence of Catholics and Protestants in Taiwan never amounted to more than about seven percent of the population; and although some denominations continue to grow, the aggregate numbers of practicing Christians have been declining.<sup>6</sup> It is an ironic development, because many Protestants and Catholics in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s saw themselves, with some degree of accuracy, as Taiwan's modernizers. When Taiwan was still a largely rural society, they established major universities (the Protestant Tunghai and the Catholic Fu Jen), built hospitals, and organized a wide array of professionalized social services – all in contrasts to Buddhism and Daoism, which were mostly identified with traditional, rural folk religious practice. But by the time Taiwan really did become modernized, it was Buddhists, and some Daoists, that emerged as the major vehicles for the moral aspirations of the new urban middle classes.

The religious renaissance has made important contributions to Taiwan's civic culture. Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) President of Taiwan celebrated this in his inaugural address in May, 2000:

"Amid the fierce power of Nature, we have seen Taiwan's most beautiful compassion, strongest faith and greatest trust. Our compatriots have been injured and wounded during the September 21 earthquake, but with the spirit of a 'volunteer Taiwan,' Taiwan's new family will stand up resolutely on its feet once again."

When Chen's audience heard the words "compassion...faith...and trust" and "the spirit of a 'volunteer Taiwan'" in connection with the "September 21 earthquake", they most likely first thought of those Buddhist and Daoist organizations that had done so much to mobilize citizens in response to the crisis. In this paper, we will argue that the compassion, faith, and trust nurtured by such organizations have indeed helped constitute the moral basis of a successful transition to democracy.

That there has occurred such a religious renaissance in Taiwan with basically positive civic consequences is something surprising that calls out for explanation. No less a sociologist than Max Weber deemed Buddhism and Daoism incapable of sustaining the rational, inner-worldly asceticism necessary for the transition to modernity.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, until the late 1970s, Taiwan's KMT government did whatever it could to discourage the modernization of Taiwanese Buddhism and Daoism.

While working to co-opt local religious leaders and to use local temples as conduits for the "black gold" of corrupt politics, the KMT aimed to legitimize itself as a secular, modernizing government. While promoting classic Confucian moral virtues (interpreted so as to justify obedience to authoritarian government), the KMT's public education attempted to make students critical of traditional "superstitions." Meanwhile, the government made it difficult for religious leaders to develop more sophisticated understandings of their practices or to use modern forms of organization to expand their influence.

A partial exception was the KMT's policy toward Christian missionaries. Because of its need to maintain favor with the United States, the KMT government was somewhat more tolerant towards Protestant and Catholic missionaries than toward its indigenous religions. For example, it allowed Protestants and Catholics to establish universities, while denying this right to Buddhists and Daoists.

Under these circumstances, one might have expected that as the Taiwanese economy shifted away from agriculture to an increasingly knowledge-intensive high tech industry, its mobile, cosmopolitan, well-educated urban middle classes would either replace their traditional folk religious practices with Christianity or with nothing. The surprising renaissance in "humanistic" Buddhism and what I will call "reform" Daoism raises the following questions. How have Buddhist and Daoist leaders been able to reform their religious practices in ways that would appeal to large numbers of urban Taiwanese? How have they managed quickly to create effective organizations? Despite an early history of government constraints on large scale religious organizations, how have Taiwanese Buddhists and Daoists managed not only to grow in size and influence, but to do so in a way that maintains constructive working relations with the government? Finally, given the fervor that is associated with some of these religious groups and their appeal to different constituencies within Taiwan, what has kept them from becoming a divisive rather than a unifying force in Taiwan's civil society?

I will seek answers to these questions by comparing the histories of four groups whose similarities represent important general trends and whose differences give us clues about the complicated origins and direction of these trends. The first three groups are forms of "humanistic Buddhism"<sup>8</sup>, the fourth a "reformed" version of Daoism. The information on these groups comes mostly from my own ethnographic and archival research.

### Examples of Religious Renaissance

First, let us introduce the groups:

#### Tz'u-chi

We begin with Tz'u-chi, the popular name for the "Buddhist Compassionate Relief Association," which is probably the best known and most influential of all these groups. Tz'u-chi was founded by the Buddhist nun, Master Cheng Yen in 1966. The daughter of a prosperous Taiwanese family in Taichung, Cheng Yen decided to "leave the family" (*chujia*) and become a nun in the early 1960s. By 1966 she had established a small community of nuns in Hualien. Influenced – so the legend goes – by a conversation with some Catholic nuns who had asked her why Buddhists spent all their effort seeking otherworldly satisfaction rather than trying to improve this world through good works, Cheng Yen organized a small group of Buddhist laywomen to help care for the poor and sick. This group grew steadily but slowly during the 1970s. In the early 1979, Cheng Yen decided that Hualien – in a relatively remote, poor area populated heavily by aborigines -- needed a modern hospital, and she "vowed" to build it. With support from President Chang Ching-kuo and other government leaders, she was eventually given government land for the hospital. Meanwhile, with the help of her lay volunteers, she embarked on a major effort to raise 20 million dollars to fund it. Against all expectations, she succeeded, and this feat won her renown throughout Taiwan. The hospital was opened in 1986. Her lay organization then exploded in size and influence after 1987, when martial law was lifted in Taiwan. (Her monastery – "The Abode of Still Thoughts" – in Hualien only has a membership of about 100 nuns.) Tz'u-chi now has over four million members, defined by their willingness to pledge a regular amount of money to the organization each month. Moreover, the small group of lay volunteers (originally all women), had grown from about 500 in 1987 to about 15, 000 today (about a third of them men). Wearing distinctive navy-blue uniforms, these "Commissioners" attend regular meetings and dedicate an enormous amount of time and energy to the work of Tz'u-chi. The Commissioners are the center of concentric circles of devoted, but less fully committed lay volunteers, who are available to be mobilized for Tz'u-chi projects (such as rebuilding of houses after the September 21, 1999 earthquake).<sup>9</sup>

Beginning around 1990, Tz'u-chi made a major effort to become international. Branches were set up, not only throughout Asia, but also throughout the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Local

branches are encouraged to take initiative but are subject to supervision from the headquarters in Hualien. Membership is open to all, but in practice most members are Chinese (and, in the United States, immigrants from Taiwan rather than the PRC). Tz'u-chi now receives direct contributions of about 150 million dollars annually.<sup>10</sup> Over time, it has accumulated significant assets, such as its hospital and other property, which some estimates have valued as high as 9 billion dollars.

It uses its money, the energy of its volunteers, and its enormous network of connections to carry out a variety of charitable and educational works. Each local branch raises its own money, which it uses to care for people in need within its area. (Branches in the United States, for example, raised money and organized volunteers to help victims of the September 11 attacks.) The central headquarters in Hualien dispatches teams of professional relief workers to help direct and coordinate the efforts of local branches. Tz'u-chi also dispatches teams of professionals and volunteers to disaster sites where there are no branches. Such teams have provided disaster relief on many occasions to Mainland China and North Korea, Turkey, Kosovo, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Somalia, Honduras, El Salvador – and, most recently, Iraq.<sup>11</sup>

A more routine form of Tz'u-chi work is medical. To the Tz'u-chi hospital in Hualien have been added two other hospitals in Taiwan (in Chiayi and Taipei). These hospitals attempt to combine high quality scientific medicine with compassionate care for their patients, facilitated by mobilizing volunteers to provide comfort and care for the sick. Inspired by a Buddhist sense of the continuity between life and death, they have also been pioneers in hospice care and in long term care for the elderly. Outside of Taiwan, they have established an array of clinics to serve the poor (including a free clinic in the Los Angeles area). Finally, Tz'u-chi has established Asia's largest (third largest in the world) bone marrow registry.

On the culture and education front, Tz'u-chi has created a series of textbooks and classroom materials based on Master Cheng Yen's writings to give "values education" in primary and secondary schools. (These materials, which are based on highly interactive teaching methods rather than the rote learning that was common in earlier forms of moral education, are one of the options teachers can use to teach the "life education" classes that have replaced the San Min Zhuyi in Taiwan's schools.) Tz'u-chi teacher trainers have been invited to present these materials in schools in Fujian Province (where they were followed nervously by Public Security agents), as well as in Chinese schools throughout the diaspora, including the United States. Tz'u-chi also has a medical and a nursing school and a comprehensive university in Hualien, as well as handsome private primary and secondary schools in Hualien and several other places in Taiwan.

Finally, Tz'u-chi employs a sophisticated array of media to convey its message. In addition to publishing books and magazines, it owns its own cable television station (whose programs are available throughout the world), and maintains multilingual web sites.

Throughout the networks established by this array of activities, there flow broad streams of people and ideas. Visitors are constantly coming from around the world to the Abode of Still Thoughts in Hualien for meetings, retreats, training sessions, and inspirational visits, and Tz'u-chi volunteers are circulating from Taiwan throughout the Chinese diaspora.<sup>12</sup>

### Buddha's Light Mountain

Based near Kaohsiung, in southern Taiwan, Buddha's Light Mountain, "Fokuangshan", is comparable to Tz'u-chi in visibility and influence and has an even greater claim to be the foundation for humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan. Its founder is Dharma Master Hsing Yun, who came as a young monk from the Mainland in 1949 and built a reputation as an inspiring Buddhist teacher in the 1950s and 1960s. An excellent speaker and enterprising organizer, he was one of the first monks to use regular radio and television programs to spread his message. He aroused some suspicion from the authorities when he refused to join the government-controlled Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC). Nonetheless, he eventually managed to cultivate good enough contacts in political and religious circles to begin building the massive temple and monastery complex of Fokuangshan in 1968.<sup>13</sup>

On five hills within the complex, there are five temples, each devoted to one of the five major lineages within Chinese Buddhism (and representing Hsing Yun's aspiration of integrating those lineages). Although Buddha's Light Mountain was well established by the 1980s, it took off to new levels of membership and influence after the ending of martial law. At its site near Kaohsiung, the monastery now houses about 1300 monks and nuns. In addition to branch temples scattered throughout Taiwan, it has constructed temples throughout East Asia and in the early 1990s, the Hsi Lai Temple near Los Angeles – the biggest Buddhist temple in the United States.

