Part III

Religion and Nationalism in Taiwan and Hong Kong
12 Religion and National Identity in Taiwan

State Formation and Moral Sensibilities

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Abstract
We propose in this chapter that the relationship between religion and nationalism in Taiwan has been mediated by two developments that pull in different directions. The first is state formation, which has erected barriers between religion and national identity. The second is a search for culturally authentic expressions of modernity, which has shaped both religion and nationalism in Taiwan, infusing them with a shared sensibility. The emergence of religious movements sharing important affinities with nationalism has reinforced the cultural sources of nationalist politics, but also motivated more direct forms of engagement with this politics. This is because the forms of religion that display this modernist sensibility tend to be this-worldly in their focus, and politically engaged.

Keywords: Religion, nationalism, Taiwan, Buddhism, Christianity

Introduction

Issues of identity and nationhood have combined as a pervasive organizing theme in democratic politics in Taiwan since the end of authoritarian rule. Political divisions have revolved around the question of whether the people of Taiwan, linked by co-residence or shared sociocultural characteristics, constitute a nation distinct from the Chinese nation. The rise of identity politics in Taiwan has also coincided with a newly vigorous religious scene, the main beneficiaries of which have been the reformed Buddhist sects, Daoism, Christianity, and popular religion. This chapter aims to explore the relationship between religion and processes of national identity formation in Taiwan.

Any account of how religion has intersected with nationalism in Taiwan must begin with an account of the sources of nationalist sentiment on the island and the location of political struggle over national identity. Some
have suggested that nationalism has arisen within civil society in the post-democratization era to fill a relative void created by the weakness of the Taiwanese state: its retreat from society domestically, its ambivalent political situation in relation to the mainland, and its lack of recognition internationally. The state, in this view, has been incapable or unwilling to sustain a national project, and the retreat of the state has created space for new forms of identity politics or the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism. Religion, as a body of cultural practices that preexisted the development of the state, has once again adapted to become an important site for the construction of identity, with Taiwan's unique political situation and lack of full statehood giving it an importance that it otherwise would not have had. On this account, Taiwanese nationalism is formed in the social space occupied by religious groups and other non-state actors, suggesting that religious movements are in a powerful position to foster an ‘ecumenical nationalism’ (as Richard Madsen predicts) or cut across any attempt to foster a monolithic Taiwanese identity (as Robert Weller expects).

In this chapter, we propose that the relationship between religion and nationalism in Taiwan is considerably more complex than the above account suggests because it is not only mediated by the loosely regulated processes of social negotiation in civil society, but also by the more restricted and tightly regulated processes associated with government and state formation. Whereas Madsen and Weller both suggest that nationalism in Taiwan is a post-democratization, civil society phenomenon arising recently in opposition to the faltering KMT-led project of state formation in Taiwan, we argue that the common ‘high culture’ promoted as an important tool in this state formation project was crucial to the later emergence of a Taiwanese national identity. Furthermore, the importance of the state as the protector and promoter of a shared national culture in modern societies suggests that the state and its institutions will remain an important battleground in the struggle to define the content of national identity on the island. Thus even if the retreat of the state and the development of civil society have undoubtedly created new opportunities for the social negotiation of national identity, it is also important to understand the relationship between religion-led and state-led processes of nation-building.

1 Weller (1987; 2000a; 2000b); Madsen (2007).
3 Madsen points to the KMTs opposition to Taiwanese nationalism, and its view of Taiwan as little more than a launchpad for the recovery of political control in China (2007, p. 11). Weller similarly suggests that ‘[i]n a world organized by nation-states, Taiwan falls between all the boundaries’ (2000, p. 479).
We argue that these statist nation-building processes have, as a functional by-product, tended to separate religion from the sphere of politics and the state, and by extension inhibit religious involvement in the politics of national identity. At the same time, however, this differentiation of the religious and the political is never complete. The boundary between the sacred and the secular is frequently transgressed and redrawn by both political and religious actors on the surface level of public politics. Beyond this surface level, though, there is also a deeper discursive level at which the evolution of religion in Taiwan has been shaped by a distinctively modern moral sensibility, a concern with culturally authentic modernization, that has also been crucial in animating the politics of nationhood in Taiwan. This moral sensibility provides a mutually energizing point of contact between religion and nationalism on the island, but it also motivates a closer religious engagement with the politics of national identity.

The argument proceeds in four stages. In the following section, we provide an account of national identity formation in Taiwan as driven by both state formation processes and a moral concern with culturally authentic modernization. In the next section, we argue that the former process tended to separate religion from processes of national formation through differentiating the religious and political spheres, whereas the latter phenomena cut across these boundaries, creating affinities of moral sensibility and motivating greater religious engagement with the politics of nationhood. In the final sections, we illustrate our argument with a comparative discussion of the Fuguangshan Buddhist Order (佛光山, FGS), and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), both of which have been actively concerned with the identity and political status of Taiwan.

The development of national identity politics in Taiwan

Ernest Gellner argued that nationalism can be viewed as a functional requirement of industrializing economies in modernity. A nation is not given in nature, or an intrinsic component of the human condition; but neither is it a historical accident or the contingent ideological invention of European thinkers. It is instead rooted in the structural requirements of a very particular kind of society. Specifically, it is an effect of efforts to create the educated workforce sharing a common means of communication that is vital for an industrial society. Economic growth in such a society is
dependent on a mobile population whose members are able to communicate easily with one another, and this in turn demands a single culture and common medium of communication. Only with a homogenous culture can people in a particular society do business with one another across boundaries of family, ethnic group, region, and so on. The development of such common cultures over large geographical areas depended on the emergence of large and well-centralized states. The need for uniformity, and the magnitude of project, mean that the task of inculcating this shared culture can no longer be left to institutions such as the family and religious groups that had passed on high, literate cultures in premodern times. In modernity, the state therefore developed as provider and protector of the shared culture. The primary means through which ever-larger sections of the population are inculcated into the common high culture is the creation of mass public education systems, and to a lesser extent the promotion of a common language.

The universalization of the high culture within the state, transmitted by a national schooling system rather than through local and regional folk traditions, erodes the distinctive cultures of subnational communities. This makes the state increasingly dependent on the inculcation of a strong and homogenous shared culture to provide social cohesion and moral policing that had previously been supplied by more local forms of community. As a shared national culture begins to pervade the entire population and subgroupings are eroded, it also becomes natural to identify the shared national culture as the primary locus of political legitimacy. It is therefore in this social context that we see the formation of nationalism, understood by Gellner as the belief that the political boundaries of the state and the cultural boundaries of the nation should align. Gellner writes that

> When general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify. The cultures now seem to be the natural repositories of political legitimacy. Only then does it come to appear that any defiance of their boundaries by political units constitutes a scandal.5 (emphasis in original)

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One implication of Gellner’s argument here is that ‘nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist’.6 In other words, it is not nations that engender nationalism; rather, it is nationalism that invents nations.7 It is in the context of efforts to make political boundaries align with the boundaries of a linguistic or cultural unit that particular nations are invented as ethno-linguistic unities with a shared history and a set of folk traditions. The nation, as a coherent cultural unity, does not preexist nationalist projects to win political autonomy and the right of self-determination for a people. While nationalisms claim the warrant of the preexisting folk cultures they claim to be defending and revitalizing, they use these cultures selectively, transform them radically, and often invent entirely new traditions. They may be assembled from elements of dormant, oppressed or threatened low cultures, but rather than reviving these cultures they replace them with a high culture adapted for impersonal, industrial-bureaucratic societies, even if it claims continuity with local folk traditions. National identities are often given content by a process of arbitrary selection and invention, but the nationalism that drives this process is rooted in deep structural requirements of modern societies.

