

Invisible tie between Caesar and God: Creation and development of traditional Taiwanese religious governance networks

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Abstract

This study aims to understand how the Taiwanese traditional religious policy creates a local religious governance network in which a religious organization (Hui-Ji Temple), residents, and government officials are connected by holding religious rites and services in Taipei City. Through direct observation and interviews with critical network participants, the author found that such a governance network does help Hui-Ji Temple preserve traditional Taiwanese culture and respond well to the challenges brought by urbanization and modernization. However, this research suggests that more transparency should be brought into the recruitment process of the temple management committee to have more new ideas and modern management skills in organizational management and responding to social needs.

KEYWORDS: traditional Taiwanese religion, Taipei City, Hui-Ji Temple, religious policy

Introduction

Traditional Taiwanese religions have strong ties to the history of Pattsiran, which includes the modern Shilin and Beitou Districts in Taipei City. When the first immigrants moved to Taiwan from mainland China in the 17th century, traditional Han religions such as Taoism and Buddhism offered spiritual sustenance to help these immigrants to

deal with natural disasters such as typhoons, floods, and droughts. In addition, temples served as major locations for public education and local decision making. Thus, traditional religious organizations in Taiwan helped create a strong local religious network with residents and government officials.

With the rapid growth of urbanization and business, Taipei City has become a modern, international metropolitan city of the 21st century. Foreign religions including Christianity and Islam enrich religious activity in Taiwan. However, the traditional Han religions remain very popular. Religious festivals and worship activities are held by temples and other religious organizations during traditional holidays such as the Lunar New Year and the birthdays of deities, which may strengthen the coherence of local residents. The “four corners”¹ local worship area in Pattsiran created the major traditional religious governance network that mobilizes human and financial resources for annual religious festivals, such as the Zhongyuan Festival.² In Pattsiran, the Hui-Ji Temple serves as the faith center and its members take responsibility for holding the Zhongyuan Festival and other critical religious activities. Taking Hui-Ji Temple as a research target can allow a comprehensive understanding of traditional Taiwanese religious governance networks.

Religious organizations have a long history of community service (Lowndes & Chapman, 2005). In Taiwan, traditional religious organizations act as local faith centers that strengthen community coherence and mobilize people to participate in local affairs; furthermore, they facilitate local political, economic, and cultural activities (Li & Wu 2005). Immigrants from the Chinese mainland created the former Taiwanese society. The immigrants brought their local religious beliefs with their families to new territories. As a result, religious and clan organizations were created, and a public governance network based on local religious and clan activities was established as the critical resource for developing local areas (Chau, 2007).

Providing and maintaining infrastructure is a fundamental objective of modern governments. Moreover, under the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis, adopting innovative policies that enable changes to public services by enhancing the level of cooperation with civil society to create a cooperation relationship is viewed as a practical method for solving service issues among local governments (Wu & Wu, 2008; Tso & Li, 2018). Thus, the concept of “collaborative governance” has become popular in the public administration research field (Tseng, 2011, p. 29).

¹ The four districts of Pattsiran.

² On the 15th day of the 7th month of the Lunar Calendar, traditional temples offer feasts and entertainment to wandering ghosts. This is called “Zhongyuan Pudu” and promotes safety in the local area.

In the summer of 2017, members of Hui-Ji Temple joined with other traditional religious organizations for the Taipei 2017 Summer Universiade festival held by Taipei City Government. It also followed the city's environmental protection policies to reduce emissions from burning incense and candles during worship activities. Thus, many traditional religious organizations have become critical partners in local governance networks. For the public sector, religious organizations help facilitate effective communication between the public sector, civil society, and other policy stakeholders. They may join in the policy-making process to contribute to policy execution and monitoring and reviewing works (UNDP, 2014). Several scholars have reported that a successful collaboration partnership is based on whether all partners have effective communication, sufficient consensus, and trust (Grimsey & Lewis, 2004; Trafford & Proctor, 2006; Tseng, 2011). Trust among all partners is key to promoting public-private collaboration relationships (Kooiman 2003: 102).

This study aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how traditional Taiwanese religious governance networks accommodate changes and challenges resulting from urbanization and modernization through the application of research methods used for analyzing public administration and folklore. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and participation in local religious governance activities.

Research on religious governance

There are four major types of research in this field: operation and management of religious organizations, interactions between temples and society, temples and local governance, and relationship between religious organizations and political affairs.

Several studies have focused on the operation of the target organizations (temples), such as those by Chen (2006) and Ou (2015), and other descriptive studies of single local temples. In addition, several scholars have discussed the activities of a worshipped deity's followers and how they interact with related organizations. Similar to Lin's (1989) research on the belief sphere of Matsu (goddess of the sea), Zhuang (1986) and Chen (1998) have expressed comprehensive views on the development and changes in Taiwanese temples across eras.