In 1992, Buddha's Light Mountain established its own lay organization, the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA), which has tens of thousands of members throughout Asia and around the world. About 1.5 million people have formally "taken refuge" (the basic Buddhist rite of initiation) at Buddha's Light Mountain. In addition to helping to organize various Buddhist rituals, the BLIA volunteers participate in a wide array of social welfare and educational activities.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike Cheng Yen, who, claiming poor health, never leaves Taiwan, the founder of Buddha's Light Mountain, Hsing Yun, travels constantly to spread his message and build his organization. Tens of thousands of people fill stadiums and auditoriums from Taipei to Singapore to listen to his "dharma talks," a familiar American analogy of which might be Billy Graham's rallies. These events are typically staged in spectacular fashion, with multimedia light and sound effects. Hsing Yun visits regularly with world leaders like the Pope and heads of state (and, amidst some controversy a few years ago, with then Vice-President Al Gore at the Hsi Lai Temple).<sup>15</sup>

There are Buddhist Universities both at the Fokwangshan site and at the Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles. Like Tz'u-chi, Buddha's Light Mountain also publishes an extensive array of books and magazines (translated into many languages), produces television programs, and maintains sophisticated multi-lingual web sites. Buddha's Light Mountain also has extensive assets, in the range of five billion dollars.<sup>16</sup>

### Dharma Drum Mountain

Though not as large as Tz'u-chi or Buddha's Light Mountain, the Dharma Drum Mountain organization – known in Taiwan as "Fakushan" – has a considerable following among influential intellectuals and professionals. Its head is Dharma Master Sheng Yen, who like Hsing Yun originally became a monk (at age 13) in Mainland China and came to Taiwan in 1949. Unlike Hsing Yun, he had to leave the monastic life behind and join the army to get to Taiwan. After retiring from the army at the age of 30, he was reordained as a monk. He then underwent a six year period of spiritual cultivation as a hermit on a remote mountain. After this, he studied at a Buddhist university in Japan, where he earned a Ph.D. Unable to find a satisfactory niche in Taiwan, he accepted an invitation to work in a Chan (Zen) Buddhist center in New York City. After the grandmaster of the Nung Chan Temple in Taipei died, Sheng Yen returned to take over as its leader.<sup>17</sup>

The Nung Chan Temple is a simple structure built on land that was not zoned for religious buildings. To get around the regulations, the temple has been constructed with sliding doors all around its sides and with partitions that can be used to block off its altar from the rest of the building -- so that it can be classified as a shed. Surrounding this building are rather ramshackle residences and offices for over 100 monks and nuns. As the city of Taipei has expanded to encompass the formerly semi-rural district where the temple is located, its land has become too valuable for officials to ignore the zoning laws. Thus, Sheng Yen has acquired land on a mountain north of Taipei to build Dharma Drum Mountain. Besides a large temple and monastery, which are currently under construction, Dharma Drum Mountain will include a Buddhist university.

Like Tz'u-chi and Buddha's Light Mountain, the Dharma Drum Mountain organization exploded in size and complexity in the 1990s. In 1990, Sheng Yen established an Institute of Buddhist Studies, an educational and research institute that will become the core of Dharma Drum Mountain University. The Institute runs a number of extension courses for lay people who want to learn more about Buddhism. Following the example of Tz'u-chi and Buddha's Light Mountain, Sheng Yen also established an organization of lay people who carry out tasks ranging from teaching to charity work to hospitality. There are over 300 computers in use in the

offices of Dharma Drum Mountain, which are used to keep track of donors and volunteers as well as to prepare manuscripts for the organization's publishing house. The temple has a regular television show.

Like Hsing Yun, Sheng Yen travels widely. He spends almost half of the year away from Taiwan, either in New York or traveling to Buddhist meetings around the world. When he is in Taiwan, he gives a dharma talk (a sermon commenting on sutras) almost every Sunday, to a packed temple. Many of his congregants have themselves traveled widely, and an unusual number of the monks and nuns have studied abroad. (The nun who was my main contact there had a Ph.D. in economics from Ohio State University.) There are constant retreats, classes, and ceremonies, not only at the main temple in Taipei but all across Taiwan. Every year there are at least three ceremonies at which 1000 people take refuge in the Buddha at Dharma Drum Mountain.

Each of the three organizations described above claim to be developing a tradition of "humanistic Buddhism" (renjian fojiao). This is a tradition inspired by the reformist monk Tai Xu, whose work was begun in Shanghai in the 1910s, but because of disruption by war and revolution, did not reach fruition during his lifetime. A prime tenant of this tradition is that one must "enter the world in order to leave the world" (ru shi wei chu shi). One finds salvation not by retreating into a monastery but by bringing Buddhist compassion into the midst of ordinary life. One must also adapt the dharma to the conditions of modern life.<sup>18</sup>

### Performing Heaven's Business Temple

Humanistic Buddhist organizations are the most visible examples of the religious renaissance that has swept through Taiwan's middle classes since 1987. But some Daoists have made similar contributions. The best known example is the Performing Heaven's Business Temple -- Hsing Tien Kung -- in the heart of Taipei.<sup>19</sup>

The temple has most of the features of a typical Taiwanese Daoist temple: a large bronze incense burner, huge, dark-faced statues of Chinese folk deities -- the main deity in this case being Enchu Kung -- long tables for offering gifts of food and flowers to the gods, and a system for divining one's fortune by throwing crescent-shaped blocks of wood in front of the gods. But, its leaders claim, its inner spirit is different. The temple was established in the early 1960s by Hsuan Kung, a wealthy coal mine owner who, according to the official story, at the age of 39 "gave up relations with his wife and began a path of spiritual cultivation."<sup>20</sup> He developed the Hsing Tien Kung by taking over an older temple. Hsuan Kung purged this temple of its "superstition" (mixin). This meant getting rid of practices that were typical of most Taiwan temples, such as burning paper money to the gods, consulting spirit-mediums, and offering sacrifices of meat to the gods. Hsuan Kung instead emphasized a this-worldly, morality-based form of religious practice. The temple has established two branch temples, one in the Taipei suburb of Peitou, the other in San Hsia.

In the discourse of temple leaders, "superstitious" rituals were those that automatically brought supernatural help without regard to one's moral intentions. A typical sermon delivered at the temple goes as follows: "We worship god, not men. So we don't burn paper money. Worship should begin with a good heart. Right morality is better than right (ritual) techniques. We need to practice filial piety and have a heart of mercy....Every day we say a good word, every day we pick up a bag of garbage [the temple urges followers to help clean up the environment], we continue the spirit of our temple. We hope we can renew the spirit of our society. We hope our society can do good things together. Happiness comes from (a morally good) heart."

In literature published by the temple, "faith is the only emphasis of the ritual" performed in the temple. The deities represented by the statues are exemplars of moral virtue but they do not exist as active agents in the world. The rituals are symbols of a person's intention to practice the virtues exemplified by the gods, not techniques for eliciting the gods' favor.

The virtues are those of the Confucian tradition, which is interpreted so as to stress not the duties of subordinates (sons, wives, subjects) to accept the authority of their superiors (fathers, husbands, rulers) but the mutual obligations of people engaged in interdependent roles. Publications issued by the temple not

only tell stories of classical moral exemplars (especially from the Romance of the Three Kingdoms), but offer sophisticated accounts of how modern philosophers are interpreting these virtues for the present day.

The temple is organized to attract mobile urban middle classes. At any time of the day, it is busy with well dressed people of all ages (about two thirds women) who, by their appearance, seem to be office workers, store clerks, and students, as well as small business owners and housewives. But the people do not necessarily reside near the temple (which is conveniently located near major bus and subway lines) and have not necessarily grown up with religious practice. Unlike most temples in Taiwan, there is a chart on the wall near the entrance explaining how to offer incense and carry out the various rituals. The temple is considered a very popular place for carrying out the shenjing ritual (especially popular in the aftermath of the September 21 earthquake), in which incense sticks are passed over body to pull out bad qi energy residing within, because at Hsing Tien Kung the procedure is done very efficiently and does not require that one has any personal relationship with the temple priests.

Like the Buddhist groups described above, the Hsing Tien Kung has made new use of lay people. Its rituals are assisted by a group of elderly women "helpers" (xiaolausheng) dressed in pale blue smocks. Such women help in other temples, but on a much less formal basis than in Hsing Tien Kung, where they are trained and put on regular schedules. The temple also mobilizes lay people to assist in professionally organized social services.

Through a foundation controlled by the directors of the temple, Hsing Tien Kung has built a handsome public library and a modern hospital. It publishes an attractive magazine, and sponsors a range of educational and cultural activities, from concerts (both Western and Chinese classical music) to classes on managing interpersonal relationships. These activities are managed by well educated, professionally trained staff but they also call upon the assistance of volunteers, for instance to assist with patient care in the hospital. The foundation also has plans to build a university. Such professionalized social outreach activities have been organized only since the late 1980s.

### Common Patterns of Religious Evolution

Despite important differences which will be discussed below, all four of these groups share features that come from a common wrestling with the dilemmas of Taiwan's modernization.

First, all of them have at least partially demythologized traditional beliefs. That is, instead of taking these beliefs as a solid, literal representation of a world beyond the one of ordinary experience, they see the beliefs as symbolic expressions of the challenges of common human life. Reminiscent of the quest of the Protestant theologian Dietrich Boenhoffer for a "religionless Christianity,"<sup>21</sup> some of the members of these Taiwanese organizations describe their faith as "religionless." As a nun at Fokuangshan put it, "This is our cultural tradition, it isn't a religion." Another nun at the Tz'u-chi monastery spoke of her commitment as a "way to express the culture of my race." Members of Dharma Drum mountain described their practice as more philosophy than religion and, as we have seen, the leaders of Hsing Tien Kung talk of their deities as symbols of moral principles within their cultural tradition.