Gellner’s account has been criticized for tying nationalism to state formation and industrialization. This means it has trouble accounting for nationalisms that developed before industrialization, and those that lack the aspirations to statehood that Gellner takes as definitive of the phenomenon.8 Neither of these criticisms apply in the case of Taiwan, however. Here Gellner’s account provides a useful interpretive framework that points to two important aspects of the development of nationalism in Taiwan.

Firstly, Gellner’s understanding of nationalisms as modern ‘high cultures’ that appropriate and selectively reconstruct elements of the folk cultures they putatively defend directs our attention to the ways in projects of national identity in Taiwan have never been the political expression of preexisting national units. Rather, they represent attempts to distill centralized, homogenous, and universal island-wide cultures from the extremely complex patchwork of locally sustained ethnic, regional, linguistic, and

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8 Anthony D. Smith points to Serbia, Finland, Ireland, Mexico, Japan, and West African states as examples of preindustrial nationalism (1998, p. 36); Charles Taylor argues that early expressions of nationalism in Quebec promoted non-state institutions rather than seeking a statist outlet (2011, p. 85).
religious cultures that have shaped Taiwan's history. In this first respect, then, Gellner's work draws our attention to the arbitrary content of national-identity projects in Taiwan, and their contingent and often distant relation to their source material.

In another respect, however, Gellner's theory suggests that the development of nationalism in Taiwan is intimately connected to state-building, and has deeper roots than a focus on recent articulations of Taiwanese national identity alone would suggest. Specifically, it highlights the significance of intensive efforts by the KMT government to inculcate a shared national culture through centralized education, language, and cultural policies after it retreated to Taiwan in 1949. While the emergence of a distinctively Taiwanese national identity is a much more recent development, taking Gellner's account seriously suggests that earlier KMT-led processes of state and national culture formation around a certain conception of Chinese-ness were crucial preconditions of the later emergence of Taiwanese national consciousness. The content of specific accounts of what it means to be Chinese and Taiwanese may be arbitrary and highly selective, but the movement towards nationalism-in-general is deeply rooted in functional requirements that follow from state-building and industrialization.

This combination of contingency and structure can be seen in the process through which a complex range of ethnicities and identities, and have increasingly been reduced to a simple set of alternatives: Taiwanese and Chinese, understood as mutually exclusive. When people in Taiwan now refer to the Taiwanese, they exclude people in mainland China from this identity. It was not always so; at times Taiwanese and Chinese have been compatible or even complementary categories. Both terms have historically meant different things to different people, connoting a variety of elements such as ethnic origin, language, culture, residency, citizenship, identification, and so on. The specific meanings of Taiwanese-ness and its significance vary, vertically across time, and horizontally across individuals and ethnic groups. The present constellation of meanings, in which Taiwanese refers to a national rather than an ethnic or provincial identity, has emerged since the 1990s and been enforced under Ma Yingjiu administration's forceful push to link up with China despite societal resistance to it, which represents both an expansion and a simplification of the category relative to earlier usage.

The difficulty of the identity question in Taiwan is partly a legacy of the island's complex history of occupation and settlement. The earliest Han settlers from China in the fourteenth century encountered an island already occupied by aborigines. After brief periods of Spanish and Dutch rule in the seventeenth century, the island fell under the control of the
Qing Dynasty, under which large numbers of Han Chinese from the coastal provinces migrated to the island. Taiwan became a colony of Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, until it once again became a province of China in 1945 following Japan’s defeat in the World War II. Four years later, the KMT relocated the capital of the Republic of China to Taipei when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gained ascendancy in mainland China.

The complexity of Taiwan’s history is reflected in its ethnic makeup. It has frequently been said since the 1990s that Taiwan has four ethnic groups: the Hokkien, Hakka, Aboriginal people, and Mainlanders. None of these four ethnic groups formed naturally, however; they are all socially constructed. The aboriginal people are Taiwan’s first inhabitants. Although they are discussed as a single group of people, the Aboriginals are in fact composed of at least nine tribes. Each tribe has its own language, custom, and kinship, and there was no common language among the aboriginals. The Aboriginals compose only 1.7 percent of the population of Taiwan. The Hokkien people (福建人), who constitute more than 73 percent of the population, are people whose ancestors were from southern Fujian and immigrated to Taiwan from the seventeenth century until the inception of Japanese colonization. The Hokkien ethnic group is not a perennial and homogeneous ethnicity either. Although they all came from southern Fujian, their language, customs, and culture diverged greatly among them since the region is mountainous. The Hakka people (客家人), making up 12 percent of the population, is a distinct ethnic group in China who has their own cultural identity, language, and customs. The Hakka immigrants in Taiwan came from different parts of China, mainly southern Fujian and northern Guangdong. ‘The Mainlanders’ is the label used by the native Taiwanese to describe ethnic Chinese who settled in Taiwan with Jiang Jieshi’s KMT regime after 1945, and their descendants. However, there was no shared identity among those who immigrated at that time, as they came from different parts of China. Not until the early 1990s did the Mainlanders form a collective identity and become a ‘singular’ and ‘unitary’ ethnic group. This group of people now makes up around 13 percent of the population.

Due to the complexity of its history and ethnicity, the connotations of the term ‘Taiwanese’ (taiwanren 臺灣人) differs across different historical periods. What it meant to be a Taiwanese in the nineteenth century is

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10 Tribes, for example, used the Japanese language to communicate with one another under Japanese rule.
different from what it meant in the twentieth century, and in the 1970s it was different from the 1990s. For instance, during the Japanese colonial period, the term ‘taiwanjin’ (臺灣人, lit., ‘Taiwanese’ in the Japanese language) was synonymous with the Japanese term ‘hontojin’ (本島人, lit., the islander) in Taiwan, in contrast to another Japanese term ‘naichijin’ (內地人, lit., people from Japan proper). While the term ‘hontojin’ referred to Aboriginals, Hokkien and Hakkas, ‘naichijin’ indicated the Japanese residents in Taiwan. At this time, there was no opposition between the categories of Chinese and Taiwanese. In his account of the political movement for a Taiwanese parliament during the Japanese occupation, the historian Wang Xiaopo (王曉波) argues that the elites leading the campaign shared a consciousness of a common Han-Chinese identity that looked to the mainland, rather than any emergent sense of Taiwanese-ness.\(^\text{12}\)

When it retreated to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT sought to integrate Taiwan into the modernizing Chinese nationalist project it had been pursuing on the mainland. This was initially a top-down, state-led project that focused on the creation of a nation through the generalization of standard Mandarin as the language of everyday and official communication, and the promotion of Confucian traditions of mainland elites as a shared culture of national unification, consistent with the KMT’s position that Taiwan was an integral part of China. The term ‘Taiwanese’ became a regional or provincial affiliation. It was by then interchangeable with another Chinese term benshengren 本省人 (lit., people from within Taiwan Province), which referred to those Han-Chinese whose ancestors came to Taiwan before the colonization by Japan: Hokkien and Hakkas.\(^\text{13}\) The term was used in contrast to another term waishenren 外省人 (lit., people from outside the province), which refers to the Mainlanders.\(^\text{14}\)