Other studies have attempted to identify interactions between temples and their social surroundings. They have discussed how the temples accommodate environmental changes and create new functions to attract followers (e.g., Katz (1997), Wang (2002), Chen (2005), Kamizuru (2005), Chen and Chu (2006), Hsu (2009), and Wu (2015)). By discussing the interactions between temples, environments, and residents, scholars may

determine temples' role in local governance activities. For example, temple organization's may work with the public sector and residents by holding religious festivals and other worship events. Lin's (2004) article discussed how the Dong-Long temple was affected by the Taiwanese central government's policy of establishing it as a museum, after which it lost its linkage with residents. This case study offered insights into how public sector decisions may negatively affect traditional religious organizations.

Local governance research has mainly focused on how the public sector works with policy partners such as those in the private sector, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and citizens to improve policy outcomes and reduce costs by creating cooperative relationships (Chao, 2007). According to the New Public Management policies, previous state-run services have been increasingly transferred to religious organizations. As a result, the state's relationship with religious organizations for welfare provision has changed (Martikainen, 2013). Scholars have discussed how central and local governments link governance partners from civil society and the public sector to establish an effective governance network, which works to satisfy the interests and needs of communities to enhance local living standards (Kauzya, 2003). Borrowing from governance research, scholars have investigated how traditional religious organizations (temples) create religious governance cooperation networks by holding religious activities and joining in local governance works with the public sector and civil society (Chao, 2007; Hsieh, 2008). Temples thus act as critical governance partners to encourage more people to join in public affairs and reflect public opinion toward the government (Laliberté, 2009). Therefore, modern governments have begun to cooperate with religious organisations to invite them and their members to join in local governance activities for better governing performance.

In recent years, many traditional Taiwanese religious organizations have become critical partners in local governance activities. Chao (2007, pp. 32-33) noted several governance functions of these organizations:

- (1) Cooperating in temple management (with local gentry or other elites).
- (2) Jointly holding local religious activities, banquets, and moral education activities.
- (3) Creating coherence among people.
- (4) Collecting financial resources for religious activities, construction works, and facility maintenance.

- (5) Making donations for local infrastructure construction, welfare, and education.
- (6) Working as volunteers for temple security and activities.
- (7) Securing local communities.
- (8) Sponsoring local religious and cultural activities.
- (9) Mobilizing people to join in cultivation and development activities.
- (10) Financing economic activities.
- (11) Contributing to local religious, mental health, and medical services.

These governance functions do not solely belong to religious organizations, and local groups such as clans may have similar functions. Some temples may not be able to exercise all these governance functions because of limited resources. Hsieh (2008) noted that in local governance networks, the public sector tends to use legal regulations and budget subsidies to assist local temple organizations and encourage them to participate in governance activities. Such relationships may not fully satisfy the meaning of “cooperation” in governance networks. Nevertheless, this relationship is widely observed in Taiwan. The appropriate level of governmental control of religious organizations is a critical issue. From a pluralistic perspective, less governmental control on religious affairs may have a positive effect on the development of a competitive religious society. From the rational choice theory of religion, more state regulations on religion result in religious competition, decreasing their importance (Martikainen, 2013). In other countries, the public sector may cooperate with civil society in offering public services by signing contracts and using budget subsidies. In the United States, the operation of faith groups that receive government subsidies involves several legal limitations. For example, these faith groups cannot use public funds for worship services and sectarian instruction (Bluestein & Graham, 2001). Taiwan has less strict legal limitations on religious organizations.

Several scholars have reported that temples serve as religious centers and critical arenas for local elites to create their own power networks (Chen, 2001). Plaques sent by local or central government officials can often be seen hanging in temples. Sending plaques to a temple is a means of worshipping a god, approving the key role of a temple, and strengthening the power and affection of the government in the local area (Chen 2001). The public sector is willing to ensure their power in local communities through more involvement in local religious affairs, such as sending plaques, funding temple construc-

tion, ensuring maintenance works, granting titles to gods, and holding worship rituals (Watson, 1985).

In Western society, the relationship between religious organizations and politics is a critical issue with a long history. The Gospel of Matthew (22:21) said to 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.' This describes a classical but unclear distinction between religion and politics. Historically, emperors, kings, queens, and many political leaders attempted to render the line between God and Caesar vague in order to become more involved in religious affairs. In democratic societies, scholars have analyzed the extent to which religious organizations affect politics. In studies of church-state relations, scholars have examined how religions are regulated, how they cooperate with the state, and how these rules steer religious organizations and affect religious freedom (Martikainen, 2013). In a discussion of the church's relationship with political participation, Djupe and Neiheisel (2012) argued that church involvement indicates a thorough connection to the community majority, which boosts political activity. The research findings of Djupe and Neiheisel supported their argument. Jamal's (2005) argument, in which churches may bring together individuals to instill a group consciousness that empowers political participation, supported religious organizations' possible effect on political participation and mobilization. McKenzie (2004) observed that churches help in teaching democratic norms and civic skills and serve as venues for political recruitment and the mobilization of church attendees through informal social connections. Furthermore, in immigrant societies, religious community organizations can cater to the needs of ethnoreligious minorities searching "for refuge, respectability and resources" as agents of political integration and mobilization (Peucker & Ceylan, 2017). Thus, religious organizations help societies remain stable by controlling immigrants.

