

## RELIGIOUS RESPONSE TO MODERNIZATION IN TAIWAN: THE CASE OF I-KUAN TAO†

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### *Introduction: Modernization and religious change in Taiwan*

Since the middle of the last century China has been a theatre of far-reaching political, economic, social and cultural changes. The most obvious manifestation of these changes has been the revolution of 1911, sealing the end of a monarchy which had endured for more than two thousand years. But the defeat of the Manchu dynasty marked the closing of an epoch not only politically: the revolution of 1911 was also a decisive turning-point in the cultural development of China. The traditional culture which so long was the pride of every Chinese scholar underwent an almost complete reevaluation. To the revolutionary intellectuals of the first decades of the twentieth century this traditional culture was the ideological expression of the overthrown feudal system. The construction of a new society should, therefore, not be a mere change of political institutions but had to comprise the formation of a new intellectual culture as well.

The central target of this cultural-revolutionary movement was Confucianism, which was regarded as the ideological foundation of the old social system. At the same time this movement also had distinct anti-religious tendencies aimed not only at the religious components of Confucianism but at all kinds of religion, traditional Chinese as well as foreign. Religion and superstition were inconsistent with the scientific worldview which had been imported to China from Europe and America.

The critical attitude of the Chinese intellectuals towards religion was certainly one of the factors which contributed to the decline of traditional Chinese religion in the twentieth century. But there were other reasons, too. On the popular level, the arguments of the intellectuals were probably of no great significance for the religious behaviour of the common people. More important were the changes

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in the political and social structure which eroded the social base of many traditional forms of religion. This is true especially for those forms which C. K. Yang called "diffused religion"<sup>1</sup>, i.e. cults intimately connected with traditional social institutions. The best-known examples are the ancestor-worship whose social base was the traditional Chinese family, and the statecult which had its *raison d'être* in the traditional monarchy.

It is convenient to name the complex process of social, economic, political and intellectual changes which took place since the last century *modernization*. "Modernization" could then be defined as that process which leads to the formation of a new social structure and new cultural values. "New" here only means "other than traditional", it being assumed that it is sufficiently clear what "traditional social structure" and "traditional cultural values" in the case of China mean<sup>2</sup>. This definition might appear too vague and, therefore, unsatisfactory but we have to leave it this way since any attempt to define it positively seems to be doomed to failure. For modernization is essentially an open-ended process which makes it impossible to determine what the "new" social structure and the "new" cultural values will be. We have to avoid the quasi-evolutionary assumption that the transformation into a modern society necessarily produces a Western-style industrial society.

While we cannot say to which end-result the process of modernization in China will eventually lead, it is possible to name some of the elements of this process. I would like to mention only three which seem to have rather obvious consequences for traditional forms of religion: industrialization, urbanization and cultural contact. This characterization applies to Taiwan as well as to Communist China even though the degree of industrialization, urbanization and cultural contact differs widely in these two societies. It goes without saying that there are many additional elements of modernization in China, some of which are more or less confined to one of these two societies.

In what follows I deal only with the Taiwanese case, primarily because I had the opportunity to do field research there. We should observe, however, that the extent of industrialization, urbanization and cultural contact since 1949 has been much greater in Taiwan than in the People's Republic. The impact of *these* factors on religious life has therefore been stronger, too<sup>3</sup>.

It is not surprising that the thoroughgoing changes in social and

intellectual conditions which are implied by the modernizing process in Taiwan should go hand in hand with significant changes in religion. The fact that there are connections between social and religious change is too obvious to be doubted. What is less obvious are the kinds of religious changes which are connected with modernization in Taiwan. To be sure, one tendency has long been observed, i.e. secularization. Yang has given an excellent analysis of secularizing tendencies in modern China which can also be applied to Taiwan<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, it can easily be seen that the factors mentioned above do in fact undermine the social base of many traditional forms of religion. The socio-economic frame of many traditional religious activities has been the peasant village community. To the same degree that *industrialization* reduced the relative importance of agriculture, the religious rites and festivals which were strongly related to the cycle of the farming seasons lost their significance for the society as a whole. *Urbanization*, a seemingly inevitable concomitant of industrialization<sup>5</sup>, brought many people to the fast-growing cities, which lack the intimate social contacts of the villages. While in the countryside residential community and religious community were nearly identical – symbolized in the village temple –, in the modern cities new social relationships are formed, which normally do not coincide with the residential neighbourhood. As a result, the traditional religious life which formed an integral part of the village community loses its social base and is weakened. Finally, *cultural contact* in Taiwan has taken place to a degree that it can properly be named ‘westernization’.

Westernization in Taiwan has several aspects. On the one hand there is the integration in the capitalist world economy which resulted in a socio-economic readjustment after the model of the Western industrial nations. On the other hand there is the strong impact of the Western intellectual tradition, above all of science, but also of philosophy, political thinking and religion. The rationalistic and materialistic coloration of Western science and philosophy induces many well-educated people to disregard traditional forms of religion as superstitious. At the same time the Chinese cultural heritage is no longer the sole repository of social and cultural values; people are turning more and more to Western ways of life, which are fashionable especially among the middle and upper classes in the cities.