This nation-building process reached its high-water mark with the Cultural Renaissance movement that began in the mid-1960s, a systematic program of moral and cultural education that aimed to develop a spiritual consciousness of Chinese-ness that could serve as the basis of national solidarity, and inculcate traditional values through socialization in schools, study groups, and neighborhood associations.\(^\text{15}\) Chinese culture was elevated over indigenous cultural forms, which were represented as crude

\(^{13}\) Brown (2004, pp. 9-10).
\(^{14}\) The non-Han Aboriginals simply disappeared in this schema, as if they did not exist on the island. They were neither ‘Taiwanese’ nor ‘non-Taiwanese’.
\(^{15}\) Chun (1994).
and backward, and the use of languages other than Mandarin was banned in schools and public places.

The version of ‘traditional Chinese culture’ promoted by the KMT was, in Gellner’s terms, a ‘high-culture’ invention of Chinese tradition as a conservative response to the threat of communism on the mainland, and a cultural ethos more compatible with the developing state than locally sustained folk cultures. As Chun argues, ‘the crisis of culture in postwar Taiwan was one which was predicated by the government’s attempt to nationalize Chinese culture... where no such culture (of the nation) previously existed. In concrete terms, it was driven by the perceived need to establish new foundations of spiritual consciousness, ideological rationality and moral behavior that could conform to the dictates of the modern polity or nation-state in ways that primordial notions of Chineseness could not’.16

When the term ‘Taiwanese’ changed its meaning again in the 1990s, it reflected the new context created by the KMT’s efforts to foster a shared high culture. It was now often used in Taiwan to speak of the ethnic majority, the Hokkien people,17 though this conception of the term was later, particularly after 2000, challenged by some Taiwanese politicians and scholars who have contended that ‘Taiwanese’ should incorporate ‘the Four Ethnic Groups’: the Aboriginals, Hokkien, Hakka, and Mainlander. For instance, Taiwan’s former president Li Denghui promoted a new conception of being ‘Taiwanese’ – the so-called ‘New-Era Taiwanese’ (Xinshidai Taiwanren 新時代台灣人).18 He called for the residents of the island to look upon Taiwan as their shared home, unifying together, and establishing a shared future. Anyone who identifies with his appeal can then become a Taiwanese – a ‘New-Era Taiwanese’. One could tentatively argue that this ostensibly all-inclusive discourse of ‘Taiwanese’ in effect signifies a formation of Taiwanese national identity; that is, the belief in the ‘homogeneity’ of the people residing in Taiwan and the pursuit of self-determination by all residents in Taiwan.19

By this time, ambiguity, interchangeability, and inclusiveness of these two concepts – ‘Taiwanese’ and ‘Chinese’ – had disappeared, and the people of Taiwan were accordingly compelled to ‘become’ either Taiwanese or Chinese; any other political possibilities in the middle ground or a gray area were ruled out. China was invoked as the ‘Other’, against whose image

16 Chun (1994, p. 54).
18 ref. idem? (2005).
19 While this political rhetoric ostensibly includes all residents of Taiwan, it is not exactly all-inclusive. Some groups of people residing on the island are still excluded, e.g. foreign spouses.
the Taiwanese ‘Self’ has been redefined and reconstructed. It is plausible to argue that there is no ‘homogeneous’ Taiwan due to the complexity of Taiwan’s history and ethnicity as mentioned above, but that if such a ‘homogeneous’ Taiwan does exist, its precondition is that there is an existent China to encounter. No matter how people in Taiwan interpreted their own history, tradition and culture, the most important and fundamental task was now that of demonstrating how ‘Taiwanese-ness’ is different from ‘Chinese-ness’. The presence/absence and specter of ‘China’ is a crucial aspect of the homogenization of Taiwanese national identity. China in fact is economically the greatest (potential) market for Taiwan; it is historically the source of its ethnicity, culture, and languages; it is politically a contestant or enemy; and it’s one of Taiwan’s deepest and most recurring images of ‘the Other’. China, as Taiwan’s contrasting image, has helped the Taiwanese to define what Taiwan is itself. In this sense, ‘China’ is not simply a physical site but a discursive space in which different forms of homogeneity, solidarity, affinity, and identity are constructed and contested. Indeed, when the Taiwanese people think of themselves as a people, they nowadays do so in contradistinction to the Chinese people; China is their main object of alienation/disassociation. The polarization of identities in Taiwan has been exacerbated by the rise of the politics of identity since the 1970s, and has become especially intense since democratization. Nevertheless, language, culture, and identity have been a consistent theme in Taiwanese politics at least since the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949. The emergence of a national Taiwanese identity defined in opposition to Chinese identity was made possible by the KMT’s earlier state-building project, and specifically, by its attempt to stimulate national solidarity and loyal patriotism through the creation of an island-wide national culture in Taiwan.

The sinicization policies were relaxed in the 1980s, with growing recognition and promotion of indigenous culture within a policy that was still oriented towards China overall. The reorientation towards Taiwan and indigenous culture gathered pace with the end of martial law and the beginning of democratization. A series of changes exemplified the new movement towards a national consciousness centered on Taiwan: most notably, the more inclusive rhetoric of the KMT under Li Denghui, and a liberalization of the education system introduced in 1968 at the height of the Cultural Renaissance, involving a revision of textbooks to increase representation of indigenous heritage. The KMT’s effort to reorient national culture towards Taiwan, without giving up the cultural connection with China, was then

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challenged by the more radical discourse promoted by its main rival the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), in which the distinctiveness of Taiwan in relation to China has been emphasized much more strongly.

The outcome has been the emergence of a de-sinicization/anti-China movement in Taiwan that seeks to define Taiwanese national identity and culture as opposed to Chinese, and opposes any move perceived as threatening the fragile autonomy of the emergent national community. This anti-China sentiment was further fortified under the President Ma Yingjiu administration from 2008 to 2016, a period which saw the warming of cross-Strait relations and close political ties and economic integration between PRC and Taiwan. There were a number of social movements during Ma’s presidency, wherein the participants – many of them overlapping – explicitly protested against Ma’s policy and disagreed with Taiwan’s closer relationship with China. Those events include: (1) the Wild Strawberries Movement of 2008, which protested the visit of Chen Yunlin 陳雲林, the chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) to Taiwan; (2) the protests against the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010; (3) demonstrations launched by the ‘Alliance Against Media Monsters’ in 2012 to oppose the Next Media buyout, in which the Hong Kongese owner of Next Media sold the Taiwan Division of the company to Wangwang China Times and its pro-China Taiwanese entrepreneur; (4) the Sunflower Movement (Taiyanghua Yundong 太陽花運動), as well as (5) Anti-Black Box Curriculum Movement which sought to implement controversial changes to textbook education. 21