When they say things like this, however, they are not advocating an uncritical acceptance of their inherited culture. As Hsing Yun, the founder of Buddha's Light Mountain writes: "Professor John Dewey, the American philosopher, educator, and teacher of Dr. Hu Shih, once said, 'We must reappraise the meaning of value.' His remark has had a tremendous impact on my thinking and my method of reappraisal and reorientation when dealing with issues of Buddhism, life, and society....I do not unconditionally follow tradition. I do not toy with the idea of emptiness and talk in vain about abstruse things. I do not consciously accept the opinion of the majority. Instead, I constantly review our tradition, observe, and think about the future of Buddhism. I keep on reappraising values as I grow."<sup>22</sup> Members of Tz'u-chi sometimes refer to this process as "adaptation to life" (shenghuohua), adapting the best of their cultural values to the changing conditions

of life in modern Taiwan. The other two groups we have described are also support earnest efforts to get back to the basic premises of their traditions and extend them to modern conditions.

In all the groups, there is indeed much talk about "cultivating the heart" (xiu xin), a term well known from books on Confucian philosophy, but one that I had never heard used much in ordinary conversation until I became engaged with these Taiwanese religious groups. The term refers to the process of spiritual development that enables one to understand how to apply them in the broadest possible contexts. The many, multimedia publications of all of the groups aim to facilitate this understanding.

The norms of filial piety, for instance, have to be adapted to a world of high tech occupations in which, to be successful, children have to learn to think critically for themselves, and may eventually have to move far away from their parents. The religious groups that I have studied all say that one should still hold on to the principle of filial piety under these circumstances but that one must understand it in a deeper way and exercise it through new methods. To be truly filial, one must not blindly obey one's parents but thoughtfully assimilate the lessons they have taught and carry on their legacy in a cosmopolitan world that they may not be able to comprehend.<sup>23</sup> The collective work of these religious groups is an example of how to do this. They devote themselves to reworking the lessons that parents in Taiwan typically impart to their children. They encourage followers to help strangers in need as if they were one's own parents. If one is living far away from home, then, one can help one's parents by generously caring for someone else's parents – and in the process one can gain confidence that other members of one's religious community will be on hand to take good care of one's own parents. Self-cultivation, then, is not just improvement of one's individual self (using neo-Confucian language, publications of these groups refer to a "small self" – xiao wo), but a broadening of vision that generates affiliations to a wider community (a "big self" – da wo).

Another common characteristic of the groups studied here is a devaluation of ritual. Though all of them still regularly practice rituals, they all claim to subordinate external ritual practice to internalized morality. As one Tz'u-chi commissioner put it, before she followed Master Cheng Yen, "I had the habits of Buddhism but not the heart. I used to offer sacrifices twice a month. But when I accepted the right Path of becoming a member of Tz'u-chi, I realized that what is important is not just to worship a lot of Buddhist images. It is changing the heart....Instead of offering two sacrifices every month, cultivate yourself."

Along with a devaluation of ritual comes a dilution of hierarchy. In their formal structure they remain authoritarian, not democratic. The Dharma Master in the Buddhist organizations is a supreme leader whose decisions are final. The priests of the Hsing Tien Kung have unchallenged authority in interpretations of ritual and practice. But if rituals led by Buddhist monks or nuns or by Daoist priests are no longer as important as the good intentions harbored in a well cultivated heart, then laypeople can be just as important as ordained masters. All of the organizations studied here have created dynamic associations of lay followers, which have rapidly expanded, and carry out much of the public work of the organization. One secret of the success of these lay associations is that their members are encouraged to take initiative. Even though formal hierarchy remains, therefore, its power is diluted by, as well as disseminated through, the active initiatives of the lay associations.

A final common characteristic of all of these groups is the rationalization of their organizations. When one passes through the gate of the Fokwangshan monastery from the noisy, cluttered, busy streets of its neighboring towns, the effect can be shocking. Inside the monastery grounds, all is orderly and serene. Although there is an enormous amount of activity always going on at the monastery, there is a place for everything and everything in its place. Events in all of the Buddhist organizations run on extremely precise schedules. Even the Hsing Tien Kung seems more orderly than most Daoist temples; and its foundation offices, with their neatly attired professional staff working at banks of computers, seem a very model of rational efficiency.

Yet the organizations are not bureaucratic. "We are not an apparatus (jigou)", says a Tz'u-chi commissioner. "People don't come to work everyday. So everybody has to know what has to be done and how to fit in." Authority is not passed down from top to bottom through layers of specialized offices. Since these

organizations depend so much on volunteers, they have to elicit their goodwill, not enact their obedience, and rely on their general skills rather than any specialized training. The religious organizations do this by putting great effort into educating their key volunteers to understand the vision of the organization and to articulate this to each other. A key part of the vision is that work should be carried out in a self-conscious, disciplined, efficient way, and that members should constantly discuss this with one another and encourage one another to act accordingly.

Using the terminology of the anthropologist Mary Douglas, one could characterize these developments as movement from what she calls "restricted speech codes" to what she calls "elaborated speech codes."<sup>24</sup> A restricted code offers the speaker a limited range of alternatives for describing natural and social reality. It is the language of myth or unquestioning faith: of sacred stories that claim a monopoly on truth. While restricting the speaker's ability to articulate alternatives, the restricted code carries great emotional resonance and moral power – so powerful that, in the very act of being expressed in sacraments and magic, it can bring about what it symbolizes. An elaborated code enables the speaker to elucidate abstract, general principles that allow for many fine distinctions, can lead to many different conclusions, and legitimate many different personal choices. Sociologically, the restricted code has a solidarity maintaining function. In the restricted code, "utterances have a double purpose: they convey information, yes, but they also express the social structure, embellish and reinforce it."<sup>25</sup> The elaborated code, on the other hand, maximizes the individual's autonomy and becomes a "specialized tool for decision making."<sup>26</sup>

For Douglas, the different speech codes are connected to different forms of society. "It is essential," says Douglas, "to realize that the elaborated code is a product of the division of labor. The more highly differentiated the social system, the more specialized the decision-making roles – then the more the pressure for explicit channels of communication concerning a wide range of policies and their consequences. The demands of the industrial system are pressing hard now upon education to produce more and more verbally articulate people who will be promoted to entrepreneurial roles. By inference, the restricted code will be found where these pressures are weakest [that is among people whose jobs are routine and require little verbal facility]."<sup>27</sup>

Taiwan's high tech industrial economy is dependent on middle class professionals who have mastered the elaborated code. If Douglas is correct, it is likely that if they maintain any religious practice at all, they will want one which has been translated into such a code. The effects of such a translation, Mary Douglas tells us, will be a devaluation of ritual, an increased emphasis on interior religious experience, and a move to "humanist philanthropy."

Relative to traditional Taiwanese religious practices, the Buddhist and Daoist organizations we have described here are making precisely this transition. They have made it to different degrees, however; and as Douglas might have predicted, those organizations that are most closely identified with the new middle classes of educated professionals have made the furthest transition.

#### Different Forms of Middle Class Modernity

None of our four groups have completely discarded the powerful, "condensed" symbols of the restricted code, nor have they completely replaced ritual with a cult of inner experience and with "humanist philanthropy." (As Douglas notes, a complete abandonment of condensed symbols and ritual would be terribly alienating and dehumanizing.) We can, however, array them on a continuum.

The Daoist Hsing Tien Kung remains the most closely bound to the restricted code and to ritual. Its analogue in the American Christian landscape might be an inner city Catholic Church whose priests give sermons about pursuing social justice in the modern world while congregants are busy lighting candles and performing devotions to Mary and the saints. It reflects the wonderfully jagged development of Taipei itself, where sleek modernist office buildings, and innumerable McDonalds and Starbucks restaurants line the main thoroughfares while a vibrant world of artisans, peddlers, folk healers, and traditional Taiwanese food sellers clogs the side alleys. The religious functionaries at the temple are constantly preaching that moral

cultivation is more important than ritual offerings, the temple does not sell food or flowers to offer to the gods, and the glossy magazine published by the temple shows no pictures of such sacrificial offerings. But crowding against the sidewalk adjacent to the temple are dozens of peddlers (mostly women in typical farmers' garb) selling materials for such offerings. The temple officially disavows the peddlers. There is a red line painted along the edge of the sidewalk, and any peddlers who cross it are driven away by the temple's security guards. So the peddlers stand in the street just across the line. This, however, violates city laws. Every few hours, city police drive up on motorcycles and force the peddlers to retreat to the other side of the street. But after about ten minutes, the police leave and the peddlers return. Business is brisk. Worshippers mostly buy bouquets of flowers or bags of fruit, which they place on special wooden plates on long tables in front of the statues of the deities. But offerings can include anything edible, except for meat. One often sees large boxes of instant noodles and cases of Coca-Cola.

The temple sponsors many different rituals to help people discern their fate and to seek good fortune. The main rituals, redolent with the allusive, condensed symbolism of the restricted code, are divided into two parts between which the worshippers must listen to a sermon (broadcast throughout the temple) about how moral cultivation is more important than external ritual. Some people listen attentively to the sermon, but others doze off or talk on their cell phones or chat with one another, while waiting for the efficacious part of the ritual to continue.

As mentioned above, the temple, through its foundation, has built a hospital and a library, and it sponsors cultural events. This "humanist philanthropy" is managed by sophisticated professionals. But these professional managers do not necessarily have much to do with the temple. As one of the top administrators of the hospital told me, the temple is a good part of Taiwanese folk culture, but it does not appeal much to him.

Moreover, for all of its advocacy of modern professional respectability, universalistic values, and moral rectitude, the temple cannot shake off an aura of traditional Taiwanese sleaze. In the late 1990s, the board of directors was accused of selling temple land at artificially low prices to some cronies. They were vindicated in court (and celebrated the victory with an elaborate ritual in the temple). But in 2001, a series of newspaper articles accused the head of the temple's governing board of laundering 30 million dollars through the temple. He claims that it was based on a misunderstanding, and the case has not been resolved. But, whatever the outcome, the public gets the impression that Hsing Tien Kung has not gotten as far beyond traditional particularistic temple practices as it might claim.