In anthropological research, the concept of the "religious sphere," which refers to a territorial unit in which residents worship a single god, is widely used by Taiwanese scholars to analyze the relationship between residents and the god (temple) they worship. The concept of the religious sphere originated from the Japanese anthropologist Yuzuru Okada, who believed that this applying concept is a practical approach for analyzing the role of Traditional Taiwanese religious organizations in local governance networks (Hsu, 1975). Adopting the concept of the religious sphere is a critical approach for analyzing the effect of traditional Taiwanese religious activities on civil society, such as in the studies of See (1973) and Lin (1987). Several scholars have proposed the concept of the "belief sphere," which refers to a voluntary religious organization formed by believers of

one god and its branch deities in a large region. A belief sphere is developed by a certain religious sphere, and thus the belief sphere is larger than the religious belief (Lin, 1989). Chang (2002) argued that we should go beyond the concept of the religious sphere for more comprehensive research on the relationships between temples, society, and the state with the current trend toward urbanization. Chang's argument offered a theoretical foundation for research on the role of traditional religious organizations in people's political and social life.

Traditional religious organizations in Taiwan may have a political function. From the Qin Dynasty, many critical local temples served as grassroots units of local autonomy (Chien, 2003). Scholars have discovered that several temples became power arenas for local elites to pursue social resources, expand influence, and exercise social mobilization. Elites attempt to allocate resources through temples (Chen, 2002; Chen, 2005; Chen, 2006; Hsieh, 2008; Katz, 2000). Under social transformation, temples have become a critical target for new elites and traditional local gentry in pursuing resources and power. Therefore, the chairperson of a temple's management committee may have considerable political resources and power in a local area.

This study borrowed ideas from the aforementioned research findings, theories, and methods to analyze how Hui-Ji Temple found its role in a religious governance network to remain relevant, given the rapid changes resulting from urbanization and modernization in Taiwan. Concerns relate to how the public sector cooperates with local temple organizations to enhance local governance and to what extent the interaction between the public sector and civil society changes as the traditional local gentry becomes increasingly less crucial in local governance networks.

Development history of Pattsiran and Hui-Ji temple

Discovering the history of Pattsiran and ethnic relations allows a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship among traditional religious organizations, residents, and society. Worship activities and temples are core elements of the traditional religion of Han society in Taiwan. Neither a strict doctrine nor a strong follower organization or a single leader existed in traditional Taiwanese religion. Temples were always present in Han immigrant society as the center of the villages. Hui-Ji Temple was the meeting and activity center of Han immigrants in Pattsiran.

The name "Pattsiran" first appeared in 1724 A.D., which means "the hot spring" in a Taiwanese aboriginal language. In the early Japanese occupation era, Pattsiran was re-

placed by “Shilin” by government officials, a name still used today (Hsieh et al., 2007). Historically, the first settlers of Pattsiran were Han Chinese from Zhangzhou in the 18th century. When more Han immigrants arrived from China, Pattsiran became the logistics center and most important harbor area in Taipei (Lin, 2004).

The prosperous economy broke down in 1859 because of armed conflict between Zhangzhou and Quanzhou settlers. The Quanzhou immigrants burned downtown Pattsiran, and a new downtown area was created in 1860. The Zhangzhou settlers adopted a grid street plan for the reconstruction of the old downtown Pattsiran. After reconstruction, the market square of Pattsiran was moved to the plaza in front of the rebuilt Temple of the Marine Goddess located in the center of the old downtown area.

Hui-Ji Temple was created in 1751 as the faith center of the Zhangzhou settlers. As the major local traditional religious organization, Hui-Ji Temple was jointly managed by local elites and gentry from the “four corners.” This management system has not changed from the 18th century.

Religious governance network of Hui-Ji temple

In Chinese culture, the local gentry are authorized to be responsible for temple management, and all local residents are invited to participate in religious affairs. After its creation, Hui-Ji Temple was led by local elites for a century. From the late 19th century, Hui-Ji Temple was managed by a joint management committee with two other major temples (Shan-Nun Temple and Tzu-Hsien Temple) in Pattsiran. In 1915, the annual Zhongyuan Festival in Pattsiran was established by Zhangzhou settlers to worship the deceased of local armed conflicts. Pattsiran was divided into four worship areas (the four corners) to take responsibility for organizing worship activities by turns. Originally, the festival was held in the Hui-Ji Temple plaza. However, the festival site changed to Tzu-Hsien Temple owing to its larger size and relative convenience. Since 2006, the festival has again been held in Hui-Ji Temple plaza after the god’s approval was received by casting divination blocks. In the beginning, the festival was held by large local clans. Approximately 40 years ago, the festival was changed to be held by the village (the basic unit of local authority in Taiwan); thus, new settlers were permitted to participate in these critical local religious affairs and join the religious governance network (Chien, 2003).