The ‘Sunflower Movement’ is particularly significant as a group of Taiwanese students in March 2014 occupied Taiwan’s parliament to protest legislation of a cross-strait trade pact – or Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) – that would open Taiwan to further mainland investment. Ostensibly, Ma Yingjiu was criticized for failing to inform the public about the trade pact, and the issues of democratic governance, accountability, and public trust were at the forefront of the movement. More profoundly, the protests point to a deeper crisis as Ma sought to further integrate Taiwan’s economy with China’s. After Ma took office in 2008, he brought Taiwan closer to the mainland, signing 21 cross-strait trade agreements in the first six years of his presidency. His eventual goal was for Taiwan to participate in regional economic integration, increasing economic opportunities and cooperation with Taiwan’s primary trading partners through participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the Regional Comprehensive

Economic Partnership (RCEP). Nevertheless, Ma faced an angry backlash from voters over the improvement of the cross-Strait relationship. The Sunflower Movement demonstrated that there is a widespread fear of China among Taiwanese people, particularly the younger generation. The essence of this movement is not just about a trade agreement; it is rather about the risks of opening Taiwan to further economic and political dependence on China. Most Taiwanese who oppose the trade agreement do so mainly because they fear that such an agreement will further increase the mainland's political influence in Taiwan, thus gradually killing the independence movement in Taiwan.22

Likewise, more recently, the controversies surrounding curriculum guideline changes in 2015 channeled all of the themes that have been central to political disputes over identity in Taiwan. Taiwan's Ministry of Education under Ma's administration tried to do what it described as ‘fine-tuning’ textbooks used in the twelve-year compulsory education. Yet, this move stimulated a new wave of protests against Ma's government. Opposition groups have alleged that the High School Citizens and Society text redacted sections about the White Terror and illustrations of the 2/28 Incident, and added content relating to Chinese tradition and culture. Some extremist protest groups such as the ‘Taiwan-Centric Textbook Alliance’ have even demanded the ‘rejection of a Chinese colonial curriculum’, and the ‘creation of a Taiwan-centric curriculum’.

In its state-led and top-down nature (initially at least), the centrality of language and education as key battlegrounds, and the selective, almost arbitrary reductions of complex cultural histories into island-wide common identities, Taiwan has followed the path described by Gellner. What Gellner’s theory cannot account for in the case of Taiwan is why the KMT’s efforts to promote a high culture based on a version of Chinese traditional culture have not completely succeeded, and why increasing numbers of people have resisted assimilation into this cultural project. Why has a rival, ‘Taiwanese’ account of the shared culture of the island emerged in opposition to the ‘Chinese’ account? Gellner understands rival projects of nationalism as being generated by minority groups forced to assimilate into a high culture that is not their own, and where they face discrimination or systematic disadvantage that comes from working in a second language.23 The emergence of Taiwanese nationalism is not adequately explicable as the project of an economically and culturally excluded section of society,

22 Lin (2014); Fan (2014); Ho (2015).
however, and Gellner’s account cannot explain the sense amongst advocates of a Taiwanese national identity that asserting the distinctiveness of Taiwan is a moral imperative rather than simply a matter of material advantage.

Charles Taylor offers a way of explaining this development without falling back on assumptions about a primordial Taiwanese identity that has been frustrated and oppressed by mainland impositions.24 Taylor asks why some elites passionately resist assimilation into dominant national cultures, even when they share many of the values of these cultures, and assimilation would be the easiest option? His answer is that such resistance can be understood as driven by a desire for a locally distinctive process of modernization that builds on rather than obliterates valued local cultural traditions. Crucially though, achieving such a distinctive developmental path is more than a matter of preserving aspects of a valued folk culture; at stake is the dignity and self-worth of a people who desire recognition as the equals of other peoples.

A common elite response to modernization outside of the West has been a creative adaptation of modern Western social forms that draw on indigenous cultural resources. Modernization often engulfs and erodes traditional cultures, and where such cultures are not completely destroyed, elites have often understood their choice as being between an outright rejection of modernity, and finding resources in the traditional culture to sustain the best practices and institutions of other modern societies. This search for a culturally authentic path to modernity is driven not only by a concern to ensure the wellbeing of co-nationals while preserving familiar customs and traditions from erosion, but also by a desire for dignity and respect. Modernization has often taken place in the context of global and regional hierarchies, constituted by the presumption among members of successful and powerful societies that their way of life is superior to others they view as being in some way backward or inferior. These hierarchies are strongly evident in direct and neocolonial relationships, in which civilized is contrasted with savage, but they have come to also structure a world public sphere, in which peoples understand themselves and other societies through the categories of ‘developed’, ‘developing’, and ‘underdeveloped’. Against this background, the search for different, locally authentic forms of modernity is an assertion of equality, and a bid for recognition of this equality by dominant societies. The emotive power of nationalism, Taylor suggests, and the frequency with which themes of pride and humiliation

24 Taylor (2011, pp. 81-104).
feature in nationalist discourse, become comprehensible when nationalism is understood through this connection between modernization and dignity.

Nationalism as a search for dignity is generated by experience of modernization against the background of the generalization and universalization of modern social, political and economic forms in a world of cultural difference. It is modern in another sense, however, for Taylor argues that modernity has transformed the conditions of dignity. In a hierarchical, network society, dignity and self-worth were grounded in kinship relations, lineage, clan, and so forth. In a horizontal, direct access society, by contrast, dignity is attached to a common categorical identity that can be threatened and humiliated. Nationalism involves the assertion of a particular categorical identity as the vehicle for the dignity desired. Taylor suggests that although nationalism is often generalized as a mass movement through a defensive politics of fear directed against a putative threat represented by another community, such mass movements often have their origins in a moral aspiration to recognition of equality in difference.

In Taiwan, the felt need for political difference in the context of modernization has arisen within a complex set of relationships. The incipient Han-Chinese-Taiwanese consciousness of the Japanese colonial period sought a more locally authentic adaptation of Japanese modernity (which was itself a project concerned in part with the dignity and equal standing of Japan alongside the Western powers). The KMT state on the mainland during the Republican era took on modernizing Western ideas while promoting Confucian values as a source of social stability and unity. It continued this project in Taiwan, where the model of modernity aspired to be that of the United States, but inflected by the identity of the Chinese that had developed on the mainland in the early twentieth century, and the Confucianism of the mainland. Since the 1970s, the Mandarin-US high culture of the KMT has been increasingly challenged by the demand that Taiwan should find its own path, with a national project no longer based exclusively on the culture of the Mainlanders. The popularization of this challenge, which began as an elite discourse, was helped by the increasing divergence of Chinese and Taiwanese societies, fear of potential political domination or military threat from the PRC, and the ROC’s indeterminate political status. After the loss of its UN seat in 1971, followed by the loss of US diplomatic recognition in 1979, Taiwan has been denied by all but a few

27 Chang (2003, pp. 44 and 47).
states the recognition of statehood that is the formal condition of equality in international society.

Melissa Brown relates two anecdotal examples that illustrate some of the ways the emergent articulations of a distinct Taiwanese national identity have been bound up with these dynamics of dignity and equality. One concerns a Mainlander whose parents arrived with the nationalists in the 1940s. Brown describes how this woman recalled a visit to China in the 1980s:

After expressing shock at the standards of living, at the loss of Confucian civility and propriety in relationships, and at the apparent lack of work ethic which she found in China, she identified herself proudly as from Taiwan.