There cannot be any doubt that industrialization, urbanization and westernization affected many traditional forms of religion and diminished their structural as well as their functional position in Taiwan-

ese society. We can, therefore, say that religious changes which run parallel with modernization are to be characterized as a kind of secularization, if by secularization we mean that formerly existing religious beliefs and practices are abandoned. However, there is a danger that by linking modernization and secularization one is stimulating the idea of a general decrease and a final extinction of religion. This idea is fostered by some evolutionary schemes suggesting that the intellectual progress which is supposed to be implied by modernization will finally lead to the adoption of a "scientific" world-view in which there is no more place for religion. In other words, this theory would not be content to define modernization as the formation of new social structures and cultural values but would try to indicate the direction of this development. As usual in such cases the direction of progress leads to the position of the "enlightened" observer.

On the other hand, as we have seen, there is strong empirical evidence for secularizing tendencies in present day Taiwan. What is more, it can be shown that these tendencies are directly connected with certain aspects of modernization, i.e. industrialization, urbanization and westernization. In the light of these facts it might seem as if the various forms of religion which can still be observed in Taiwan are just survivals of the traditional culture. To the same degree that modernization turns the traditional society into a new, "modern" society, one could argue, the remaining forms of traditional religion will also disappear.

In the following parts of this paper I shall try to show that this conception results from a one-sided view of the religious changes which are actually going on in Taiwan. To do this I first give a short description of a religious movement that enjoys much popularity among the lower and middle classes. I hope to show that the teachings of this movement, though it certainly is part of the Chinese religious tradition, contain elements which reflect the changing social and cultural conditions of the present time. My argument is that the process of modernization, which unquestionably entails secularizing tendencies, also leads in another direction, i.e. to the renaissance of institutional religions and popular religious movements. In the last two parts of the paper a few suggestions will be made about the possible relationship of this renaissance to the modernization process.

### *Renaissance of institutional religions*

As has been mentioned above, social changes in China affected

above all the *diffused* forms of religion because they were inseparable from traditional social institutions. *Institutional* religions, by contrast, form social institutions of their own and are, to a certain degree, independent of "secular" social institutions. Changes in the traditional social structure have, therefore, only an indirect effect on them which is far less striking than in the case of diffused religion. On this account the process of modernization has not necessarily the same secularizing consequences for institutional religions as it has for diffused religion.

On the other hand, Buddhism and Taoism, which are the best-known examples of institutional religion in traditional China, seem to have been in a state of decline even before modernization began in the last century. The reasons for this cannot be treated here, but we should note that since the nineteenth century there have been efforts to revive Buddhism intellectually as well as institutionally. These efforts continued in this century and were not wholly unsuccessful<sup>6</sup>. Two points are to be observed in this connection. The first is the important role which the Buddhist laity played in this movement. The second is the fact that the Buddhist revival seems to coincide more or less with the period of modernization. This point is especially noteworthy since it shows that there is by no means a *necessary* connection between modernization and secularization. One might even conjecture that there exists an interrelation between the Buddhist revival and the modernization movement in China.

Be that as it may, there cannot be any doubt that in Taiwan Buddhism actually did undergo a renaissance after 1949<sup>7</sup>. This can be seen not only from the countless new temples financed by donations from laymen, but also from the steadily increasing publication of popular and scholarly books and journals on Buddhist philosophy and religion. A comparison of this situation with the state of Buddhism in the last centuries of traditional China shows that the process of modernization *in this case* produced anything but secularization.

Attempts to revive Taoism have been far less successful up to now. It is difficult to find a sociological explanation for this difference, one probably has to look for historical reasons. Obviously the position of Taoism as an institutional religion in the last centuries of imperial China has been weaker than that of Buddhism. On the popular level neither Taoism nor Buddhism could be separated from the religious syncretism which had developed since the Sung dynasty. But although many intellectuals were heavily influenced by Taoism there was no significant lay-movement that actively patronized a revival of the

religion. The Taoism of the elite, lacking the Buddhist idea of the *sangha*, was much more a private affair of the individual, while the Buddhist conception of meritorious deeds stimulated the propagation of the faith.

These might be some of the reasons for the poor state which Taoism was in at the end of the imperial era, and which did not improve much during the first half of this century. Although the starting position was rather poor, today there are signs of a renaissance of religious Taoism in Taiwan<sup>8</sup>, even if it is much less obvious than in the case of Buddhism. Significantly, the recovery of religious Taoism is promoted not only by the Taoist clergy, whose intellectual standard in general is still rather low, but also by laymen<sup>9</sup>. It is not easy to assess exactly the scope of this Taoist renaissance, but we can say that the position of Taoism as an institutional religion is probably not weaker than in the last century. That means that here, too, no secularizing influence of modernization can be ascertained.

Apart from Buddhism and Taoism there is a third major form of institutional religion which played an important though less recognized role in traditional China: popular lay-communities of a more or less syncretic character. Most of these communities call themselves Buddhist or, less often, Taoist and indeed can be regarded as popular forms of these religions. From the observer's point of view, however, many of them are clearly distinguishable from the "orthodox" forms of Buddhism and Taoism. Not only do we make this distinction, the Chinese authorities also regarded some of these societies as heterodox and proscribed them. The best-known examples of this are the communities related to the White Lotus tradition. It would, however, probably be a mistake to believe that the majority of popular lay-communities belonged to this class of secret sects.

In contrast to orthodox Buddhism and Taoism these communities do not seem to have suffered from a significant decline during the last phase of traditional China. Quite the contrary, one gets the impression that in a certain way their strength corresponded to the weakness of the orthodox religions during the final years of the empire. Many people found relief from political and economic pressures by turning to the various popular forms of religion, ranging from consulting witch-doctors and spirit-mediums to joining one of the many smaller or larger sects which offered the hope of deliverance of the faithful or even an impending end to the present misery and the coming of a new era<sup>10</sup>.