Buddha's Light Mountain is more than a few steps ahead on the path toward a religion based on an elaborated code. If Hsing Tien Kung is like an inner city American Catholic Church in a mixed neighborhood of recent immigrants, Buddha's Light Mountain is like a suburban American Catholic Church, where most congregants join in common prayer and singing rather than practicing private devotions during Mass – but where the church's nooks and crannies still hold images of Mary and the saints which sustain quasi-magical private devotions. Compared with the bustle of Hsing Tien Kung, the atmosphere at the Buddha's Light Mountain temple complex is remarkably controlled and orderly. There are none of the jarring contradictions between officially approved sermons stressing inner morality over external ritual, on the one hand, and unofficial peddlers purveying the accoutrements of ritual, on the other. There is none of the syncretism. Buddha's Light Mountain has attempted to purify Buddhism, consistent with its foundational texts and traditional practices. Nonetheless, the Buddhism here is presented in all its historical and sociological diversity without any effort to subordinate the parts to a consistent organizing principle. My first impression upon entering the temple complex was of a vast clutter of Buddha – thousands and thousands of Buddha statues of all sizes and styles, from the huge welcoming Buddha (one of the largest in Asia) on a hill near the entrance, to the thousand small Buddha that cover the inner marble walls of the cavernous central temple, from the exquisite ancient Buddha in Fokuangshan's Buddhist museum to the kitschy statues in the "Buddhaland" cave (like a somewhat cheap imitation of a Disneyland exhibit). Buddha's Light Mountain does indeed achieve its founder's ambition to be a Buddhist "supermarket or a filling station" with something for everybody.<sup>28</sup> If Hsing Tien Kung is like a Taiwanese night market, with its jumble of independent merchants

peddling their different wares, Fokuangshan is indeed like a modern supermarket, selling many different products with sometimes contradictory uses, but in an orderly manner under a single management.

The many programs of Buddha's Light Mountain seem aimed to ensure, however, that the different products of this supermarket will lead to an internal moral transformation. Its books and videos familiarize the public with the meaning of Buddhist customs and teachings, so that the public can practice in an informed thoughtful way. Also, Buddha's Light Mountain constantly hosts retreats and courses that train its followers in prayer, meditation, and practice. Finally, Hsing Yun and the other leaders of Fokuangshan try to make distinctions between internal principle and outer practice in an effort to make Buddhism more "user friendly" to busy modern people in a diverse society. For example, after a ceremony in which 1000 people "took refuge", the current Abbot gave the following lesson about how the new members should practice vegetarianism. They should not try to impose this lifestyle on unwilling family members and friends. If their families wanted to eat meat, they should cook it for them, while trying to abstain from meat themselves. And if for some reason they did end up eating some meat, they should not worry too much – strict vegetarianism was introduced only sometime after the introduction of Buddhism to China. Their main concern should be to give a good example of kindness toward others.

The internal moral integration promoted by Buddha's Light Mountain, however, can be fully accomplished only within the walls of the monastery. In keeping with classic Buddhist practice, Buddha's Light Mountain puts great emphasis on recruiting and training monks and nuns – and as can be seen from the 1300 monastics at Fokuangshan, it has been very successful in doing so. Retreats for lay followers are billed as opportunities to experience a monastic way of life. People come to the monastery to regenerate their spirit after having been buffeted by the contradictions of secular life.

Tz'u-chi, on the other hand, tries to instill in its lay followers a level of personal moral discipline sufficient to change the way they carry out their professions in the secular world. It greatly simplifies the clutter of folk Buddhist rituals while encouraging its followers to think in terms of basic Buddhist principles while expressing their inner goodness through efficiently organized works of philanthropy. If Buddha's Light Mountain reminds an American of a suburban Catholic church, the Tz'u-chi headquarters in Hualien reminds one of a classic New England Congregational church, magnificent in its simplicity. The heart of Tz'u-chi is its convent in Hualien, the Abode of Still Thoughts, where Master Cheng Yen lives with approximately 100 nuns. There are also guest dormitories (not individual rooms, as at Fokuangshan, but large common rooms for men and for women) where several hundred lay followers can sleep at a time, while they come to listen to and work for the Master. At the front of the Abode is a chapel (*fotan*) made out of dark hardwood (not marble like the temples on Fokuangshan), with a single elegantly carved wood statue of the Bodhisattva Guanyin in front. The statue is flanked not with huge vases of flowers and mounds of fruit, as at Buddha's Light Mountain, but with several orchids arranged in elegant simplicity. This chapel is used for morning and evening chanting, but during the rest of the day it serves as a meeting room. Often a large movie screen is pulled down in front of the Guanyin statue for video projections. After breakfast, Master Cheng Yen holds a morning conference here. This is more like a talk on current events than a talk on Buddhist sutras. Her talk illustrated (and perfectly coordinated with) video images, the Master discusses the various disasters in the recent news and reports what Tz'u-chi volunteers are doing to meet the needs of people afflicted by them.

The same patterns of architecture and practice are repeated on a grander scale in the newly built Hall of Still Thoughts, located several miles away from the Abode, next to the Tz'u-chi General Hospital. It is a massive new building that houses administrative offices, meeting rooms, and a large worship space. The wood paneled main hall, about the same size as the main temple at Fokuangshan, has no statues of the Buddha – only a blank wall on which a Buddha image can be projected during worship. At other times the hall serves as a general meeting room.

If Buddha's Light Mountain tries to create a modern way of being Buddhist, Tz'u-chi tries to fashion a Buddhist way of being modern. Buddha's Light Mountain uses modern construction techniques to build temples according to traditional designs – it would be like using modern techniques to reproduce gothic cathedrals in Europe. The Hall of Still Thoughts, on the other hand, is basically a modernist building, with a

sleek form aimed to carry out practical functions, but with a sweeping curved roof that evokes traditional temple style without reproducing it. The same motif is carried out in Tz'u-chi's branch offices, hospitals, and schools. The differences in architecture between Buddha's Light Mountain and Tz'u-chi represent differences in their general approach toward embedding Buddhism in modern life.

Most of Tz'u-chi's work is focused on humanistic philanthropies of charity, medicine, education, and culture. There is far more emphasis on these works of mercy than on traditional Buddhist meditation and prayer ceremonies. If in Buddha's Light Mountain prayer before statues of the Buddha is supposed to lead to a compassionate heart that will perform works of charity, in Tz'u-chi, it is the ritualized performance of philanthropy that leads to meaningful prayer.

The works of mercy are seen as having an educative purpose. The Tz'u-chi motto is "help the poor and educate the rich." The giver, not the recipient, is to be grateful for acts of kindness, because it helps the giver learn about his or her essential Buddhahood. (The Tz'u-chi motto is "Give with gratitude, receive with joy.") Helping others becomes an end in itself, a fundamental religious act. Thus, a visitor to Tz'u-chi institutions sometimes feels almost smothered with love, because the place is full of more helpers than would be strictly needed to meet the obligations of hospitality, all of them wanting to educate themselves by offering tea and cookies and making one feel comfortable and at home. The acts of giving, moreover, are heavily stylized – gifts for example are presented with both hands and a slight bow, gestures which are supposed to express and to create the giver's attitudes of respect and love toward all creation.

Though Tz'u-chi's good works are seen to benefit the giver even more than the receiver, the works are of course supposed to have a beneficial effect not only on direct recipients but on society as a whole. Having adapted Buddhism to the professional delivery of modern services, Tz'u-chi aims to transform the spirit of professional practices. Consider for example, the way Tz'u-chi operates its hospitals and medical school. In its mission to provide the most modern forms of Western medicine, it has to compromise the basic Buddhist precept forbidding killing of any sentient beings. At the Abode of Still Thoughts, both nuns and lay visitors make assiduous efforts not to kill even mosquitoes or ants. But the Tz'u-chi hospital and medical schools conduct scientific research that involves killing animals – and Master Cheng Yen permits this if it is "done for a good purpose and if the animals are not made to suffer unnecessarily."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Tz'u-chi seeks creative ways to inject Buddhist values into modern medical practice. For example, the Tz'u-chi medical school has a distinctive way of conducting its anatomy class. Before students dissect the human cadavers used in the class, they pray for the souls of the deceased. On the walls of the classroom, they post biographies of the cadavers they are working on, and students write essays expressing their gratitude toward the person who donated his or her body. When the bodies are cremated at the conclusion of the class, half the ashes are returned to the deceased's family, and the other half kept in an urn in a chapel next to the anatomy classroom, where students can meditate and give gratitude for the lives of the people who have helped them in their education. The aim is to instill in young doctors a respect for the human persons who will be their patients, and to imbue within them the Tz'u-chi commitment to "compassionate care."

Unlike the Hsing Tien Kung, which, after paying for its hospital, does not interfere with the hospital's professional administrators, Tz'u-chi exercises a deep, if sometimes subtle control, over the work of its hospital. This is not a matter of interfering with the professional autonomy of physicians. For instance, although Tz'u-chi Buddhists believe that abortion is wrong and the hospital does not encourage it, the administration's policy is not to second guess the clinical decision of a physician to perform a therapeutic abortion. The Tz'u-chi influence is rather focussed on making the hospital a place where patients are made to feel especially well loved, respected, and cared for as they undergo their medical procedures. It hopes by this to provide a positive example that will influence the medical profession throughout Taiwan.

Finally, Dharma Drum Mountain marks the furthest step on our continuum from restricted to elaborated code. Unlike Fokuangshan, Dharma Drum Mountain does not offer a supermarket of Buddhist products. It subordinates all other forms of Buddhist devotion to one -- Chan (Zen) Buddhist practice. Unlike Tz'u-chi, which aims to cultivate an integrated, ethical life through ritualized practice of good works, Dharma Drum Mountain places Chan meditation first, and aims through this to produce the inner mindfulness that will

engender meaningful work to transform the world. Besides the pure forms of Chan sitting meditation, Dharma Drum Mountain infuses a Chan spirit into other devotional practices.

By no means does it reject ritual; but its Chan rituals are focussed even more than those of Tz'u-chi on creating a deep inner experience. For example, I took part in an afternoon long ceremony centered on recitation of the name of Buddha. Dressed in black robes in a large simple room lit only by dim natural light, about 200 of us stood, then prostrated ourselves a hundred times while reciting the name. (It was like doing calisthenics.) Then a procession began in which we walked two by two back and forth within the room, while continuing to recite Buddha's name. We began at a normal walking pace, but gradually the person leading the procession began to slow down, until finally we were walking at, literally, a snail's pace. The mind, though wishing to race forward, was gradually focussed into the present. The procession finally ended with everyone back at the original places. Sitting in the lotus position in near darkness, we gradually chanted faster and faster. The effect was hypnotic. Everything melded together, and we seemed to become one extended self.