In the second anecdote, Brown describes meeting an academic in 1987 who wore a hat with a ‘MIT’ logo. She explained that the acronym, for her, stood not for the Massachusetts Institute for Technology but for ‘Made in Taiwan’. In Brown’s words,

[s]he had bought the hat on a recent visit to Boston, because she had been a student in the US during the 1960s and 1970s, when ‘Made in Taiwan’ was on so many labels [...] and Taiwan was associated with cheap products – inexpensive and not very well made. She had been ashamed to have Americans associate her with such cheap products. She said that now that Taiwan was known for its economic success, she would wear her MIT hat proudly.

These examples illustrate the hierarchies associated with modernization – China is represented as backward and regressive, while the US is a society to be caught up with. Also evident is the desire for recognition of equality by an Other who has achieved a standard of development aspired to (the US). The second informant’s experiences of shame and pride, meanwhile, illustrate individual self-worth at stake in these relationships.28

We have proposed here an account of nationalist politics in Taiwan as arising out of two processes: a state-building and modernization process initiated by the KMT government, and a felt need for culturally authentic forms of modernity. While the former created and consolidated the space of shared universal high culture that is crucial for the development of

nationalist projects in general, the content of this shared culture has been shaped by a desire for dignity and equality in the context of Taiwan's evolving social and political relationship with the mainland, and international isolation. This account of the forces shaping successive phases of identity politics in Taiwan provides a framework for understanding how religious movements have engaged with the politics of national identity. In the next section, we will argue that the former process tended to separate religion from the politics of national identity, while the latter pushed in the opposite direction, motivating greater religious involvement in the politics of nationhood and increasing the wider public appeal of such involvement. In the final two sections, we will illustrate the argument by showing how the Buddhist Fuguangshan Order and the Christian Presbyterian Church in Taiwan have interpreted and responded to these constraints and influences in different ways conditioned by their own traditions of belief and practice.

Religion and the politics of national identity

Gellner conceived the rise of nationalism as an essentially secular phenomenon, in origins and nature. Like other modernization theorists, he tended to view nationalism as a replacement for religious modes of identity and community that had been eroded by the social changes associated with modernity, and religion tended to become socially marginal rather than adapting to a role in the new social forms. The rise of nationalism was a movement away from the cultural politics of agrarian societies, in which a shared high culture was maintained by religious institutions with power and authority extending over a patchwork of folk cultures and political units. The new nationalist culture required by industrializing economies could not be grounded in religion, for two reasons. Firstly, the dogmas of religion could not supply the level of sophistication required by a shared culture. And secondly, the protection and maintenance of this culture required a powerful state actively involved in society, rather than the relatively weak religious institutions that merely overlaid society.

Following this perspective, it might be supposed that religion is only relevant to understanding nationalist politics in Taiwan as the substance of what preceded it – a cultural form that has been displaced in its public significance by the rise of a new, state-supported mode of social belonging.

Modernization in Taiwan, as elsewhere, has not been associated with a decline in religion though. Neither industrialization, state-building nor the emergence of nationalist projects have been associated with a collapse of religiosity or a decline in the social significance of religious institutions. Nationalism is significant as a secularizing movement in another respect, though. In Taiwan as in many other countries, the rise of a national imaginary as the focus for societal unity has a differentiating effect, separating politics and religion by defining citizenship as belonging to a separate realm of life with its own identity. As Charles Taylor points out, modern democratic states are horizontal, direct-access societies, which have a functional need for a shared identity. Citizens no longer stand in hierarchical relationships through which their access to the state is mediated; they stand as individuals, participating as equals in the public sphere, the market economy, and the state. Individual identity is no longer defined in networked terms, by a person’s standing in a certain set of hierarchical relationships, but in categorical terms: identification with a set of impersonal entities, such as nations, ethnic groups, races, religions, or humanity in general. Social groupings began to be imagined as ‘sets of equivalent persons’, rather than ‘webs of relationships among persons or hierarchies of positions’. This direct-access social imaginary is given political form in the modern state. Membership of these states cannot be mediated by membership of a religious community. Modern, and especially democratic states, depend for their survival and legitimacy on the mobilization of a committed citizenry who identify strongly with the polity, prioritizing their identity as citizens and thus their allegiance to the state before all other communities. In this context, appeal to a categorical national identity is an obvious way to unite a country, but it has the further effect of downgrading the public importance of identities – such as religious identities – that divide societies into subgroups.

In Taiwan, therefore, as elsewhere in Asia, modes of pious belief and practice that had formerly been deeply embedded in social, political, and economic life were detached to create a new religious realm that would be formally insulated from education, welfare, business, and politics. An

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31 For influential critiques of models positing linear connections between modernization and secularization, see Casanova (1994); Berger (1999); Taylor (2007). For a recent defense of secularization theory, see Bruce (2002).
32 Taylor (2011, pp. 81-104).
important facet of this process was the extension of official recognition to significant religious traditions, a recognition that comes with autonomy, the protection of freedom to practice religion, and even permission for a more public role – in the provision of welfare, for example – within prescribed limits.

The differentiation of religion from other spheres of life is both enabling and constraining. It provides some measure of protection against state interference, but it also limits the political role that religious movements can legitimately take on. However, taking nationalism as a secular political form detached from religion risks neglect of the ways in which the boundaries of religion and nationalism are permeable and frequently breached from both sides. The differentiation of religion is never complete, for two reasons.

The first is that religion is often the object of secular regulation, to undermine or reform aspects or forms of religion viewed as incompatible with national culture. An important part of the Nationalist regime’s government of religion during the martial law period was the creation of large umbrella associations that could unify religious organizations belonging to particular traditions into manageable, state-regulated organizations. The Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC), for example, represented Buddhist groups to the government, and made it easier for the government to regulate and monitor them. It was one of many associations representing interest groups in the Nationalist state, and they were all expected to act as conduits for communications between their members and the government, mobilize political support for the regime, and help the government to implement its policies. During the early years of the martial law period, the KMT’s concerns about espionage and infiltration by Communist agents led to the surveillance and infiltration of groups considered potentially seditious on account of socialist or pacifist leanings, as well as restrictions on the form religious organizations could take, and limitation of the power of temples. Indigenous Taiwanese religion came under particular suspicion as being incompatible with modernization and sinicization projects. Until the 1980s, for example, the KMT actively tried to discourage the formation of island-wide cults that could serve as an alternative focus of cultural loyalty. During the Cultural Renaissance,

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35 This point has been forcefully argued by Talal Asad (2003; 2005) and Saba Mahmood (2006).
Nationalist government issued guidelines that aimed to rationalize local religious traditions it considered superstitious.\(^{39}\)

The second reason for not overstating the division between secular national politics and religion is that the demarcation of a distinct religious sphere has never been stable or complete. The relaxation of state control over religion from the 1970s onwards created an atmosphere of greater openness, contributing to the pluralization of the religious sphere and providing more opportunities for religious voices to be heard in public life. Added to this, many religious traditions in Taiwan have never been fully ‘religionized’, in the sense of differentiated from other spheres of life as a discrete spiritual practice with its own apolitical rationality. Many forms of religiosity have escaped the control of the state, and were never fully dis-embedded, and while others become re-embedded in everyday life.\(^{40}\) Religious rituals are often closely tied to understandings of political processes in local religious traditions, for example.\(^{41}\)