Not much is known about the history of popular religious lay-communities in the twentieth century<sup>11</sup>. While in comparison with the last century their popularity may have faded they are far from having perished. They still play a significant role in the religious life of present-day Taiwan.

It is convenient to distinguish analytically three types of popular religious community even if in practice it is often impossible to separate them clearly. First, there are groups of people which centre around the person of a specially-gifted woman or man, who may be a spirit healer able to cure sickness or a medium who can communicate with the spiritual world and reveal future, hidden or mysterious things. In most cases people who consult such persons form not a community but a clientele, i.e. they do not relate to one another but only to the healer or the medium, much like the clientele of a doctor. Sometimes, however, a healer or a medium is able to organize a cult in which his followers come together and jointly receive blessings or instructions or perform certain practices<sup>12</sup>. In such cases the clientele may turn into a community whose members share a common stock of beliefs and habits and develop a feeling of belonging together. Normally the person of the leader remains the centre of the cult and the community may retain the traits of a clientele for a long time.

Second, there are religious communities which are not primarily related to the person of a leader but are connected with a particular temple or — what normally amounts to the same thing — the worship of one or several particular gods. These temple-communities are probably religious community in Taiwan. In most cases they consider themselves orthodox Buddhist or Taoist, while actually they are strongly syncretic in character. It might happen that in the religious life of the temple-communities spirit-mediums do play a part, but normally they do not hold the central position. Occasionally, however, a medium may be able to gain a leading role and to turn the community into a dynamic movement whose influence extends far beyond the local or regional level<sup>13</sup>.

The third type of popular religious community in Taiwan is the sect-like movement. In contrast to cults and temple-communities these movements have or at least try to develop a country-wide organization. Furthermore, they are often *explicitly* syncretic, combining elements of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, and in this way consciously distinguish themselves from those religions. Since in traditional China such sects were in danger of being regarded as

heterodox by the government, they often had to operate secretly. This was the case with the sects which belonged to the White Lotus tradition.

All three types of popular religious community have to be considered institutional forms of religions since it is primarily out of *religious* motives that people join these communities. Membership is not a matter of birth or belonging to a certain village or profession but demands the personal decision of each believer. In contrast to orthodox Buddhism and Taosim these popular movements as a rule have no ordained priesthood but are lay-communities<sup>14</sup>.

While the above-mentioned renaissance of Buddhism and Taoism in Taiwan has been widely noted, these popular lay-movements have been somewhat neglected. One reason for this is probably that most of these popular religious communities operate only on a local or regional level. It is therefore every difficult to gain a comprehensive picture. We can be sure, however, that taken together the importance of these organizations in the religious life of present-day Taiwan is very great indeed<sup>15</sup>.

In the following I shall confine myself to one of the most interesting examples of such popular movements, the *I-kuan Tao* sect and cults with strong ideological connections with it. In the analysis I shall concentrate on those aspects which show the religious responses to modernization, rather than try to give an overall picture.

### *I-Kuan Tao – a popular religious movement*

*I-kuan Tao* 一貫道, which can be translated as “the Way of the One that penetrates everything”<sup>16</sup>, is the official name<sup>17</sup> of a secret religious sect which is one of the offshoots of the well-known White Lotus sect *Pai-lien chiao*. Although officially prohibited by the government this sect flourishes under several other names everywhere in Taiwan. There is probably no place in Taiwan where *I-kuan Tao* groups cannot be found<sup>18</sup>. The success of this sect is really striking, taking into account that it was brought to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland only after the Second World War. On the mainland it was popular especially in the northern provinces during the time of the Japanese occupation<sup>19</sup>. But as late as the fifties the Communist government undertook several campaigns to fight this secret sect. It is not known to me whether it still exists on the mainland today<sup>20</sup>.

Only a few elements of the teachings and practices of *I-kuan Tao*

are strictly secret. The most important of these elements are the so-called *San Pao*, the "three Precious Ones", a traditional Buddhist expression by which in the case of *I-kuan Tao* three different secrets (a symbol, a ritual gesture and a formula) are signified<sup>21</sup>. The *San Pao* are transmitted to new members during a secret initiation ceremony which is much rumoured about by the public. The rumour goes that the participants have to be naked<sup>22</sup> and that the sect performs other scandalous rites in which men and women are not separated. Reports from former members prove that the accusations about the initiation ceremony are certainly not true<sup>23</sup>. Such wide-spread rumours, however, show how deep-rooted the prejudices against "heterodox" sects are, which makes propagation of the faith difficult if not dangerous.

All the more remarkable is the undoubtable success of this sect. This seems to indicate that obviously *I-kuan Tao* has something to offer which attracts people even though they may have to suffer public defamation or even prosecution. As a matter of fact, the enforced secrecy which results from prohibition by the government allows for many speculations about vicious rites and political plotting indulged in by the sect-members<sup>24</sup>. But we do not need to occupy ourselves further with the secret aspects of the sect since the teachings which are important for our present purpose are transmitted more or less openly. What is more, they are very similar to the beliefs held by other popular religious communities. This is true especially for some of the *fu-luan* cults which are very popular in Taiwan today.