The tradition of employing the local gentry as management committee members of Hui-Ji Temple has not changed in over a century. During the Japanese occupation, the colo-

nial government established rules to regulate religious affairs without changing the management institution. As a result, all three major temples (Hui-Ji, Shan-Nun, and Tzu-Hsien) in Pattsiran were managed by a single committee. In the 1950s, the “folklore improvement” policy was inaugurated by the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) government. Based on this policy, all traditional religious organizations had to be registered, and the management committee was guided by the government. In 1989, the new policy required every temple to create a single management committee. Thus, the management of Hui-Ji Temple became independent from those of Shan-Nun and Tzu-Hsien temples.

However, many committee members are members of one or more temple committees (and come from local elites and the gentry). Presently, the management committee of Hui-Ji Temple is proportionally composed of local residents from the four corners. The committee has 20 members with a four-year term. The committee members are elected by the “believers” (residents who are recognized by the temple and registered with Taipei City government) from the four corners. Each corner has its own registered believers and committee members as representatives in the committee. The chair of the committee is selected by committee members every four years. Traditionally, the chair comes from one of the four corners, alternating by turn to ensure equal opportunities in decision-making. Government officials (including city and district government officials) are invited to witness the election of the committee chairperson. The chairperson takes responsibility for temple management and administration and is required to work with the committee for holding critical religious activities such as Zhongyuan Festival. A secretary-general is hired as the chief assistant of the chairperson. During these years, the secretary-general is selected from other committee members. This institutional design of management is similar to that of other temples in Taiwan. Unlike in other temples, all current chiefs of villages (elected local leaders) in Pattsiran are invited as honorable believer representatives by Hui-Ji Temple. Therefore, many committee members are current village chiefs; this has the purpose of creating a close relationship between local religious governance and political networks. If a committee member passes away, a new member is selected by the committee, so new committee members tend to have close relationships with old members. The openness of member recruitment is low, and the committee tends to make conservative decisions rather than borrow new ideas from outside.

Recently, as young and newly elected village chiefs have increasingly joined the management committee, they may bring unexpected changes to the temple. Some new village chiefs have more new ideas for local religious affairs than others do. For example,

one of the new elected village chiefs is Christian, and her religious beliefs affect her willingness to participate in local traditional religious activities. Some new village chiefs may have disputes with experienced committee members due to having different ideas about managing temples or holding activities. The management committee does not conduct any activities to help new members learn about the inheritance and experiences of temple management and religious affairs. The new committee members must learn from joining committee meetings. However, this is not effective for new members to learn and strengthen their identity toward local religious affairs. Such a phenomenon has threatened village chiefs' support for local religious activities held by Hui-Ji Temple.

Hui-Ji Temple was established to satisfy the identification and religious needs of Zhangzhou settlers. However, with rapid urban growth in Taipei, more non-Zhangzhou descendants are moving to Pattsiran and joining Hui-Ji Temple's religious activities. Now, several non-Zhangzhou deities are worshipped with other Zhangzhou deities in Hui-Ji Temple together. Therefore, the distinction between ethnic groups in Hui-Ji Temple has vanished. However, the management committee recruitment design (new members must be suggested by old members) may prevent the committee from being more open to the public to incorporate newcomers and new ideas into the temple management.

Furthermore, the committee tends to pursue a harmonious decision-making style, and every critical decision must have all committee members' approval to be enacted. Thus, the temple management tends to be conservative and does not allow radical changes. Therefore, the temple may not effectively respond to changes in its surroundings to attract more people (particularly the new generation) to join in temple activities.

Two local temples have now been merged with Hui-Ji Temple. Overlaps occur among temple management committee members in Pattsiran, and some members may be too busy to devote themselves to temple management. Young people have joined in local traditional religious affairs, and some were recruited by the temple as staff or have cooperated with the temple in holding religious activities. These young staff members tend to be enthusiastic about enlarging their cooperation network to include other traditional Taiwanese religious organizations outside of Pattsiran and Taipei City. For example, every 10 years, a grand pilgrimage procession is held. All temples in Pattsiran are invited by Hui-Ji Temple to join in the procession. The Hui-Ji Temple organization also joins a religious society with other temples that worship Zhangzhou deities. Joining such a society helps the Hui-Ji Temple organization enhance its governance network

links to other temples in Taiwan. Hui-Ji Temple also sponsors activities held by other temples to maintain their cooperative relationship.