To summarize then, the boundaries between sacred and secular exercise real normative constraints on the place and role of religion, and this is especially the case in the public political sphere, but this differentiation is never complete. The significance of religion for the politics of national identity in Taiwan resides not only in the formal public interventions of organized religious groups though. It can also be found at the deeper discursive level at which secularist language of differentiation and separation becomes increasingly misleading, suggesting a greater autonomy and self-sufficiency than either religious or political discourses can possess. Religious traditions are never hermetically sealed off from contextual influences, however many modern ‘fundamentalist’ movements may believe that they can be.\(^{42}\) They are shaped and strengthened and undermined by historical processes in the societies in which they are always embedded. And nationalist imaginaries take up elements – symbols, myths, rituals, and narratives – from adjacent forms of cultural politics including religion.\(^{43}\)

Following William Connolly, these relationships need not be understood on the model of efficient causality: separating out religion and nationalism to show how one causes the other, or how they cause each other. He proposes

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40 Weller (2015, p. 15).
42 For an illustration, see Sami Zubaida’s (1982) analysis of the modern, Western categories of thought, which Khomeini’s ideas about government implicitly relied on, in spite of his desire to develop an Islamic politics untainted by Western corruptions.
43 Van der Veer (2015).
instead a model involving the mutual constitution of discursive systems and relations of affinity and resonance between their core elements that can create intensities of solidarities between different social groups.\textsuperscript{44} For Connolly, the discursive elements that resonate are not only ideas and doctrines, but also identities and sensibilities. Affinities of sensibility can create powerful political assemblages even where social constituencies differ in their religious, political, and economic doctrines and identities.\textsuperscript{45}

We want to suggest that the relationship between religion and nationalist politics in Taiwan not only should be understood in terms of the formal political interventions of religious groups, but also at a deeper level where religious discourses resonate with the moral sensibility that animates nationalist politics. Religious engagement has been mediated by the ways in which religion has been positioned and contained by the modernization and state-building processes associated with the rise of nationalism, but it has also been mediated by the same experience of the distinctive conditions of moral dignity in modernity. Experiences of shame and pride have been at the heart of many nationalist movements, but they have also shaped the evolution of religions in modernity. In some cases, the development of culturally authentic expressions of religious modernity has involved taking the ‘best’ formal elements of the rational religion of Western modernity – Christianity – and discovering resources that support the same elements in one’s own tradition, as Hindu revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj in South Asia discovered in Hinduism ‘modern’ religious forms such as a monotheistic God, foundational scriptures, and congregational worship.\textsuperscript{46} It can also take the form of adopting more general themes characteristic of modernity: a greater humanitarian concern for this-worldly wellbeing; a preoccupation with reconciling the content of the religious tradition with the conclusions of modern science; a literalist and pseudoscientific rejection of metaphor and allegory in the interpretation of scriptures and traditions; or alternatively a thorough rejection of literalism, with the content of tradition relativized as a mythical framework for the affirmation of universal human goods. Whether they involve the emulation of modern Western religious forms or reforming religion on the basis of more generic modern cultural emphases, such efforts are driven by a felt need to create modern forms of religion worthy of equal recognition and respect in themselves, and able to serve as resources for culturally authentic developments of

\textsuperscript{44} Connolly (2005, p. 870).
\textsuperscript{45} Connolly (2005, p. 871).
\textsuperscript{46} Van der Veer (2002, p. 175).
modernity more broadly. The influence of these cultural dynamics within the religious field can provide an impulse towards religious engagement with nationalist politics grounded in a similar sensibility, and serve as echoes and repositories of moral experience that provide a subtle reinforcement of nationalist politics in the wider society.

In the next two sections, we propose that these moral sensibilities are evident in the humanistic Buddhism of FGS and the Asian Christianity of the PCT respectively, creating a reservoir of moral impulses that motivate engagement with the politics of national identity in Taiwan, and strengthen this politics through cultivating in their members moral sensibilities that resonate with the moral sources of this politics of nationhood. At the same time, however, the formal and explicit engagement of these groups in this politics has been constrained by the boundaries between sacred and secular that are a by-product of modern state-formation. Yet each group interpreted and responded to these constraints and influences in different ways conditioned by their own traditions of belief and practice.

Foguangshan

FGS is one of the most prominent Buddhist organizations in Taiwan. It has played an important role in the revival of Buddhism on the island, and has expanded to establish more than 200 branch temples around the world.47 FGS’s charismatic founder Xingyun 星雲 was born in Southern Jiangsu, and arrived in Taiwan with the Nationalist forces at the end of the civil war. He teaches a form of Buddhism with roots in the humanistic Buddhism developed in China by the monk Taixu in the early twentieth century. Humanistic Buddhism was a modernist reformulation of traditional Buddhist doctrine as a response to the influence of modernization and Westernization in China. Major themes in this reform have included: a greater concern with this-worldly wellbeing and the improvement of society; a narrative of Chinese Buddhism as having been in decline, overly focused on other-worldly rebirth, and weighed down with superstitious accretions; and finally, greater emphasis on lay involvement.48 Taixu and other reformers saw such changes as necessary not only to revitalize Buddhism to position it as a necessary response to the social and spiritual challenges of the twentieth century but also saw as a way to strengthen Chinese culture and

47 Fo Guang Shan Monastery (2013).
society against the threat presented by foreign encroachment in China. Taixu sought to reform Chinese Buddhism away from a concern with the dead, ritual, and preparation for rebirth in a supra-mundane pure land, a realm in which unhindered study of the Buddhist dharma is possible. Buddhism was instead refocused on the living, and efforts to transform the human world into a mundane pure land.

These themes and emphases are all present in Foguangshan. Xingyun has sought to strengthen Chinese culture against the countervailing influences of Western modernity and globalization. While Western (US) presence in Taiwan has provided welcome protection from Communist domination, the popularity of Foguangshan and other humanistic Buddhist movements such as Ciji Charity Association (Ciji Gongde Hui 慈濟功德會) reflect an ambivalence about the cultural implications of this influence. Humanistic Buddhism combines what are believed to be the modern ideals of the West, such as this-worldly humanism, science, and a democratic elevation of ‘ordinary life’, with the traditional virtues and roles associated with Confucian notions of morality and human relationships. They provide a way for Taiwanese devotees to creatively adapt important facets of modernity in a non-Western, locally authentic way that can ground a claim for cultural equality.

The humanistic Buddhist concern with establishing a pure land in the human world tends to blur the boundaries between supra-mundane and mundane and between sacred and profane. In this, it extends the Buddhist idea of the interpenetration of all things to relativize boundaries between private life, civil society, and the state. Change in each is linked. This in turn has implications for practice: everyday activities such as work become legitimate, even exemplary forms of cultivation, lay, and monastic life converge, with lay members taking on a more active role in the order and monks and nuns active in society.