*Fu-luan* 扶鸞 or *fu-chi* 扶乩 (alt. 扶箕) is an ancient Chinese divination practice which can be described as spirit-writing, sometimes known in the West under the name "planchette". Although the practice can be traced back at least to the Sung dynasty, its modern form seems to have developed during the last century<sup>25</sup>. At that time it became usual to receive written revelations from various deities which communicate through mediums. The mediums — traditionally two persons operating jointly, but today often only one — hold a stick with which the deity writes characters on a small table covered with sand. These messages from the gods normally contain answers to questions of the believers, but not seldom also directions or instructions of a general kind. At times the medium might be the focus of a larger cult or community whose members participate in the seances and try to follow the divine admonitions. *Fu-luan* cults were brought to Taiwan from the mainland during the first decades of this century and soon turned into a mass movement<sup>26</sup>. There has been a very strong revival

of *fu-luan* cults in Taiwan in recent years<sup>27</sup>.

There are many links between *fu-luan* cults and practices and the *I-kuan Tao* sect. Most of the texts which expose the teachings of this sect have been revealed by "spirit-writing" since the beginning of the sect in the nineteenth century<sup>28</sup>. *Fu-luan* sessions are held regularly, normally four times a year<sup>29</sup>, during which new revelations and instructions are received. Furthermore, the content of the teachings which are propagated by *I-kuan Tao* show strong similarities to those of many of the common *fu-luan* cults<sup>30</sup>. This is the case especially where the religious interpretation of the present time, the assessment of the historical role of the Chinese tradition and the confrontation with Western influence is concerned. It is these elements of the beliefs which show most clearly the popular religious responses to the modernization process.

*Religious interpretation of the present time: traditionalism*

To illustrate some basic elements of the world-view of these cults I quote a few passages from a revelation of the god Shang Ti which was given during a *fu-luan* session in 1977:

From 1914 to 1939 two world wars broke out. As a result the correct truth was almost eradicated and the traditional culture went up in flames. Streams of blood were shed and millions of corpses covered the earth. Wives were separated from their husbands and their sons scattered to the four winds, unbearable was the misery. If this happens again, if a third world war breaks out, mankind will face destruction. For the military weapons which are developed by the modern sciences are being improved day by day, nuclear weapons are perfected day and night. In such a situation we must give up our hope for the Great Harmony and the peace in the world. Therefore, there is only one way, if we want to avoid the final catastrophe: the original orthodox tradition of the *Tao* which our Chinese nation possesses has to be restored. The four social relations (*szu wei* 四維) and the eight virtues (*pa te* 八德) [must be put into practice again]. We must continue the past in order to save the future, that means to follow the orthodox tradition of the *tao* which has been transmitted from Yao, Shun, Yü, T'ang, Wen Wang and Wu Wang, Confucius and Mencius. Only in this way can one escape this huge cosmic catastrophe.

This short passage shows the general attitude which characterizes the religious interpretation of the present time: the present era is seen as a time of decline and of crucial historical significance. The future of humanity is at stake. Only if men are able to reverse the tendency of decay inherent in modern societies will it be possible to avoid the impending catastrophe. Recovery can be secured by returning to the way of the sages of antiquity and by practising the traditional virtues of the Chinese culture. This point is further elaborated in the following passage:

These are the teachings of the holy kings of former times:

1. We want to restore the five social obligations (*wu lun*), the three social principles (*san kang*) and the five constant virtues (*wu ch'ang*). 2. We want to institute the three unspoiled [values], i.e. virtue, merit and true speech, and [in this way] bring benefit to the people. 3. We want to esteem highly the spiritual life, but to disregard the material life. Spiritual life means to put into practice the natural virtues humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faithfulness. [. . .] Alas! [How different are] the men of this world! They always care about the material life and are striving for the enjoyment of worldly goods. Who still speaks of propriety and righteousness, of modesty, social principles, constant virtues and modesty?

It can be seen from this passage that the dangers of the present time have their roots in the *moral* decline of men, i.e. in the abandonment of the traditional social virtues as propagated by the Confucians. These rules of moral conduct and social obligations are seen as the prerequisite for a sound and orderly society. Although principally these standards apply to every society, it is obvious that the deity especially has in mind the present situation in China, i.e. in Taiwan. Criticism of contemporary society in Taiwan becomes more outspoken in the next section:

I [i.e. Shang Ti] see that in this world it is the Chinese nation in which rites and music are cultivated, where true culture exists. For this reason, up to the present day China could not be overthrown by another nation. Nowadays, however, people are only imitating the European and American way of life. Father and son do not love each other, husband and wife do not live in harmony, brothers fight each other,

superiors and inferiors are without righteousness, there is no faithfulness between friends. What a talk of liberalism! People get married and they get divorced again; if such conditions are common everywhere, how then can the orthodox tradition of the *Tao* be restored? Look at the following examples: In the European and American nations it is such that, when people are old and approach the end of their life, one is only waiting until they close the eyes and die. This is called the New Culture! Continually new weapons are being developed to destroy the human race. This is called the New Morality! How terrible it is! And we Chinese, we are giving up our own culture and our own morality, which we have inherited from our ancestors, in order to adopt the so-called New Culture and New Morality of other people. If one continues in this way, then our Chinese nation will soon have perished!

In the first section the present time has been pictured as one of utmost danger, threatened by an impending catastrophe. The second passage exposes the roots of this crisis, i.e. the general moral decline which can be stopped only by reviving the traditional virtues. In the above section the explanation again goes one step further. The moral decay, i.e. the extinction of traditional Chinese morality, is seen in relation to the influence of Western civilization. The westernization of Chinese society is regarded as promoting licence and demoralization. By implication, westernization is a major obstacle to the restoration of the orthodox tradition and will finally result in the perishing of the Chinese nation.