Hui-Ji Temple holds religious activities, and its organization takes responsibility for social services. For example, the Hui-Ji Temple organisation takes care of the management and maintenance of several “ghost temples”³ in Pattsiran. During Zhongyuan Festival, Hui-Ji Temple holds worship activities with local elites (most of whom are village leaders) for the safety of the village. There are seven ghost temples managed by Hui-Ji Temple, several of which are located on the Taipei City government’s public land, although the city government does not take responsibility for the temples’ management. Hui-Ji Temple personnel help Taipei City Government with ghost temple management without financial support from the public sector. The Taipei City Government only subsidises Hui-Ji Temple for holding local traditional religious and cultural activities, such as the Ghost Festival. The Hui-Ji Temple management committee solely bears the financial burden of temple management. In interviews with Hui-Ji Temple staff and management committee members, they remarked that they are willing to continue with ghost temple management as a social service. For the sake of the gods, the interviewees say, Hui-Ji Temple’s sacred duty is to take care of ghost temples in Pattsiran.

Table 1 lists the major activities held by Hui-Ji Temple in 2017–2018. Several are critical and routine religious activities held every year, while others are not. Most routine activities have religious meaning, such as a god’s birthday. Some activities have social meaning, such as worship, for satisfying certain special needs. For example, in 2017 and 2018, Hui-Ji Temple held a special worship for high school and college entrance examinees. In 2017, Taipei City Mayor Ko Wen-je came to Hui-Ji Temple to send a red envelope to citizens on the second day of the Chinese New Year. This activity was held by Taipei City Government and Hui-Ji Temple management committee to gain citizens’ support for religious activities and Taipei City Government. The Taipei City government continued this activity in 2018 and 2019. Before the Chinese New Year, Hui-Ji Temple management committee also cooperates with the city government to hold “winter aid distributions” to help low-income families in the neighboring five villages. These families receive cash (NT\$1000) and food (cookies and rice) from the City Government. After Zhongyuan Festival, food, drinks, and other daily necessities donated by residents were sent to orphanages and nursing homes in Pattsiran as Hui-Ji Temple’s social service. Thus, Hui-Ji Temple management committee is a critical actor and partner in the Taipei City government’s social service and governance network.

Table 1: Critical Activities of Hui-Ji Temple in 2017–2018

Name	Time	Routine or temporary
Open ceremony of Taiwan Traditional Theater Center	October 3 rd , 2017	Temporary
Annual meeting of Kaizhang Shengwang Temple Fellowship in North Taiwan	October 22, 2017	Temporary
Worship of Wenchang Dijun (god of literature) for college entrance exam	January 12, 2018	May become routine
Sending red envelopes by Taipei City Mayor	The second day of Chinese New Year 2017	May become routine
Birth ceremony of Kaizhang Shengwang	February 16 in Lunar Year	Routine
Worship for safety in Spring	February 12-16 in Lunar Year	Routine
Worship for high school entrance exam	May 12, 2018	May become routine
Ceremony of Buddha's birth	April 6-8 in Lunar Year	Routine
Matsu (goddess of marine) ceremony	April 26-27 in Lunar Year	Routine
Open ceremony of Zhongyuan Festival in Pattisran	July 1 in Lunar Year	Routine
Ullambana (deliverance) Festival	July 3-5 in Lunar Year	Routine
Worship for safety in Fall	September 12-16 in Lunar Year	Routine
Winter aid distributions (cooperate with Taipei City Government)	Before the end of Lunar Year	Routine
Pattisran pilgrimage	Every ten years, does not have a fixed schedule	Routine

In recent years, several neighboring traditional religious organizations were combined with that of Hui-Ji Temple. This phenomenon indicates that such organizations face a critical struggle for existence. Temples that do not attract believers and resources must close or combine with other temples. This crisis forces temples and their management committee members to use various approaches to help the temple survive. Traditionally, new settlers identified the nearest temple to join in its worship activities to pray for safety. As one of the leading traditional Taiwanese religious organizations in Pattisran, Hui-Ji Temple may also be visited by people who come to other temples in Pattisran. As people move out of Hui-Ji Temple's governance network, new settlers fill the gap. The management committee of Hui-Ji Temple is attempting to enhance its cooperation relationship with communities by working with village chiefs and inviting them to join in religious activities. The tradition of village chiefs being the temple's major fundraisers remains in Taipei City; however, such traditions have vanished with the rapid urbanization and industrialization of other Taiwanese cities.