One expression of this is Xingyun’s commitment to involvement in public affairs. He has a ceremonial role on the KMT’s Central Advisory Committee, maintains close relations with prominent politicians, and endorses candidates during election periods. His close links with successive KMT governments and frequent appearances in the political sphere have generated a certain amount of opposition. As a Chinese monk, openly supportive of reunification, with a large following among native Taiwanese, he has been courted by the KMT as a symbol of unity and has accepted this role. He

50 Pacey (2005).
has engaged in informal diplomacy that furthered the agenda of the ROC government in cross-strait relations on a number of occasions.\footnote{Laliberté (2004, pp. 70-71).} He has positioned himself as a mediator in cross-strait relations, headed a delegation visiting the PRC in 1989, given refuge to prominent Chinese dissidents, and has been instrumental in organizing a series of World Buddhist Forums that bring Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhists together. At the second of these, in 2009, he attracted criticism among supporters of Taiwanese independence for his comments insisting that the Taiwanese are Chinese, and for expressing the hope that more cross strait exchanges, like the Forum, will encourage unification through generating a sense of commonality between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese.\footnote{Lok-sin (2009).} Recently, he returned the head of a sixth-century Buddha statue, stolen from a temple in northern China in 1996, and subsequently bought by a Taiwanese businessman and donated to Xingyun. The return was a symbolic gesture to promote good cross-strait relations as president-elect Cai Yingwen prepared to take office.\footnote{Hornby (2016).}

Xingyun’s political activities have been constrained by the normative division between the religious and the secular. Crossing the boundary opened him up to criticism from both Buddhist and secular standpoints. He has been called in derogatory terms ‘a political monk’ by critics concerned about the religious neutrality of the political sphere, as well as Buddhist critics who charge him with trivializing the sacred by his worldly activities.\footnote{Chandler (2004, pp. 104-117).} He endorsed Chen Luan 陳履安, a prominent Foguangshan supporter, in the 1996 presidential election, and the flurry of criticism that resulted has been connected with the closure to visitors of the monastery in Kaohsiung county that serves as the movement’s headquarters. The monastery had become one of Taiwan’s premier tourist attractions, drawing thousands of tourists every weekend, until Xingyun announced in 1997 that it would close to visitors other than devotees. The previous year’s political controversy is likely to have played a role in this decision, alongside a number of other economic and spiritual considerations. By recloistering the monastery, Xingyun would resacralize an important symbol of the Foguangshan movement and ward off criticism that it had strayed from its proper religious vocation.\footnote{Chandler (2004, pp. 17-24).} Xingyun’s interventions in the politics of Taiwanese identity and cross-strait relations have been constrained by his location as a religious figure.

\footnote{Laliberté (2004, pp. 70-71).} 
\footnote{Lok-sin (2009).} 
\footnote{Hornby (2016).} 
\footnote{Chandler (2004, pp. 104-117).} 
\footnote{Chandler (2004, pp. 17-24).}
Xingyun’s explicit interventions in the public sphere are not the only way in which FGS blurs the boundaries between the religious and the political. Even more significant than FGS’s forays into electoral politics have been FGS’s less high-profile educational activities. These activities are oriented towards political change, not through direct intervention in the political sphere, but through drawing political figures, and potential political figures including ordinary democratic citizens, into deeper religious commitment. This is intentional, and has its roots in Xingyun’s understanding of political change. He has argued that the proper political stance for a monk is to ‘show concern’ but without ‘interfering’. This means acting as a moral guide, endorsing candidates with the moral character necessary for political leadership, and preparing lay Buddhists for political involvement – all with the ultimate end of creating the kind of ethical society best suited to Buddhist spiritual cultivation.  

‘Personally,’ he has said, ‘I do not think that monastics should engage in any political activities. But we can cultivate lay people to be involved in politics’. This is a pragmatic rather than a merely principled stance: for Xingyun, the long-term social and political change he seeks will not come about through exerting pressure on the state to pull the levers of government on particular issues. It will rather come about through remaking individual lives in ways that alter the social and political relations they are involved in: the focus of Foguangshan is accordingly on moral, intellectual, and spiritual education, and large campaigns encouraging individuals to commit to purifying their intentions and their actions.

The values promoted in Foguangshan’s educational and spiritual outreach are those of a modern, humanistic, and this-worldly Buddhism. The ‘purification of minds’ that Xingyun regards as crucial to social and political change can be achieved through meditation, sutra recitation, retreats, and pilgrimages. There is also a strong Confucian element, however. Humanistic Buddhism is an enculturated form of Buddhism, as it belongs to the broader tradition of Chinese Buddhist practice that has always been infused with Confucian (as well as Daoist) sensibilities. While humanistic Buddhism has sought to purge Buddhism of ‘superstitious’ accretions, it has retained its Confucianized character, and this is a dimension of the tradition that Xingyun openly embraces. For Xingyun and many devotees of the order, Buddhism, and especially the Foguangshan movement, are the primary

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means through which Chinese Confucian culture is being preserved in a largely post-Confucian world.\textsuperscript{60} There are clear echoes here of the KMT government’s postwar understanding of itself as a guardian of traditional Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{61} The KMT’s appropriation of Confucian traditions was selective and symbolic though, intended to legitimize the regime and give substance to a nationalist myth of sacred origins and continuous history, and the ritual system that gave substance to Confucian values has mostly disappeared, leaving little trace of its significance in everyday life.\textsuperscript{62}

Foguangshan presents itself as the primary means through which this traditional culture is being preserved. Clerics emphasize to devotees the importance of ritual acts, in the form of Buddhist etiquette, that sanctify every aspect of daily life.\textsuperscript{63} Foguangshan also encourages state involvement in rituals, recalling the role Confucian rites formerly played in Chinese society. State officials visiting Foguangshan monasteries are received with elaborate and carefully choreographed rituals that symbolically affirm the spirit and ethos of Confucianism as the basis of Taiwanese society.\textsuperscript{64} This role, as a carrier of Confucian values, has been extended through even more public ceremonies such as the Buddha Tooth Welcoming Ceremony in 1998.\textsuperscript{65} The event marked the arrival in Taiwan of one of the three Buddha teeth still in existence, which had been given to Xingyun by a group of Tibetan Buddhists no longer able to preserve it. The tooth traveled to Taiwan in a specially chartered plane, was welcomed at the airport by a crowd of thousands, driven in a cavalcade on a specially closed highway into Taipei, and received offerings by senior government officials, acting on behalf of the ten-thousand strong crowd, at a ceremony at the Jiang Jieshi Memorial Hall. Xingyun argued that the symbolic power of the tooth meant it could play a vital role in promoting social harmony. Chandler has noted that the significance of the ceremony exceeded the symbolic power of this particular relic, as it served as a reminder of the significance of all ritualized activity and its importance for social harmony.

Foguangshan presents itself as the primary vehicle for a Buddhist-Confucian culture that should rightfully be at the center of Taiwanese public life, in the subjectivity and habits of lay devotees, and in the shared rituals of public life. In this regard, its most significant contribution to the politics

\textsuperscript{60} Chandler (2004, p. 249).
\textsuperscript{61} Laliberté (2004, p. 40).
\textsuperscript{62} Chun (1994).
\textsuperscript{63} Chandler (2004, p. 251).
\textsuperscript{64} Chandler (2004, pp. 249-250).
\textsuperscript{65} Chandler (2004, pp. 250-251).
of identity in Taiwan may be its ‘religious’ and educational outreach work. The practical embodiment of Confucian values may have been eroded in Taiwan, but the tradition itself still serves as a powerful signifier of cultural unity between Taiwan and mainland China, at a time when it seems to many Taiwanese that its long separation from the mainland has opened a gulf between the cultures and mentalities of the two societies. The program of Foguangshan resonates with many of those who want to stay in touch with their Chinese roots.\textsuperscript{66}

FGS challenges the differentiation of religion and the secularity of the shared national culture, seeking to ground it in a Buddhist-Confucian culture by involving political actors in religious education and ritual. This response, conditioned by the emphasis on this-worldly social and political outreach characteristic of humanistic Buddhism, can be contrasted with the more confrontational approach of the PCT.