This pessimistic and critical picture of the present forms the background to the final revelations of the deity, which show the way to deliverance leading to a bright future:

If my heavenly *Tao* can be spread all over the world, the multitudes will not know any more suffering caused by weapons nor will there be malefactors or criminals. This is called to regulate without acting purposely (*wu wei*). Even if one does not plan for peace, peace will occur without doubt; even if one does not plan for a renaissance, a renaissance will come by itself. Then, what need will there be for rules and regulations, what need for severe laws and heavy punishments? And yet the days of Yao and Shun can come again and there can be a perfect world for men to live in.<sup>31</sup>

While former passages showed a clear Confucian coloring, this last section depicts an ideal future world whose Taoist stamp cannot escape notice. A crucial point to be observed here is the admonition to spread the *Tao* all over the world, which will result in the emerging of a paradise-like new society. Since the Chinese expression for "world" here is not *t'ien-hsia* but *shih-chieh*, it is obvious that the deliverance is not thought of as confined to the Chinese nation only but is open to all mankind.

I cannot decide for certain which religious group this text originates from. There is some evidence that it was revealed during an *I-kuan Tao fu-luan* session, but it could also be the product of any other *fu-luan* cult. In the interpretation of the present time there is a common stock of beliefs which is shared by most of the popular religious movements. According to my observations it normally consists of the following four basic elements:

1. The present political, social and cultural situation is regarded as a time of decay and decadence. This can be seen above all in a general decline of public morality.

2. The present time of decay is interpreted against the background of a religious theory of history. This applies especially for the *I-kuan Tao* and related groups. According to this theory we are now in the last phase of a cosmic period at the end of which there will be a worldwide catastrophe. Only a few elected, i.e. those who follow the true *Tao*, will survive this cataclysm. After this they will live in the ideal world of the Great Harmony (*ta t'ung*).

3. The cause of the present decadence is to be found in the decline of the true *Tao*, which is a result of the influence of Western civilization. Western civilization is regarded as materialistic and immoral. The Chinese tradition, in contrast, is seen as a fountain of religious and moral values from which the spiritual renewal of mankind will grow.

4. The divine revelations not only stigmatize the present time as a period of decay; the divine revelations also show the way to deliverance. This path is essentially the same one that was marked out by the sages of Chinese antiquity. That means it consists in the observance of the traditional Confucian moral values. While deviation from the true *Tao* accounts for the cause of decay, observance of the true way contains the key to salvation.

Obviously these views reflect the tensions between traditional

and modern Chinese culture. They present, to a certain degree, a religious interpretation of modernization in Taiwan. But if we examine the above mentioned elements, we find that virtually none of them is really new. They are all patterns which are well known from Chinese intellectual history. I shall just give a few examples:

The devaluation of the present time as a period of moral decline can be traced back as far as Confucius. In the earliest Confucian writings we can also find the theme of the return of the Golden Age of Yao and Shun.

The concept of the Great Harmony, *Ta T'ung*, also originated in antiquity, it is elaborated in the *Li Chi*. Probably somewhat later, during the Han dynasty, the idea was formulated that the emergence of the new ideal world would be preceded by a period of destruction, as can be seen in the *T'ai-p'ing Ching*. Finally Buddhism added to these elements the theory of the declining *dharma* and the expectation of the future Buddha Maitreya. Maitreya is still of utmost importance in the eschatological teachings of *I-kuan Tao*.

The rejection of foreign influence is also a familiar topic. As we know, Buddhism has long been the target of anti-foreign propaganda. During the Six Dynasties Buddhism was held responsible for all the deficiencies of the time<sup>32</sup>.

Finally, we should observe that *I-kuan Tao* as well as most of the other popular cults combine elements of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, and promote the idea of *san chiao he i* 三教合一 "the three teachings form a unity". This explicit syncretism goes back at least to the Sung dynasty.

These remarks suffice to show that the reactions of these popular religious movements to the social changes resulting from modernization are by no means new. The symbolization of the tensions caused by cultural contact and modernization draws heavily upon the traditional symbol repository. Not only are the traditional symbols relied on, but also their content: The values by which modern society is measured derive mainly from the traditional moral teachings. It would therefore not be untrue to say that the religious responses to modernization as we have analyzed them so far can be characterized as traditionalism and conservatism.

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to regard movements like *I-kuan Tao* as mere survivals of a past historical period. For, as we shall see presently, besides the traditional elements there are also

significant innovations. These innovations, too, reflect the changing conditions of the present time.

*New responses to cultural contact: universalism*

One important element in the interpretation of the present time, as we have seen above, is the rejection of Western influences. Indeed, the impact of Western civilization, whether militarily, economically or intellectually, can be regarded as *the* driving force for change and modernization in the last 150 years. The religious interpretation of the modern situation cannot avoid facing this Western civilization and assigning it its proper place in the religious interpretation of reality.

Rejection of the West, even open hostility, has been the most common reaction since the last century. Not only conservative politicians had a heavy aversion to the Western civilization, lower strata of society also shared this loathing. The second half of the last century is full of more or less serious incidents caused by the latent aggression of the Chinese population towards the foreign culture and its representatives. The Boxer uprising of 1900 has sometimes been seen as the culmination of this series of encroachments.

Popular opposition, not only to the Western powers but also to the foreign rule of the Manchu dynasty, often organized itself in secret societies with a more or less religious coloration<sup>33</sup>. The religious character of many of these groups should not be overestimated since in traditional China religious elements diffused in most social institutions irrespective of their primary objectives. On the other hand there were groups belonging to the popular religious tradition which occasionally developed strong political, esp. nationalist impulses. As to the anti-Western attitude, a further religious component was added since Western civilization was represented not least by Christian missionaries. To fight Western influences, therefore, also meant to fight Christianity. Indeed, Chinese Christians not seldom were regarded as foreign agents, and the fact of their Christianity was seen by many as an obvious sign of their having abandoned the traditional Chinese culture.