It was a powerful lesson on Buddhist Emptiness – the individual self as an illusion, the true reality of the world subsisting in our interconnection. At the same time, such practices lead the individual's consciousness to become intensely focussed. It is perhaps a consciousness particularly suited to the demands of modern middle class life in Taiwan's knowledge intensive industries, in which individuals have to take initiative for thinking through problems while being acutely aware that they are part of a collective enterprise.

By reputation, the four religious organizations that we have studied correspond to different fractions of Taiwan's middle class. But common sense among educated people in Taipei makes the following distinctions. Hsing Tien Kung is the most "downscale" of the four. It is most attractive to shopkeepers, clerical workers, retail clerks. Buddha's Light Mountain attracts fairly affluent business owners, as well as government officials and politicians. Tz'u-chi has especially strong attraction to people in modern managerial and service professions. Dharma Drum Mountain has special appeal to intellectuals.

I do not have survey data on the actual membership of these organizations, but the actual membership in these organizations is certainly much more fluid than these imputed distinctions. Yet the distinctions made in popular discourse provide a good map to the complexities of Taiwan's emerging middle classes. Their prosperity has arisen from a number of different sources: globalized technology, heavily dependent on research and development; small scale, entrepreneurial manufacturing, networked with counterparts throughout "greater China"; government patronage (especially connected with the KMT); and local service industries. People whose path to success stems from different sources usually acquire different ways of thinking and feeling which leads them toward different religious affiliations.<sup>30</sup>

Up to a point, therefore, Mary Douglas's socio-linguistic theory about the transition from a restricted to an elaborated code helps to explain the patterns of religious evolution that have taken place among the Taiwanese middle classes. But it does not explain why so many Taiwanese middle class people have gravitated toward religion at all and why they seem to prefer Buddhism and Daoism rather than Christianity. Nor does it help us discern the social and political consequences of these religious developments. To address such questions, we to look more closely at the social constitution of Taiwan's middle classes and the political development of Taiwan. We need to pay more attention to the contingencies of Taiwan's history.

### Religion and Status Differences

As would be suggested by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, middle class Taiwanese utilize the distinctions in reputation of the different religious groups to provide a map of relative social status and individuals try to celebrate or enhance their status by moving between different religious groups.<sup>31</sup> Religious affiliations intersect with and reinforce with the status distinctions created by consumer advertising. Rhythms, Tz'u-chi's general interest magazine on culture, contains advertisements for automobiles like BMW. Presumably, the advertisers have found that people who are attracted to Tz'u-chi see themselves as the kind of people

who can, or someday would like to, purchase such high status automobiles while compassionately helping the poor.

Besides providing a map of different status stemming from occupation and education, the distinctions commonly made between the different religious groups also provide a map of the ethnic divisions that intersect class divisions in Taiwan. Hsing Tien Kung is thoroughly Taiwanese. Its ceremonies and sermons are all in the Taiwanese language; its practices remain rooted in the folk customs of Taiwanese village life. Tz'u-chi is also Taiwanese – its founder is Taiwanese, the language most commonly used in its ceremonies is Taiwanese, and many of its followers take great pride in saying the Tz'u-chi represents the best in Taiwanese culture – but a more refined and cosmopolitan Taiwanese identity than that associated with Hsing Tien Kung. Buddha's Light Mountain is Mainlander.<sup>32</sup> Its founder was from the mainland and he has been associated with Mainlander political factions in the KMT. Dharma Drum Mountain is also Mainlander.

With the exception of Hsing Tien Kung, whose membership is almost entirely Taiwanese, however, the religious groups have become quite mixed ethnically. Although neither Buddha's Light Mountain's Hsing Yun nor Dharma Drum Mountain's Sheng Yen speak in Taiwanese, many of their associates do. Their dharma talks are often given half in Mandarin, half in Taiwanese. Participants in their rituals are a mixture of Taiwanese and Mainlander in rough proportion to their mixture in the general population (with perhaps a slight over representation of Mainlanders). Tz'u-chi's Master Cheng Yen speaks both Taiwanese and Mandarin (some interviewees told me that her Mandarin has improved significantly in recent years), and in recent years there have been increasing numbers of Mainlanders participating in the organization, some in high positions.

This gap between what our four organizations represent and what they are is of great importance sociologically and politically. Taiwan's rapid economic development has produced a middle class full of conflicts. Meanwhile, the Island's delicate geopolitical position and conflicted history sets up potentially devastating conflicts between Mainlanders and native Taiwanese. The differences between popular religious organizations could provide a frame of reference for thinking about such social and political divisions. When this happens in other societies, religious groups can become the agents of violent social polarization. But this has not happened in Taiwan. The groups that I have described have encouraged the blending of different segments of the population and facilitated reconciliation between potentially warring factions. This undoubtedly has helped Taiwan make a relatively peaceful transition to democracy since the end of martial law in 1987.<sup>33</sup>

Though the groups we have studied, then, reflect divisions of class and ethnicity, they have done so in a way that has kept differences among these interests from becoming antagonistic. To understand how this has happened, we need to consider how the historical development of these organizations has intersected with the particular political history of Taiwan and with the general forces of globalization.

### Religious Renaissance and Taiwanese Politics

Though they are now popular among various segments of Taiwan's middle classes, the four organizations were not popular when they began. Their religious practices were not fashioned with a view to achieving such popularity, at least not quickly. They were fashioned to fulfill the founders' religious ambitions and to respond to needs immediately at hand.

One characteristic shared by all of the founders was that they were non-conformists. Hsing Yun refused to take part in BAROC and for years was regarded with suspicion by the Buddhist establishment and the political establishment. In 1962, Cheng Yen took the very untraditional act of shaving her own head to become a Buddhist nun. When she applied for formal ordination in 1963, she was at first rejected because she had not received her tonsure at the hands of a recognized authority. Sheng Yen had to largely fund his own education in Japan (by chanting sutras for the dead) and when finished, could not find a monastery to lead in Taiwan. In spite of his wealth, even Hsuan Kung had to overcome many obstacles before he could take over the Hsing Tien Kung.

In the 1970s, these groups gradually grew and developed their distinctive approaches to Buddhism and Daoism, but even as economic development began to produce a sizeable middle class, their followings remained relatively small. A major obstacle was political. Religious organizations had to contend with government suspicion of any large groups not under government control. Hsing Yun, of Buddha's Light Mountain, overcame some of this suspicion by cultivating favor with KMT politicians.<sup>34</sup> The other groups simply remained too small to pose a threat to the government. It might be tempting to see the explosion in popularity of such groups in 1987 as driven by citizens' desire to participate in organizations that were not controlled by the state. In fact, however, it was the government itself that helped these groups gain an important social role in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a role that prepared them for takeoff in 1987. Subsequently, the relationship of these organizations to the government has mainly been one of cooperation rather than rivalry. The people who become involved with these groups do so from a variety of motives – but these do not include a desire to oppose the Taiwanese state.

In 1976, the Taiwan provincial government instructed all temples to carry out charity work.<sup>35</sup> It fit a general strategy (common to East Asian Newly Industrializing Countries) of keeping government social welfare expenditures low by relying on the private sector to take care of the poor, sick, and weak. In earlier stages of development, this had meant mostly relying on extended families to take care of their own. Because of the increasing complexity and mobility of Taiwanese society, however, families could no longer meet such needs. Christian Churches had carried out many types of welfare work since the 1950s. But the Christian community remained tiny. If the government was to rely heavily on religious groups to provide welfare, these would have to be Buddhist and Daoist.

The difference between the current proposals in the USA to promote "faith based charities" and this Taiwan approach was that the government commanded rather than encouraged, and it gave special support to groups it deemed to have followed its commands most effectively. Tz'u-chi was an award for being the best provider of welfare services – an important milestone in its rise to prominence. Later in the early 1980s, it was the Taiwan provincial government that played a major role in the building of the Tz'u-chi General Hospital. The initiative – the vow – to build the hospital came from Master Cheng Yen. But when she made her vow, she had no resources to carry it out. In particular, she had no land upon which to build a hospital. In October of 1980, the Taiwan Provincial Governor Lin Yang-kang and, a few days later, Taiwan's President Chiang Ching-kuo visited the Abode of Still Thoughts and offered to help Tz'u-chi obtain the land. The hospital was eventually built on public land donated by the Hualien County government. Prominent political leaders Lee Teng-hui (who by this time had become Provincial Governor and after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo would eventually become President) and Lin Yang-kang (at this time, Minister of the Interior) attended groundbreaking ceremonies.<sup>36</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s Fokuangshan similarly benefited from government support in obtaining land for its temples and for other ventures.<sup>37</sup> The Nong Chan Temple (foundation of Dharma Drum Mountain) benefited from government willingness to let it stay on illegal land, even as that land was becoming extremely valuable. Favorable connections with the government enabled Hsing Tien Kung to benefit from its land deals. Even though the government may have been ambivalent about initially supporting such Buddhist and Daoist religious organizations and may have slowed their growth, the government actually helped build a solid foundation for their later expansion. These religious organizations do not fit the image of a "civil society" that grows up independently of the state.

The years following the end of martial law, when most restrictions on free association were swept away, were truly a springtime for Taiwan's civil society. People flocked to all manner of associations, representing an extraordinary wide range of causes, from politics, to social reform, to community improvement, to philanthropy.<sup>38</sup> Many of these groups remained small, others grew quickly and died. The religious groups studied here grew quickly and steadily precisely because they had good, if somewhat detached, relations with the government before 1987. Participating in them was a respectable and safe way of taking initiative to help address Taiwan's social problems. Such organizations were no means transmission belts from the government to the people, but perhaps they were like belt buckles joining private and public sectors.

