

An Unbreakable Thread? Preliminary Observations on the Interaction between Chinese and Taiwanese Religious Traditions under Japanese Colonial Rule

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This paper will examine the on-going synergy between religious traditions in China and Taiwan during the modern era. While an increasing body of research is considering these phenomena in light of Cross-Straits relations since the 1980s, I will focus instead on how these traditions interacted during the late Qing and especially the Japanese colonial era, a time conventional wisdom treats as marking an abrupt break in intercommunication between Taiwan and China. Based on a broad-based approach designed to stimulate new research, rather than the in-depth investigation of a single case study, this paper will cover a wide range of religious phenomena. Apart from the realm of communal religious traditions as seen in Mazu 媽祖 pilgrimage networks and the spread of cults to deities like the Royal Lords (*wangye* 王爺), the Patriarch of the Clear Stream (Qingshui zuzhi 清水祖師), and the Revered Lord of Preserving Ceremony (Baoyi zunwang 保儀尊王), I will also consider the ways in which Cross-Strait reverberation shaped the development of so-called “institutional religions” in Taiwan, particularly via the interaction between Buddhist and Taoist specialists. Other key topics include the links between Chinese and Taiwanese “redemptive societies” (*jiushi tuanti* 救世團體), both in terms of religious leaders and the morality books (*shanshu* 善書) that formed the core of their scriptural traditions, as well as the role of millenarian beliefs in sparking uprisings like the Ta-pa-ni 噍吧哖 Incident of 1915. Taiwan’s place in the formation of modern transnational religious networks will also be considered, as will the impact of overseas Chinese and overseas Taiwanese practitioners.