At first sight it seems that the criticism of Western influences which is common among today's *fu-luan* cults and *I-kuan Tao* groups is but a continuation of the anti-Western attitude of popular religious groups in the last century. It would then be just another symptom of the above mentioned cultural traditionalism. But this is only part of the picture. For if we look closer, we find that opposition to Western

culture is by no means absolute. As can be observed in the above quoted text, the real contrast is not between the Chinese and the Western cultural traditions but between spiritual and materialistic approaches to life. To be sure, the spiritual culture is represented above all by the religious and moral traditions of China, while materialism is seen as the product of Western civilization. But at the same time it is admitted that in the West there also exist spiritual traditions, namely the two religions Christianity and Islam.

In this view Western civilization is not objected to in its totality, only its materialism is rejected. The menace of the modern world results from the fact that the West has submitted to materialistic thinking and this materialism gains more and more ground in China as well. Since the Chinese religious traditions and the Western religions are equally opposed to this materialism, they are all fighting for the same cause, they are allies not adversaries.

The recognition of Christianity and Islam as true religions equal to the Chinese religious traditions can be observed at different intellectual levels. A rather superficial level is represented by some of the *fu-luan* cults. While the deities which manifest themselves by the writing-stick originally all belonged to the traditional Chinese pantheon, it does happen today that Western gods, above all Jesus and Mohammed<sup>34</sup>, give revelations by *fu-luan*. This integration of Western deities into the *fu-luan* cults may be seen as symbolic of the lack of opposition to Christianity and Islam, it is no proof, however, of any deeper understanding of these foreign religions. Actually, as far as I could observe, the knowledge of the general *fu-luan* believer and even the mediums about Islam is virtually non-existent, though somewhat more is known about Christianity. When I asked a medium how Jesus and Mohammed could manifest themselves in a Chinese temple, I was simply answered that in heaven no boundaries between East and West exist and all gods live in the same heaven<sup>35</sup>.

While the recognition of Christianity and Islam in the *fu-luan* cults is purely formal, allowing Jesus and Mohammed a status equal to the Chinese gods, the teachings of *I-kuan Tao* go one step further, trying to integrate the doctrines of these Western religions. To be sure, a manifestation of Jesus during an *I-kuan Tao fu-luan* session is recorded as early as the year 1939<sup>36</sup> and we might suppose that at that time their understanding of Christianity was much like that of today's *fu-luan* cults in Taiwan. But in recent years texts have been published which prove beyond doubt that one is earnestly attempting

to form a syncretism of the Chinese and Western religious traditions. In the same way that Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are traditionally said to form a unity, today Christianity and Islam are included in this overall religious tradition. Consequently, the former slogan *san chiao he i*, "the three teachings form a unity", has been changed into *wu chiao he i*. "the five teachings form a unity".

As an illustration of the attempts to give a theoretical, or theological, foundation to the unity of the five religions I shall quote some passages from an *I-kuan Tao* publication. The chapter is entitled "The theory of the unity of the five teachings" and starts as follows:

The so-called unity has the following aspects: 1. The unity which is due to the common origin of the five teachings in the *Tao*. 2. The unity which is due to the fact that the doctrines of the five teachings shed light on each other. 3. The unity which is due to the fact that the doctrines of the five teachings complement and complete each other. 4. The unity which is due to the fact that according to the trends of development of each of the teachings they must reunite in the *Tao*.<sup>37</sup>

In the succeeding parts of the chapter these four aspects of the unity of the five teachings are explained in detail. I confine myself here to a few selections:

1. The five teachings have their common origin in the *Tao*. The culture of all mankind has its origin in the *Tao*. Prior to the Chou dynasty there was only one school of the *Tao*. During the time of the Warring States at first the separation between Confucianism and Taoism developed, later on Buddhism, Christianity and Islam rose in India and in the West and so it came to the five religions coexisting side by side. One can compare the *Tao* to a fountainhead, the five teachings are like five streams springing from this fountainhead. They each run through different lands and on their way nurture the hearts and enrich the lives of the people [in their respective lands]. . . . Although the five teachings are separated, in their sayings there are no differences, since in reality they all belong to the same principle.

2. The doctrines of the five teachings shed light on each other. Irrespective of their differences regarding race, colour and sex all men are brought forth by Heaven and have the same nature given to them by Heaven. Therefore, the human

mind by and large is the same everywhere. Since beneath heaven there are not different *Taos*, the minds of the sages are not different either. From the identity of the mind the identity of the *Tao* can be recognized. Even though the background of the different cultures is not the same, the results which they achieve have more similarities than differences.

3. The doctrines of the five teachings complement and complete each other. . . . It is necessary to know the truth of all men in the world. For the sages of the five teachings came to the world in different regions. Because of the differences in history, culture, customs, national character and language the sages had to match their method of teaching to the times, the places and the men in each region. As a result it could hardly be avoided that the doctrines of the five teachings would lay different emphases . . . . Therefore, each teaching has its strongpoints, and each has its deficiencies. If one wants to see the truth which all men in the world possess [together], there is no other way than to combine the five teachings.