Though there is some necessary tension in this union, it is considerably more cooperative than any relationship between church and state currently possible in the United States. Although Tz'u-chi and other Buddhist organizations embarrassed the government in 1999 by responding more quickly and efficiently to the earthquake, some of its most important reconstruction efforts have actually been aimed at rebuilding government schools. Tz'u-chi is in the process of building 50 new public schools to replace one destroyed in the earthquake. Though Tz'u-chi raises money for the schools, designs them (with special concern to be earthquake proof and environmentally friendly), supervises their construction and mobilizes volunteers to help landscape and decorate them, the schools are to be government run public schools, with curriculum and teachers furnished by the government. Unlike "faith based" organizations in the USA, which currently want public money to do their private work, Tz'u-chi raises private money to do public work.

The other organizations we have described have similar cooperative relations with the government. Their contribution to Taiwan's political culture is thus a conservative, stabilizing one. Since they see the state as a necessary, positive force, they are not tempted to mobilize particular constituencies against it. Even though they may naturally attract different fractions of the middle class, they have no interest in fomenting class conflict. To the contrary, since they wish to expand, they have every interest in reaching out to as broad a cross section of the population as possible. This is justified, especially for the Buddhist groups, by a religious commitment to "great compassion for all." As they expanded during the 1990s, therefore, they have in practice served to soften class and ethnic divisions even though by reputation they represent different segments of the middle class. The reputations are based on their position within the Taiwanese cultural landscape at the moment when they emerged from the restrictions of martial law and began the process of seeking more members. Their ecumenical practices are based on their commitment to expand in a non-conflictual way with a basic attitude of respect for the state.

Even though their leaders and most committed members see them as religious rather than political enterprises, such religious organizations have non-intended, beneficent civic consequences. They help take some of the rough edges out of the conflicts between native Taiwanese and Mainlanders and between relatively successful and relatively poor. They nurture a spirit of engagement with public affairs and encourage a cooperative (but not uncritical) attitude toward the government. By no means do I argue that such religious organizations (as some of their members, particularly those in Tz'u-chi, might say) are the solution to Taiwan's social and political problems. Taiwanese political culture continues to have many rough edges and sometimes teeters on the brink of chaos. The fact that despite a history of atrocities committed by Mainlanders against Taiwanese, despite the legacy of a harshly authoritarian regime, despite a "Confucian" cultural tradition that many experts have considered incompatible with democratic values, despite all of its tensions with Mainland China, despite its lack of political recognition by the international community, Taiwan has nonetheless avoided chaos and made a successful, if still shaky transition to a stable democracy – this is perhaps the true "Taiwan miracle." The fact that some of Taiwan's most influential religious organizations have moderated conflict rather than added to it is an important part of this miracle.

Besides helping to stabilize Taiwan's civil society, these religious organizations have helped to build its sense of nationhood. The political and cultural ferment unleashed by the ending of martial law have led to a strong sense of Taiwanese nationalism. Taiwanese historians, linguists, and literary figures have been imagining a community that it is distinct from "Greater China".<sup>39</sup> Politicians like Lee Teng-hui and now, Taiwan's new President, Chen Shui-bian, have fostered a sense of Taiwan's independence from China, even as they have refrained from any formal declaration of independence that would surely bring war with China. Public opinion largely supports this stance.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, while the public does not want war with the PRC, there is a strong sense – seemingly getting stronger every year – that Taiwan differs from China not only in its politics but in its national culture as well.

Taiwan's religious renaissance both springs from and contributes to this sense of cultural nationhood. It is no accident that the religious renaissance was based on Buddhism and Daoism rather than Christianity. Although the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church was for many decades a major source of support for Taiwanese nationalism, most of the other Christian denominations neglected the aspirations of the native

Taiwanese. Their missionaries (many of whom came to Taiwan after having been expelled from the PRC) did not speak Taiwanese and most local Church leaders were mainlanders. While not being especially identified with Taiwan, most of the Christian churches were identified with the West. As mentioned earlier, they benefited from government grants of special privileges to Christianity in order to maintain the favor of its American patrons during the cold war. Buddhism and Daoism, on the other hand, were seen as native religions, deeply rooted in Taiwan's soil, although they had of course been brought from mainland China along with almost every other part of Taiwanese culture. Thus, both at Tz'u-chi's Abode of Still Thoughts and at Dharma Drum Mountain I met nuns who had embraced their vocation after studying in the West because they thought that Buddhism was the "religion of my race." Humanistic Buddhism and reformed Daoism were attempts to purify and modernize this indigenous religion in a way that would have been impossible to accomplish on the mainland – just as the Taiwanese have purified and modernized other aspects of traditional Chinese culture in a way that can claim to be peculiarly Chinese.

Although Tz'u-chi, Buddha's Light Mountain, and Dharma Drum Mountain all emphasize that their practices transcend nationality, in fact the world of religious connection that they create is centered on Taiwan. Tz'u-chi claims, for example, that it is making Taiwan an "Island of Great Love." Although it tries to disseminate its love around the world, and wishes to respect all cultures, nationalities, and religions, its leaders always make it clear that the source of that love is on Taiwan. The Hsi Lai temple, Fokuangshan's huge temple in Los Angeles, means the "coming to the West temple." The Buddha's light shines from Taiwan in the East to illuminate the rest of the world. Dharma Drum Mountain also takes pride in being a Taiwan based organization even as it extends ecumenical cooperation toward the world.

It is not just that these organizations originated in Taiwan, but that the political and economic system of Taiwan gives them the freedom and economic resources need to develop and disseminate their message. It is clear that the PRC government would never allow such large and independent religious organizations to flourish. Even if one has no other reasons to be pro-Taiwan, a practitioner of humanistic Buddhism or for that matter of reformed Daoism would feel particular gratitude for the religious policy of the government on Taiwan and to the people of Taiwan who helped develop and disseminate these modern spiritual movements.

### Globalization and Religious Renaissance

Besides being influenced by particular currents in Taiwanese history, the middle-class religious renaissance is also influenced by broader trends in cultural globalization. The homogenization of popular cultural symbols -- the "McDonaldization" of the world – seems, paradoxically, to evoke a resurgence of particular identities, expressed through local cultural practices, around the world.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in offering Coca-Cola to the gods, Hsing Tien Kung practitioners affirm their participation in a world of multinational consumer goods, but affirm a particular Taiwanese identity as well. On a more upscale level, Tz'u-chi members do the same when they accept BMW ads for their magazine. However, unlike societies where the assertion of particular religious identities leads to hostility toward the rest of the world – as Benjamin Barber puts it, in Jihad and McWorld – the assertion of Buddhist and Daoist identities in Taiwan leads more toward ecumenical cooperation.

Perhaps this is because of their history of borrowing from different cultural and religious traditions. Although based on Chinese religious traditions, the organizations I have described on Taiwan have absorbed many influences from Japan and the West to create their new forms of religious practice. The most important influence has been from Japan, both from the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945) and from the more recent past.<sup>42</sup> Japanese Buddhism has been more focussed on worldly service than traditional Chinese Buddhism. Master Cheng Yen's first Buddhist teacher, Master Hsiu Tao, had gone to school in Japan, and helped introduce to Cheng Yen the notion that monasteries should work in the world.<sup>43</sup> Japanese Buddhism had also pioneered the organization of educated lay women for community service. (After the Meiji restoration, Japanese women were able to get higher education but could not work in most occupations. Thus their knowledge and energy could be mobilized for volunteer community service.) But the Japanese Buddhists had moved away from the strict practices of Chinese Buddhism – for instance Japanese monks

could get married. While adopting the social concerns of the Japanese Buddhists, Taiwanese Buddhists maintained the purity of Chinese monastic life, and thus helped maintain a distinctive cultural identity.

Taiwanese religions also borrowed from West, sometimes in order to compete with it. Administrators at the Hsing Tien Kung Foundation said that the idea of organize volunteers to help the community was brought to Taiwan by the service clubs formed by American military wives. According to Tz'u-chi's official history, Master Cheng Yen was inspired to take up social service work after being visited by three Catholic nuns who tried to show her that Catholicism was superior to Buddhism because it performed so many works of social service. Whatever the accuracy of this story, it suggests that competition with Christians was one force driving Tz'u-chi's religious evolution. The theme of competition gets even stronger with Buddha's Light Mountain. Master Hsing Yun saw the encroachment of Christianity on Taiwan as problematic. He thought that he had to adopt some of the effective religious marketing used by Western Christian organizations if he was to maintain Buddhism's place in Taiwan.<sup>44</sup> Other Buddhist groups as well as reformed Daoist organizations like the Hsing Tien Kung adopted his methods. By now, all of the religious organizations we have described in this paper have more sophisticated magazines, television programs, and websites than most Christian organizations in Taiwan.

These religious movements are thus like the rest of Taiwan's emerging national culture, a distinctive refiguration of Chinese cultural traditions under the stimulus of influences from Japan and the United States – a distinctive blend of East and West that is made in Taiwan. With their visibility and global outreach these Taiwanese religious organizations can become vehicles for the collective representation of national identity, a role that looms especially large in Taiwan's peculiar geopolitical circumstances.

In all cultural traditions, the state is never seen just as an administrative apparatus. It is a vehicle for representing the moral aspirations that make its citizens into a national community. The state in Asian cultural traditions perhaps bears even more of this burden of moral representation than the state in the American tradition. The problem with the Taiwanese state, however, is that it cannot easily fill this function of representing the aspirations of the people. For one thing, the Taiwanese state is not recognized by any major governments in the international community. For another, even under the administration of President Chen Shui-bian, whose Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has since its founding propagated the ideal of Taiwan independence, the Taiwanese government has to avoid unduly antagonizing the PRC by claiming that Taiwan is an independent nation. Indeed, most people on Taiwan want to do whatever it takes to avoid war with the Mainland, even though there is a widespread belief that they have created a unique culture and that they share a community of fate.<sup>45</sup> Under these circumstances, the government on Taiwan can represent only their compromises, not their ideals, only their fears, not their hopes. Locally grown religious organizations inevitably pick up the burden of symbolizing the aspirations of the Taiwanese people.