Traditional religious organizations in Taiwan have been critical as grassroots local governance actors since the 17th century (Chien, 2003). Larger temples often help the public sector in policy execution and promotion by sending brochures and flyers to people who join in religious activities. During the Japanese occupation, the colonial government was devoted to promoting the traditional Japanese religion, Shinto, in Taiwan. However, many Taiwanese people retained their traditional religious beliefs, and the colonial government did not set strict rules prohibiting traditional Taiwanese religious activities. Af-

ter World War II, the KMT government established strict rules to regulate religious organizations' operation and management. With the democratic development of Taiwan from the late 1980s, both central and local governments changed their policy to have more traditional organizations as critical governance partners.

Hui-Ji Temple must now send its management and financial report to the Taipei City government annually. The city government must oversee all management and activities of local religious organizations. The management committee of Hui-Ji Temple often requests that the city government be a sponsor or partner in holding activities. Local politicians, such as village chiefs and city council members, may send gifts or sponsorship to support Hui-Ji Temple. The primary financial resources of Hui-Ji Temple are the cash sent by believers and funds raised by village chiefs (NT\$10,000 per person per year). Taipei City Government may invite Hui-Ji Temple members to join in activities held by the City Government. In 2017, the City Government held a religious festival as a warm-up activity for the 2017 Universiade in Taipei. The Hui-Ji Temple committee joined in the festival by sending its parade team. The temple must bear most of the financial responsibility of joining such activities. The City Government only subsidizes a small amount of money to Hui-Ji Temple. According to temple staff, traditionally, the public sector was willing to subsidize local religious affairs. However, recently the city government changed its policy. After the financial crisis, government officials of most Taiwanese local governments came to believe that religious organizations tended to have better financial bases than other civil organizations. By receiving increasingly less governmental financial support, temples face more financial pressure in holding activities.

Discussion

From an analysis of the local religious governance network created by Hui-Ji Temple, several critical points may be discussed.

The traditional single geographical governance network has changed into a comprehensive network. The traditional Taiwanese local religious governance network was based on the clan or geographical groups of Han Chinese (Lin, 1989). In traditional Taiwanese society, religious organizations were created by people with the same beliefs in a certain area or by immigrants from the same hometown. Thus, people from the same hometown could communicate with each other in different places by joining religious organizations that worshipped the same god. With the rapid growth of urban development, new settlers may bring various religious beliefs that compete with the original local religious

organization. Some local temples have begun to worship deities from other ethnic groups to attract more people to join in the local religious activities. Temples that reject deities from new settlers may lose believers and have problems in resource gathering for maintaining the temple's operation. The traditional temple management approach that focused on serving a single ethnic group was replaced by a comprehensive approach that focused on serving various groups of people. Originally, Hui-Ji Temple was created by Zhangzhou immigrants. Since 2000, "Guangze Zunwang," a popular god worshipped by Quanzhou immigrants, has been worshipped in Hui-Ji Temple. Other popular deities in Taiwan such as the "Lord Superior Wen Chang" (god of literature) and "Matsu" (goddess of the sea) have been worshipped in Hui-Ji Temple recently to cater to more people. Thus, a comprehensive local religious governance network is created.

Both local and cross-boundary religious groups are included in Hui-Ji Temple's comprehensive governance network. As the leading temple in Pattsiran, the Hui-Ji Temple committee has established a strong religious sphere and governance network through holding traditional religious activities such as the Ghost Festival for Zhangzhou immigrants. Hui-Ji Temple's management committee comprises local elites in Pattsiran. People who do not live in Pattsiran may have few chances to join the committee. However, as a member of the Kaizhang Shengwang Temple Fellowship in Taiwan, Hui-Ji Temple may expand its governance and cooperation network with other member temples in Taiwan and in other countries. In recent years, Hui-Ji Temple has connected with other member temples in North Taiwan and those in other countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar by holding annual member meetings. Thus, both local (Pattsiran) and cross-boundary religious groups are included in Hui-Ji Temple's comprehensive governance network.

Decision-making processes require more transparency and openness. As in other traditional religious organizations with longstanding histories in Taiwan, local elites and clan leaders are the decision makers of Hui-Ji Temple. The Japanese colonial government gave local elites a certain level of autonomy in temple management. In the 1950s, the ruling KMT regime established the management committee as the main decision-making authority of traditional Taiwanese religious organizations. Most committees are held by local elites and clan leaders. The traditional decision making style has not change considerably. With the rapid growth of urbanization, the power of traditional local clans in local religious affairs has declined. Some temples invite scholars and volunteers to join in temple management affairs to attract new ideas and management styles. In 1997, the Dalongdong Baoan Temple committee invited prominent anthropology scholars such as

Lin Mei-Jung to collect and analyze the historical, traditional, cultural, and medical documents stored in Baoan Temple. Temple staff, scholars, and volunteers have become the core of Baoan Temple’s decision making process (Hsieh, 2008). Hui-Ji Temple committee has also recruited people from the young generation as staff in temple management. Since the Japanese occupation, local politicians began to participate in religious affairs. The line between politics (Caesar) and religion (God) is vague. Politicians would like to expand their influence on religious organizations. However, management committee members must still be elected by current members. People who do not have support from committee members have little chance of joining the committee and participating in the decision-making process of the temple. Such an institutional design ensures that the traditional local elites maintain an influence in temple management and weakens the transparency and openness of the decision-making process.