4. According to the trend of development of each of the five teachings they must reunite in the *Tao*. After the separation of the five teachings they gradually took a course that led back to unity. First, the three teachings Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism accomplished complete unity. . . . Christianity and Islam were introduced to China relatively late. Then however — as there are no differences in the fundamental doctrines of these two teachings and the [other] three teachings — after they came in contact with the three teachings they likewise gradually developed a tendency to merge with them.<sup>38</sup>

These passages show clearly that the recognition of Christianity and Islam goes deeper than the mere acceptance of foreign gods as equal to the Chinese gods, as was the case in common *fu-luan* cults. It is granted that the doctrines of the two foreign religions contain the truth of the *Tao* to the same degree as the three Chinese religions. This must be regarded as a fundamental innovation, taking into account the general rejection and even hostility with which these foreign religions were looked upon during the last century. This is an important point since it shows that modernization, which in China to a large

degree is a result of the impact of the Western powers and the ensuing cultural contact, not only was reflected in the field of religion negatively but also led to a further development of popular religious ideology. That basically means that traditional religion can cope with modernization and is not necessarily doomed to extinction.

At a glance it looks as if the recognition of Christianity and Islam amounts to a withdrawal of the traditional claim for superiority of the Chinese culture. To a certain degree this may be the case. But if we analyze the argument carefully we find that this is only one side of the coin. By declaring a basic unity of the Western and the Chinese religions, the Christian (and Muslim) claim to absoluteness is countered most effectively. Christianity and Islam are no longer fought against but embraced and in this way their thunder is stolen. Having neutralized the Western claim to superiority, in a second step of the argument the priority of the Chinese tradition can be restored. For, as we have seen, Christianity and Islam are recognized as true teachings because they partake of the same *Tao* as the Chinese religions. But in China the orthodox tradition of the *Tao* goes back as far as Yao and Shun and even Fu-hsi, i.e. it is significantly older than the Western traditions. That means that the *Tao* originally came down in China.

Age is an important factor in the Chinese way of thinking. Since China was in possession of the *Tao* from the beginning it is obvious that she occupies a special position among the nations. Indeed Chinese tradition is made a yardstick for the assessment of foreign cultural traditions. The recognition of Christianity and Islam as true religions implies their subordination to the standards of the Chinese tradition.

The exceptional position of China can be seen from still another angle. In the revelation of Shang Ti which was quoted above we saw that the dangerous disorder of the present world is regarded as an immediate consequence of that materialistic way of life which originated in the West. To save China from the impending catastrophe it is imperative to redress Chinese tradition. This is what I have called "traditionalism". In addition to the traditionalist approach, however, there is the universalist one. by universalism I mean the tendency to extend the normativity of the *Tao*, i.e. the original Chinese tradition, beyond the boundaries of China proper. One aspect of this universalism has been described above: the inclusion of the Western religions in the tradition of the *Tao*, thereby extending by implication the validity of the Chinese *Tao* to the Western cultures. Another aspect of universalism comes to the fore when the deliverance from threatening disaster and

the prospects of an ideal new world for the faithful are dealt with. For deliverance is not confined to the Chinese followers of the *Tao*; who cultivates his spiritual life and follows the true *Tao* can be saved. As has been noted above<sup>39</sup>, this means that the spiritual tradition of the *Tao*, which originated in China and today still exists in Taiwan, contains the key to salvation for all mankind<sup>40</sup>. Since the spiritual renewal of the world has to start from China, this universalism is in harmony with the traditionalism which asserts the superiority of the Chinese cultural tradition.

### *Modernization and the problem of cultural identity*

In the last part of this paper I would like to make a few remarks which may contribute something to a better understanding of the intricate relationship between modernization and religious change. To formulate this as a question: can the renaissance of institutional religions in Taiwan be explained, taking into account the secularizing tendencies normally connected with modernization?

Let us first recall that secularization and religious renaissance obviously do not exclude each other. Many forms of diffused religion are continuously disappearing along with the decline of traditional social institutions they were related to. At the same time the symbol system by which the social and natural world is conceptualized in many cases loses its religious coloration. In this process religious legitimations of reality are replaced by more "rational" or "scientific" ones.

Another development which has to be taken into account is the differentiation of the cultural system into more or less distinct spheres, such as politics, economics, science, philosophy, religion, which traditionally were intimately interwoven and integrated into a single legitimization system. The growing importance of institutional religions – as compared with diffused religion – is partly a result of this general process of differentiation, as religion becomes more and more distinct from other social institutions<sup>41</sup>.

As a matter of fact, in the West institutional differentiation of religion went hand in hand with secularization. The relative importance of Christianity as an institutional religion has diminished<sup>42</sup>. The assertion that in Taiwan there has been a decline in traditional institutional religions cannot be accepted without reserve, however, since we are witness to a renaissance of Buddhism, Taoism and popular forms of institutional religions. We may ask, therefore, whether reasons

for the different developments in Taiwan and the West can be found. In trying to answer this question I shall make a few suggestions which may serve as a framework for future research.

The key to an understanding of the different religious developments may be found by considering the different circumstances of modernization in China and in the West. The temporal priority of Western modernization may be crucial. Not only did modernization in the West start about two centuries earlier than in China, which means that the West had much more time to digest the transformation from a traditional to a modern society; what is more important is the fact that modernization was the outcome of a genuine development of the Western intellectual and social tradition. In China, by contrast, the change from traditional to modern society was provoked by developments from outside the Chinese culture. Modernization began only in the middle of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the impact of Western imperialism. Consequently modernization did not happen as a "natural" evolution of the Chinese culture but was conceived as something threatening the genuine Chinese tradition. It implied not only change but change after the model of Western societies.