On the walls of the reception room in the Hsing Tien Kung are pictures of foreign ministers, heads of state, and other international dignitaries that have come to see the good work that the temple is doing. Tz'u-chi is known around the world for its relief work. Its yearbooks have pictures of the steady stream of important visitors who have come to visit the Abode of Still Thoughts, including not only political leaders but Cardinals sent by the Vatican, the head of the Nobel-prize winning Doctors without Borders, and the like. Fokuangshan's exhibition hall displays pictures of huge candlelit rallies staged by Hsing Yun in Hong Kong, Malaysia, even South Africa, as well as pictures of Hsing Yun with the Pope, the Dalai Lama, and world political leaders. Dharma's Drum Mountain's Sheng Yen also has an international reputation. Through their international celebrity, our humanistic Buddhist and reformed Daoist organizations display Taiwan's national culture as a source of wisdom and generosity and solutions to the world's problems, a Buddha's light to the world.

Facing a serious challenge from the Chinese mainland, however, the Taiwanese can ill afford to assert their national identity in a way that would antagonize supporters in the United States, Europe, and Japan. There is a special incentive to portray Taiwanese cultural uniqueness in a way that emphasizes Taiwan's openness, tolerance, and flexibility, in contrast to mainland China's relative closedness, aggressiveness, and rigidity.

This helps explain why middle class Taiwanese are attracted to forms of religion that are different from mainstream religion in the West, but display an ecumenical openness that would be attractive to the West.

Globalization has influenced not just the content of Taiwanese Buddhism and Daoism but its forms of organization. The religious organizations studied here have expanded so rapidly because of their mastery of global communication. In the past two decades, Taiwan has become one of the world's leading manufacturers of information technology. The expertise is available for local religious groups to make full use of this technology. Just as important as mastery of the hardware, however, is the ability to master the software – the ability to use global icons and idioms to communicate via television, the internet, and image-laden magazines. Taiwan's emerging middle classes, many of whom travel widely throughout Asia and to the United States and Europe and who are immersed in an advertising-saturated consumer culture, have become very familiar with such images.

Thus, everything from the arrangement of rituals to methods of dispensing charity have been influenced by demands of making them into internationally accessible representations. Under the hangings of classical calligraphy in front of the lecture hall at the Hsing Tien Kung are the little heart symbols that now seem to be used around the world as expressions of sentiment. The notices for Hsing Tien Kung's sponsored cultural events use the kinds of cheerful graphics that one might see on greeting cards in the United States. The graphic layouts of Hsing Tien Kung's magazines – plenty of sentimental color photographs of people of all ages expressing joy or sorrow – that one might see in popular Christian magazines in the West. When Buddha's Light Mountain's Master Hsing Yun gives his public dharma lectures, he uses theatrical effects that one might find at a rock concert or a Las Vegas floor show. As the curtain slowly rises, artificial smoke pours from the state, colored lights throb, and music swells. Sometimes members of the audience are given candles, the auditorium is darkened and flames are passed from candle to candle – an effect one sees often in Western church services but not in traditional Buddhist ceremonies.

Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain gives his dharma lectures not according to the traditional Buddhist calendar, but on Sunday, in a ritual that looks much like a Protestant Church service. There are opening hymns and common prayers. Then everyone opens a book of Buddhist sutras to a passage indicated by Sheng Yen and he explains the meaning of the passage in the light of current events. Finally, there are closing prayers and a recessional.

Tz'u-chi's most impressive ceremonies even more closely resemble Christian church services. In one such ceremony that I took part in, Master Cheng Yen handed out "new year's gifts" to volunteers who had helped in earthquake reconstruction. After opening hymns – performed also, according to Tz'u-chi tradition, in a very graceful, ballet-like international sign language – participants went up two by two, hands folded as in a Christian Communion service, to receive their gift from the Master. As we went forward, some of the women in the line began to softly cry, and were given tissues to wipe their tears by the ever prepared Commissioners. Our sacred gift was the typical New Year's present given by Chinese parents to their children, a red packet of money – in this case one shiny new Taiwanese penny. After receiving the gift, we returned to our places, listened to a sermon by the Master in which she told us that even investments as small as a penny could with the right spirit someday accumulate into great good, and finally we lit candles and linked arms and swayed back and forth as we sang closing hymns. A Buddhist message had been translated into a universal global language (originating from Western Christian rituals but now generalized even into secular rituals) of hope, comfort, and solidarity.

While adopting Western methods of disseminating their messages through media, the four organizations studied here have utilized Taiwanese business methods for creating flexible forms of organization. Taiwanese businesses have pioneered flexible methods of organization through networks. In the Taiwanese economy, relatively small, autonomous, entrepreneurial enterprises develop economies of scale with a complex division of labor by developing networks of connections, based on interpersonal contacts, with complementary organizations throughout "Greater China."<sup>46</sup> Their middle class religious organizations have done the same. Their branches have a high degree of autonomy and encourage entrepreneurial local

initiative. They are bound to one another out of respect for their charismatic leaders, but instead of specific instructions, their leaders offer general guidelines that can be pursued by local religious entrepreneurs.

How much Buddhism and Daoism is lost in such translation into the language and logic of a globalized network society? There are debates within Taiwan's religious circles about this. Tz'u-chi sometimes gets criticized for being "insufficiently Buddhist" (*bu ru fo*). And there does seem to be some possibility that all of the religious movement we have discussed here could dissolve into a general "new age" tissue of benign sentiment with little capacity for philosophical depth or moral discipline. Yet even as they adopt some of the idiom of globalized media culture, these organizations criticize important parts of the content of that culture. All of them warn against consumerism and stress that true happiness comes from cultivating the heart, not acquiring things. They all warn against self-indulgence and encourage generosity. All of them – but Tz'u-chi most effectively – urge people to achieve harmony with the natural environment. Are their efforts destined to be defeated by the seductive pressures of global consumer culture, or can they actually help to transform that culture?

"Some foreigners see Taiwan simply as a 'casino society'," said Tz'u-chi's spokesperson (a former official in Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to a gathering of foreign journalists in the fall of 1999. "But the way we have generously responded to our earthquake – and the way we have helped other people who have faced natural disasters around the world – shows that this is not true. We are a loving society who see the world as a global village." There are indeed plenty of crass elements of Taiwanese society that are visible for the world to see: financial speculation, political corruption, blatant materialism, rude habits and sexual exploitation (nicely joined together in the use of scantily clad young women to sell packages of the ubiquitously chewed betel nut), and reckless destruction of the natural environment. The religious organizations we have been discussing here project an image of a better Taiwan. Because the image is not mere political propaganda, but a sincere representation of ideals actually lived out in practice by at least some members of these organizations, it has credibility both to domestic and foreign audiences. It thus has some capacity to bring into being what it imagines. The act of sincerely imagining an ideal Taiwan encourages Taiwan's citizens to live up to the ideal.

#### Consequences for Civic Culture in Taiwan and in the World

The crassness in Taiwan's consumer culture is accompanied by unruly belligerence in its national political culture. The religious movements we have been discussing, however, contribute a softer dimension – one that emphasizes peace over conflict and mutual respect among ethnic groups over competition.

I saw a good example of the interplay between these dimensions when I witnessed a dialogue between Annette Lu and Tz'u-chi's Master Cheng Yen when Lu visited the Abode of Still Thoughts (as almost all major political candidates feel they must do) during her 1999 campaign for vice-President on the DPP ticket. Annette Lu and Cheng Yen are two strong Taiwanese women with very different styles. A pioneering feminist, a former political prisoner, and a strong advocate for Taiwan independence, Lu is extremely articulate but often undiplomatically blunt and confrontational. The media in the PRC have called her the "scum of the Chinese nation." Cheng Yen is also extremely strong willed and articulate, but projects an image of motherly gentleness and compassion. As television cameras rolled, Annette Lu kept trying to get Cheng Yen to criticize the PRC's leadership. "Master, you have so much more wisdom than [the PRC's then-president] Jiang Zemin. When we had our earthquake, Jiang Zemin sent us almost no aid. Yet you have generously provided help to the victims of the Yangze river floods and so many other disasters in China." To which, Cheng Yen replied, "we believe that everyone, including Jiang Zemin has love in their hearts."

Hsing Yun of Buddha's Light Mountain and Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain can also be counted on stress the need for compassionate cooperation rather than confrontation. For example, in December of 2000, Hsing Yun hosted Ye Xiaowen, the director of the PRC's State Bureau of Religious Affairs. Ye was quoted as saying that the religious sector should spearhead the establishment of the "Three Links", as long as this was done under the principle of "one China." In response, "Hsing Yun urged mainland China to 'peacefully co-exist' with Taiwan in a 'rational and gentle' manner and insisted that Beijing should never

resort to the use of force against Taiwan. 'Chinese do not fight Chinese,' he stressed."<sup>47</sup> The proponents of violent confrontation may still have the last word in Taiwanese politics, but voices such as Taiwan's Buddhist leaders give some hope that a more moderate approach both to cross-strait relations and to internal national integration is possible.

It would be foolish to try to predict if these possibilities will be realized. What I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter is only that Taiwan's emerging middle classes have generated forms of religious imagination and religious association that are playing a positive role in building a moderate, responsible, civic culture. Buddhists might say that the emergence of such religious resources was the result of good karma. But from a sociological point of view it was by no means preordained. I have tried to show how it was the result of a fortuitous confluence of separate processes, as well as by the wisdom that enabled certain spiritual leaders to make best use of the "causes and conditions" in which they found themselves.

The Taiwan case shows that strict political control over religion (as exercised by the authoritarian KMT against Taiwanese Buddhism and Daoism) does not necessarily either destroy religion or cause religion to react fiercely against the state once the repression is ended. It shows that, in a Chinese cultural context, it is possible for the state to win the active cooperation of religion while respecting the autonomy of religious leaders over their own organizations. It shows that Buddhism and Daoism have the capacity both to adapt to modernity and to humanize the modern world. It shows that globalization can help lead to a kind of religious renaissance that leads to dialogue among civilizations rather than clashes between them. This might give us hope for the emergence of positive religious developments in the People's Republic of China with beneficial consequences for peaceful transitions to democracy in the Asia Pacific. But our analysis also shows that these positive outcomes require a good measure of luck, or, from the Buddhist point of view, fate (*yuanfen*), or from the Christian point of view, the grace of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews conducted with directors of the Tz'u-chi center in Puli in October, 1999. Unless otherwise noted, information in this chapter is based on interviews with members (including leaders) of the various religious organizations studied and on participant-observation ethnography. Most of the research was carried out between September, 1999 and January, 2000, when I was a research fellow at the Academia Sinica in Taiwan. The Chiang Ching-kuo foundation provided funding for this project. I gathered additional data during a two week research trip in July, 2001, funded by the Pacific Rim Program of the University of California Office of the President. Able research assistance was provided by Ho Hua-chin and Kuo Yah-yu.