The main governance functions of Hui-Ji Temple are preserving traditional religious culture, engaging in joint management of the temple with local elites, and cooperating with the public sector in local governance works. The public sector has the budgetary and legal power to affect the operation of religious organizations. However, when the public sector requires help, temples are typically willing to assist. Hui-Ji Temple committee’s cooperation with the Taipei City Government in providing red envelopes and winter aid distribution are good examples of how it has become a critical governance partner with the City Government. Figure 1 presents Hui-Ji Temple’s governance network, in which the City Government, Shilin District Office, Kaizhang Shengwang Temple Fellowship, village leaders, and other temples in Pattisiran are included.

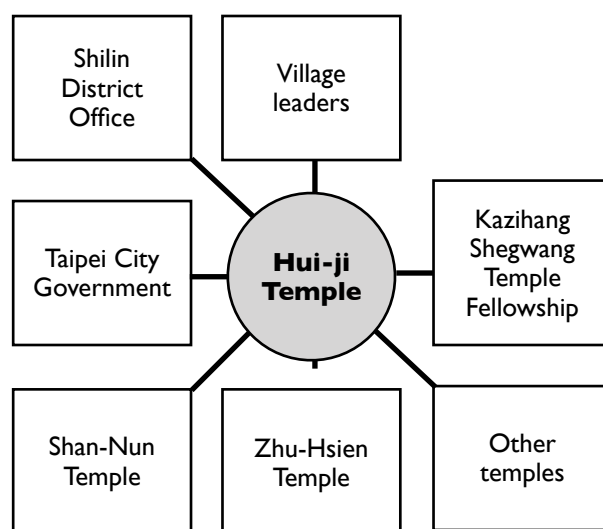


Figure 1: Hui-Ji Temple’s governance network.

Maintaining a high-performing operation and achieving transformation have become critical challenges facing traditional Taiwanese religious organizations. Traditional Taiwanese religious beliefs were created from the linkage between society and temples. Traditional religious organizations sprung from the social need to worship deities of the land and harvest. Despite the distinction between the sacred and the secular, most traditional Taiwanese temples also acted as political centers during the Chin Dynasty. The rapid growth of urbanization has brought changes and challenges to local Taiwanese temples. Having fewer followers has forced temples to adopt transformational methods to maintain daily operations to survive. Survival competitions between temples result in large temples becoming larger by annexing small temples. Temples with fewer resources must choose between being merged into large temples or closing down. Decades ago, Hui-Ji Temple was as popular as Dalongdong Baoan Temple. Through a successful transformation in management and marketing, Dalongdong Baoan Temple has become one of the largest traditional religious organizations in Taiwan today. Retaining the local community's support is a critical mission for Hui-Ji Temple to survive.

A new crisis has occurred within temple management. To gain more social and political resources, self-interested politicians and local gang members seek election as new temple management committee members. This phenomenon may bring challenges or crises to the temple. Temples must adopt stricter criteria, such as safety checks to prevent local gang members or those who have close relationships with them from joining management committees. Several temple committees have enacted more rules to regulate their activities, such as only joining local religious festivals. A lack of strong leadership also may weaken the local community's support for the temple. Conflict between the old and new generations within the management committee threatens the trust among all committee members, including members who represent the local community and public sector. When the management committee has unfavorable linkages with local communities and the public sector, the temple gains less support and brings a crisis to temple management.

Strong identification with the temple is necessary to attract more qualified people to join its management. In the past, people joined temple activities to satisfy mental needs and to identify with deities. With the rapid growth of urbanization, more newcomers who may not easily develop a local identification have less motivation to join in temple activities. If the temple cannot attract these newcomers, its daily operation will be threatened. Many traditional Taiwanese temple staff members are of the older generation and may have an information gap regarding computer, smartphone, and social media use for

marketing. Furthermore, some temple staff members have limited ability to write grant proposals to apply for governmental funding. Some temple committees may ask staff members to receive lower payment as their “dedication” to the god. Thus, few from the young generation are willing to serve in traditional Taiwanese religious organizations. Methods to enhance payment and benefits for temple staff are key to attracting more talented and skilled people to join temple management teams and help such temple personnel solve problems, such as losing followers and maintaining community support.