**Presbyterian Church in Taiwan**

The PCT is the largest Protestant denomination in Taiwan, with almost a quarter of a million members.\textsuperscript{67} It developed out of English and Canadian missions established in the mid-nineteenth century, but Calvinism had earlier been present in Taiwan under Dutch colonial rule in the mid-seventeenth century. With the expulsion of the Dutch, Christianity withered on the island until the return of the missionaries some two centuries later. By the time the KMT took control of Taiwan in 1945, the church was largely independent of the missionaries who had founded it, but continued the combination of practical, this-worldly religion combined with social welfare, education, and medical provision that had characterized the church since the earliest days of the mission.\textsuperscript{68}

Under KMT rule, the PCT became increasingly political. Initially, conflict was generated by perceptions that aspects of the PCT’s ordinary activities threatened the KMT’s rule and state-building project. Presbyterian clergy were rounded up as part of the KMT’s crackdown on the island’s social and intellectual elites during the 2/28 incident.\textsuperscript{69} The PCT also found itself in conflict with the government over the church’s efforts to develop the

\textsuperscript{66} Chandler (2004, p. 254).
\textsuperscript{67} Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (2016).
\textsuperscript{68} Cheng (2009).
\textsuperscript{69} Rubinstein (2003, p. 215).
Romanization of local languages and dialects as a practical shortcut to biblical literacy. The translation of bibles and hymnals into Taiwanese, Hakka, and tribal languages, and the use of these languages in services, conflicted with the KMT’s policy of Mandarinization. Notwithstanding these conflicts, the PCT avoided open political engagement in the early years of KMT rule, focusing instead on church growth and welfare work.70

It was during the 1970s that the PCT came into open confrontation with the KMT regime, publishing a series of outspoken statements criticizing restrictions on religious freedom and human rights and calling for democratization and self-determination for the people of Taiwan.71 These statements were some of the earliest public attempts to reorient the KMT’s project of national consolidation towards Taiwanese autonomy. They articulated a model of political community based not on ethnicity or religion, but on shared residency in Taiwan and common commitment to living there in peace, freedom, and justice. This ideal of civic nationalism, based on the right of peoples to self-determination, was affirmed not only by the UN Charter but ordained by God.72

In 1972, the year after its initial statement, the PCT justified its intervention in political affairs with an exceptionalist argument.73 Under ordinary circumstances, the Church should not become involved in politics as in the Middle Ages, but individual Christians have a responsibility to work for the good in society and politics. The Church, as a corporate body, also has a responsibility to speak out when political authorities violate the life of the Church, or human rights and human dignity. In these circumstances though, any statement made by the Church will be a theological statement – ‘a confession of faith’ – not a political statement. Defense of human rights could also be a confession of faith, because they are given by God. The PCT thus acknowledged a boundary between religious and political affairs, but denied it was stepping over the boundary.

The image of political community that emerges from the PCT’s public statements is one in which religion and politics, and religious community and political community, are separate things. In a 1994 response to a statement by the China Christian Council, the PCT argue that ‘Christian community and national community are not equal terms’ and that ‘differences

71 Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1971); Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1975); Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1977).
72 Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1971).
73 Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1972).
in national identity should not be an obstacle to Christian solidarity'. The PCT defends what might be described as a divinely ordained autonomy of the political: political community is not the same as religious community, but certain basic political principles – rights to a homeland, self-determination, human rights, and human dignity – are gifts from God that ought to be respected and defended. This argument has been developed over time into increasingly blunt statements that the ‘the people’ who have the right of self-determination are the people of Taiwan and its islands.

The PCT may not have regarded their challenge to the KMT as political, but the government took a different view. The PCT’s advocacy of self-determination and democracy, and support for the activist movement that later became the DPP, came at a considerable cost during the martial law period. Its challenge to the KMT’s project of state-building accepted its basically secular civic nationalism and its distinctiveness from religion, while making arguments on religious grounds for reorienting it towards a project of Taiwanese nationalism.

The culturally authentic modernity of the PCT can be contrasted with that of FGS. Whereas Humanistic Buddhism reformed the religious tradition to introduce modern, Western-influenced emphases, the PCT has sought to enculturate Protestant Christianity – the paradigmatic religion of modernity – by creatively adapting it in a local idiom without sacrificing the essence of the tradition. The public statements of the PCT from the 1970s onwards can be understood as expressing the ideal of ‘contextual theology’, especially as developed by Taiwanese Presbyterian pastor Shoki Coe. This refers to the idea that theology should be open to the social, political, and religio-cultural circumstances of its construction as ‘coordinating principles’ that interact dialectically with the transcendent truths of the gospel. Theologian C.S. Song’s influential development of this idea proposed that Asian Christians should articulate an Asian theology, on the basis that God works through all cultures, and not only Western culture within which most theology has thus far been done. The PCT’s concern with the historical experience of the Taiwanese people, its identification of the people of Taiwan with that of the people of ancient Israel, and the emphasis on God’s concern for both, is in continuity with this tradition.

74 Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1994).
75 Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (1990).
76 Rubinstein (2003).
77 Wheeler (2002).
78 Lee (2005).
The overall shape of the PCT’s public engagement thus manifests a concern with developing a culturally authentic form of Christianity that reflects and responds to the Taiwanese context.

In putting that understanding into practice in its public witness, the PCT encountered the normative boundaries between the political and the religious, just as FGS had done. Rather than seeking to blur and erode these boundaries though, as FGS has through its educative and ritual activities, the PCT has accepted their basic legitimacy. Nevertheless, while it endorses the normative separation of the political and the religious, the PCT has also sought to define the boundaries between them in such a way that issues crucial to the politics of national identity and self-determination become religious issues. This puts these aspects of self-determination beyond the legitimate veto power of the state and justifies the PCT’s involvement on these topics, while also framing efforts to restrict the PCT’s interventions as being illegitimate restrictions on religious freedom.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have argued that the relationship between religion and nationalism has been mediated by two processes that pull in different directions. The process of state formation, which has tended to separate religion and national identity, and the search for culturally authentic expressions of modernity, which has tended to draw them together. We proposed that the significance of religion in relation to nationalism in Taiwan has been qualified by powerful processes of modernization and state formation which have created barriers for religious involvement in politics that remain potent, in spite of the relaxation of state controls on religion. At the same time, however, religious traditions have been shaped by the same impulses towards culturally authentic modernity that animate nationalist projects. This affinity of sensibility provides a general reinforcement of the cultural sources of nationalism, but it also arguably motivates greater religious engagement with this politics. This is partly because the moral sensibility encountered in both the religious and political communities takes on the aura of common sense, but also because modern expressions of religion tend often to be more this-worldly and socially and politically engaged.
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