<sup>2</sup> Reports issued by Tz'u-chi Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> For a history of Taiwan's economic development, see Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1987); For a history of political transformation, see Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1999); for statistics on Taiwan's religious renaissance see: Wen-hui Tsai, "Folk Religion in Modernizing Taiwan" *American Asian Review*, vol. 14, no. 3 (fall, 1996), 5-15.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview, see Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); For an account of how Taiwanese religious practice is beginning to change, see Robert P. Weller, *Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), pp. 83-134.

<sup>5</sup> Weller, *Alternate Civilities*, 84-88.

<sup>6</sup> See statistics from early 1990s in Wen-hui Tsai, "Folk Religion in Modernizing Taiwan," p. 10. More recent surveys show that Christians constitute only about five percent of the total population. Chiu Hei-yuan *Taiwan Shehui Bianqian Jiben Diaocha Jihua: Disanqi Disanci Diaocha Zhixing Baogao* (Taipei: Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Trans. by Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 95-99.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief introduction to the development of "humanistic Buddhism" in twentieth century China, see Raoul Birnbaum, "Buddhism" *China Quarterly* 174 (June 2003). Wang Shunmin, "Zongjiao fuli fuwu zhi chubu kaocha: yi Foguanshan, Fagushan, yu Ciji weili," *Si yu Yan*, vol. 32, no 3 (1994): pp. 33-111.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Brewer Jones, *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State, 1660-1990* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999). Andre LaLiberte, *The Politics of Buddhist Organizations in Taiwan* (Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Political Science, University of British Columbia, 1999). Chien-yu Julia Huang and Robert P. Weller, "Merit and Mothering: Women and Social Welfare in Taiwanese Buddhism." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57: 2 (May, 1998), 379-396. Hwei-Syin Lu, "Gender and Buddhism in Contemporary Taiwan – A Case Study of Tzu Chi Foundation" *Proceedings of the National Science Council ROC*. Vol. 8, no. 4: 539-550.

<sup>10</sup> Information provided in Tz'u-chi 2001 Yearbook.

<sup>11</sup> Information taken from Tz'u Yearbooks and its website <http://www.tzuchi.org>. Tz'u-chi was the first Taiwanese charity to enter Iraq after the 2003 war. Working in conjunction with the Hashemite Charity Organization of Jordan, it distributed food and medical supplies to the Al Falluja General Hospital and to Palestinian refugees in Bagdad.

<sup>12</sup> The information above comes from the annual yearbooks published by Tz-u-chi and from fieldwork carried out by the author in Taiwan, in 1999.

9. Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Where there is Dharma There is a Way (Taipei, Taiwan: Foguang Cultural Enterprise Co., 2001), 92-93. In 1952, when the Chinese Buddhist Association was re-established in Taiwan, Hsing Yun was elected to the standing committee. "I felt, however, that I was too young and inexperienced to serve...I therefore resigned that position at once..." He later came to believe that the Association "had become the personal tool of a small clique. What came after that seems even more deplorable. For next following forty years, from respect for the dignity of the Association, I decided not to oppose it. My connection with the Association, however, remained minimal." See also the quasi-official biography of Hsing Yun: Fu Chi-ying, Handing Down the Light: The Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Trans. by Amy Liu-ma (Hacienda Heights, CA: His Lai University Press, 1996). Jones, Buddhism in Taiwan

<sup>14</sup> Information from Fokwangshan's yearbooks and from author's fieldwork in Taiwan.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, Buddhism in Taiwan

<sup>16</sup> According to Fu Chi-ying, op. cit., p. 212: "[I]t must be noted that estimated at \$NT150 billion in assets [1 US dollar equals about 30 NT dollars], Fo Kuang Shan is far behind the top-ten list of Taiwan's wealthiest religious corporations."

<sup>17</sup> Biographical information taken from Dharma Drum Mountain publications. Cf. Sheng-yen, Complete Enlightenment (Elmhurst, NY: Dharma Drum Publications, 1996). Also from interviews with monks and nuns at the Nung Chan Temple in Taipei.

<sup>18</sup> Raoul Birnbaum, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Chen Huimin, Tuergan (Durkheim) yu Weiba (Weber) Zongjianxueshuo zhr bijiao ji qizai Taiwan minjian zongjiao zhi yingyong —yi Taipei Xingtian Gong wei li. (MA thesis, Zhengzhi Daxue, Sociology Dept., 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Pamphlet published by Hsing Tien Kung.

<sup>21</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London, SCM Press, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> Venerable Master Hsing Yun, The Philosophy of Being Second (Hacienda Heights, CA: His Lai University Press, 2000), 76.

<sup>23</sup> One can see examples of this spirit in Rebirth: Transformations in Tzu-chi (Taipei: Buddhist Compassion Relief Association, nd), a collection of testimonials about how Tzu-chi members became converted to working in the organization.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 44-58. Douglas adapts her usage from the work of Basil Bernstein.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas, 44.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Douglas, 44-45.

<sup>28</sup> He makes this statement in Fokuangshan, a video produced by his organization.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Superintendent of the Tz'u-chi Hualien Hospital.

<sup>30</sup> There are many uncertainties about the size and composition of Taiwan's middle classes. A comprehensive discussion of the issue can be found in Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao ed., Discovery of the Middle Classes in East Asia (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1993), pp. 121-217. The discussion distinguishes between a "new middle class" of salaried professionals, managers, and technicians and an older middle class composed of small business owners. In the early 1990s, when this book was published, the two groups together constituted about 30 percent of Taiwan's population. In surveys, however, about 50 percent of the population subjectively thought of themselves as middle class.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste, Trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>32</sup> The Mainlanders are those Chinese, mostly associated with the KMT, who came to Taiwan in the late 1940s, mostly after 1949, when the KMT was defeated by the Communists in the Chinese civil war. The Mainlanders constitute about ten percent of Taiwan's population. One marker of identity is language: the Mainlanders speak Mandarin Chinese; most of the native Taiwanese speak the Hoklo dialect (commonly called Taiwanese), though some speak Hakka. In order to consolidate its control over Taiwan, the KMT systematically killed or imprisoned the Taiwanese intellectual and political elite. During the "White Terror" that began after the crackdown on Taiwanese dissent in the "February 28" (1947) incident and continued throughout the 1950s, as many as 30,000 Taiwanese were killed and hundreds of thousands imprisoned. Understandably, many Taiwanese have harbored deep hatred toward Mainlanders. Especially in

northern Taiwan, this is diminishing among some parts of the younger generation, as memories of past atrocities fade and as intermarriage and mutual cultural adaptation have taken place. But a strong countervailing tendency of cultural nationalism has developed among some Taiwanese. This is especially strong in southern Taiwan, and it fuels sentiment for Taiwan to assert its independence from Mainland China.

<sup>33</sup> The story of Taiwan's political development since the end of martial law in 1987 is well told in Shelly Rigger, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-193.

<sup>34</sup> See Fu Chi-ying, *op. cit.*, 244-253.

<sup>35</sup> See Lotus Flower of the Heart: Thirty Years of Tzu Chi Photographs (Taipei: Still Thoughts Cultural Mission, 1997), p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Lotus Flower of the Heart, 86-102.

<sup>37</sup> According to Fu Chi-ying, *op. cit.*, 246-247, "[T]he government had no part whatsoever in the growth of Fo Kuang Shan. Not even a single tree or a blade of grass. Except, maybe, for ten years delay in matters of official registration." But the enormous growth of Fokuangshan temples, schools, and other ventures throughout Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s has benefited from the cooperation of important government officials. See Andre LaLiberte

<sup>38</sup> See Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao, "The Development and Organization of Foundations in Taiwan: An Expression of Vigor in a Newly Born Society," in Quiet Revolutions on Taiwan, Republic of China, ed. Jason C. Hu (Taipei: Kwang Hwa, 1994), pp. 386-419.

<sup>39</sup> A-chin Hsiau, Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Shelly Rigger summarizes recent Taiwan public opinion polls in this way: "Public opinion surveys reveal a broad consensus on three points. First, Taiwanese do not want to be annexed or absorbed by the People's Republic of China. . . . Second, they recognize that their fate is linked to China. Third, Taiwanese believe that foreign contacts offer protection from annexation. . . . Most Taiwanese are willing to sacrifice the prestige of formal independence to avoid armed conflict. Moreover, only a minority of Taiwanese feel a strong need for *de jure* independence." Shelly Rigger, "Taiwan in U.S.-China Relations," The Aspen Institute Congressional Program, vol. 18, no. 1 (2003), p.p. 25-26.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin R. Barber, Jihad vs. McWorld, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Jiang Canteng, Taiwan Fojiao Wenhua Fajanshi: Riju Shiqi (Taipei: Nantian Chubanshe), 2000).

<sup>43</sup> Information graciously provided me by Alise DiVido

<sup>44</sup> As Fu Chi-ying puts it, "The seed [for the idea of building Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles] was sown when Hsing Yun first came to America as a guest of its bicentennial celebrations. . . . The country's cultural diversity and receptiveness struck him irrevocably. Further, the need for a spiritual anchorage for the fast increasing number of immigrants of Chinese heritage was more than obvious. But most of all, Hsing Yun pondered, in contrast to the heavily armed and intrusive ways in which Christianity penetrated China in the last century, could Buddhism now be taught peacefully in the West?" Fu Chi-ying, *op. cit.*, 345.

<sup>45</sup> Shelly Rigger, "Taiwan in U.S.-China Relations, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> Marco Orru, Nicole Woolsey Biggert, and Gary G. Hamilton, "Organizational Isomorphism in East Asia" in Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio, eds., The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 383-386.

<sup>47</sup> Taipei, Chinese Information and Cultural Center, Dec. 13, 2000