Resolving conflicts between traditional culture and modern policy is a key factor in maintaining governance networks. In recent years, several government policies have resulted in conflicts within the temple governance networks. In 2017, a news report revealed that the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) in Taiwan asked all temple committees to reduce the number of incense burners to reduce air pollution. This aroused wide concern regarding the balance between different values (religious need vs environmental protection). Several temple committees decided to organize a street protest against this new policy. After both the EPA and the Executive Yuan (Taiwanese Cabinet) speakers promised that this policy would not force the temples to remove all burners, the angry temple representatives finally cancelled their upcoming protest (Lin, 2017). According to temple staff, most temples in Taipei City follow environment protection policies to reduce incense burning or use “green burners,” which help reduce smoke from religious activities. In fact, the level of air pollution resulting from incense burning is very low, and incense burning is indispensable in Taiwanese folklore and traditional culture. Banning incense burning in Taiwanese temples is thus as impractical as forbidding candle burning in Catholic churches. Furthermore, the Taipei City Government asked all temple committees to send all incense and joss paper (Taiwanese people burn incense and joss paper to worship the gods and the souls of ancestors) to the City Incinerator, which is equipped with modern technology to reduce air pollution. However, the collected items (incense and joss paper) were sent to incinerators used for trash or polluted waste burning. This aroused wide criticism against the City Government as a sacrilege against the gods and ancestors. This inappropriate policy worsened the conflict between the public sector and temples and threatened their cooperative relationship within the governance network.

Conclusion

We sought to understand how traditional Taiwanese religious organizations interact with the public sector and communities by observing the local religious governance

network created by Hui-Ji Temple. Most traditional Taiwanese temples are managed by local gentry or rich merchants to facilitate communication between the temple and government and (human or financial) resource gathering. Acting as temple managers also helps the local gentry to accumulate social capital (Hsieh, 2008). With rapid urban modernisation, many temples have adopted collective leadership based on having a management committee as a governing mechanism. The local gentry and rich merchants have been replaced by village leaders and senior community leaders as committee members. However, much of the membership structure of temple management committees (such as Hui-Ji Temple) still has a high level of closeness and localisation. Decision-making is typically based on the consensus among all committee members to facilitate cooperation. Such a management style helps the stability of the temple's daily operation but lacks innovation and vitality.

From a power construction perspective, local gentry and government officials joining in local traditional religious activities may help to strengthen their power over local communities (Chen, 2001). From a governance perspective, a cooperation network is created based on the fair relationship between critical actors (the public sector, the temple, and residents). All actors cooperate to facilitate local governance based on mutual trust within the network. Hui-Ji Temple voluntarily reducing its incense burning to fit with the environmental protection policy is a good example of how the cooperation network works. In election years, many mayors, council members, and village chief candidates are willing to participate in or sponsor critical local religious activities to attract more voters. In Taiwanese local elections, politicians from various local factions may discuss with one another to decide on the candidate under the "witness" of local deities. Thus, the temple has a critical role in the stability of local politics and society. A reciprocal relationship between the public sector or local politicians, temple committees, and residents helps temples to gain more resources and the public sector and local politicians to gain more support. A purely religious relationship between the temple and residents helps the temple to allocate local resources and satisfy residents' needs for spiritual comfort.

The local religious governance network created by Hui-Ji Temple highly values the importance of harmony and stability. The temple offers traditional religious and spiritual services (by conducting worship), and the residents join in the temple's activity and offer donations to the temple. The local government bears responsibility for overseeing the management and operation of the temple and offers financial subsidies to gain the temple committee's support in local governance works. The temple has become a powerful arena in local elections for candidates to win local support. Temple committees are will-

ing to create good interactions with local politicians to facilitate resource gathering. Thus, both the public sector and local politicians have become critical actors in a temple's governance network today. With the growth and consolidation of the temple's governance network, the temple will attain a more stable operation and manage to accommodate the rapid changes within the modern metropolitan city. How to cope with the new challenges brought by the changing environment relies on the temple's ability to use its social capital better. Enhancing the governing structure's openness to encourage innovation and positivity is key for the temple committee to pursue its sustainable development.

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Povzetek

Namen študije je razumeti, kako tajvanska tradicionalna verska politika ustvarja lokalno omrežje verskega upravljanja, v kateri so verska organizacija (tista templja Hui-Ji), lokalni prebivalci in vladni uradniki povezani z izvajanjem verskih obredov in storitev v mestu Taipei. Z neposrednim opazovanjem in intervjuji s kritičnimi udeleženci omrežja ugotavljamo, da takšno omrežje upravljanja res pomaga templju Hui-Ji ohraniti tradicionalno tajvansko kulturo in se ustrezno odzvati na izzive, ki jih prinašata urbanizacija in modernizacija. Vendar pa ta raziskava kaže, tudi, da bi bilo treba vnesti več preglednosti v postopek zaposlovanja odbora za upravljanje templja, da bi imeli več novih idej in sodobnih vodstvenih veščin pri upravljanju organizacije in odzivanju na družbene potrebe.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: tradicionalna tajvanska vera, mesto Taipei, tempelj Hui-Ji, verska politika

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