To some extent modernization in China was forced in that it was the only way to cope with Western aggression. What is more, this forced modernization was from the very beginning accompanied by the experience of Chinese inferiority which led to a crisis of cultural self-confidence. While externally modernization in China had the same structural elements as in the West, i.e. industrialization, urbanization, scientific rationalization etc., in terms of cultural continuity modernization in China represented a clear break, whereas in the West it was a continuation of the genuine tradition. To put it simply, one major aspect of modernization in China was and still is westernization, which means in a way that the modern culture in Taiwan is perceived as "less Chinese" than the traditional culture. This may help to explain some of the differences in the cultural and especially the religious responses to modernization in Taiwan and in the West.

I would suggest that westernization, which is concomitant with modernization in all non-Western societies, represents a factor which in the long run may account for different developments in the process of modernization in the West and elsewhere. This appears to be a paradox but it can easily be understood if we think westernization through to its inevitable consequences. For if modernization implies

westernization then thorough modernization means thorough westernization. This amounts to giving up one's own cultural identity. There are many reasons to suppose that no society would go that far, unless it is forced to from the outside.

This is not the place to look into the mechanisms of what might be called "cultural resistance". Let it suffice here to note that the present situation in Taiwan is characterized by two opposite trends. On the one hand we have the fact of modernization with its need for innovation. Innovation, of course, means discontinuation of traditional patterns and in many cases westernization. On the other hand we have the need for cultural identity, which means symbolization of continuity, distinctness and self-assertion. These two trends are mutually opposed because more modernization as a rule implies more westernization and thus less distinctness. Less distinctness, however, increases the need for cultural identity.

*Renaissance of institutional religions as a response to the problem of cultural identity*

As we have seen, one element of *I-kuan Tao* and other popular religious movements is traditionalism. It is obvious that the adherence to traditional religious beliefs and practices can be a means of symbolizing cultural continuity and thereby identity. But we can go one step further: it is *above all* religion which is used as a symbolization of cultural identity. The reasons for this are manifold and can only be hinted at here.

First of all, religion is the most important symbol system in traditional societies, at least on the popular level. This applies also to China where the legitimation of most strategic positions of reality had a strong "religious" coloration: the important institutions like the family, the norms of social interaction, the values guiding personal cultivation, "national" history and the cosmic order. To remove the religious elements from the symbol system which explains reality would cause a collapse of the system and result in anomy. If anomy is to be avoided the old religious-oriented symbol system would have to be replaced by an alternative one without religious elements. Since such a substitute is not available for large portions of the population who have been socialized in the traditional legitimation system, the interpretation of reality must continue to make use of religious symbols.

Second, modernization in China, as probably in most non-Western

countries, started in the field of economy and technology. Only gradually (though inevitably) other parts of the socio-cultural system were affected by the economic and ensuing social and intellectual changes. This holds true also for religion, at least for the various forms of "diffused religion" which were directly related to traditional social institutions. As far as institutional religions are concerned, however, i.e. religions which form institutions of their own, they are much less affected by social and economic changes than most other traditional institutions. A society in the process of modernization can more easily afford to cling to traditional religions than for example to traditional ways of communication or education. To be sure, institutional religions are by no means independent of the surrounding socio-cultural system, but the dependency is less direct than in most other fields. Besides religion there is only one other important social institution which enjoys a comparable degree of independence of economic changes, i.e. the arts. Significantly the fine arts, especially painting, are also used as a symbolization of cultural continuity and identity. However, as the connoisseurs do not belong to the common people, on the popular level religion holds a much more important place than the arts. The renaissance of institutional religions in Taiwan seems to be more easily understandable if we keep in mind the need for cultural identity and the role of religions as repositories of traditional symbols<sup>43</sup>.

Traditionalism alone cannot be regarded as a response to the problems caused by modernization. Modernization means change and the situation actually has changed. This leads to a tension between the exaltation of traditional values and behaviour on the one side and the actual situation on the other. In trying to dissolve this tension, it is not possible to simply renounce the traditional religious symbols because on the popular level these are most important means of expressing cultural identity. If no alternative symbol system is available the mentioned tension must result in a rejection of the actual social situation in so far as it is not compatible with traditional values and behaviour. This is what happens in most nativist and messianic movements. As we have seen the devaluation of the present time also occurs in the traditionalism of *I-kuan Tao* and *fu-luan* cults in Taiwan.

Certainly rejection of the actual situation is a form of religious response to modernization. But it is a response which does not lead to a decrease of the tension between a traditionally oriented legitimation system and the experience of a changed social reality. On the contrary, as ongoing modernization implies further change, adherence

to the traditional legitimation system results in increasing tensions. If the tensions are to be diminished or at least kept to a tolerable level, then either the modernization process has to be stopped or even reversed, or the legitimation system has to be changed in such a way that is more compatible with the social reality. I would argue that such an adaptation of the legitimation system can be observed in the teachings of *I-kuan Tao*.

One typical innovation in the teachings of many popular religious societies, of which *I-kuan Tao* is just one example<sup>44</sup>, is what has been described as universalism. Not only are Western religions, especially Christianity, not fought against any more but they are accepted as being equal to the Chinese tradition. Foreign religions should even be learned from as they may contain truth which has not been revealed in China. On the other hand the Chinese spiritual heritage is valid not only for the Chinese nation but for all of mankind. There is only one truth, one *Tao*, in the world of which all religions partake.

In a certain way this universalist view is not new in Chinese intellectual history. In historic times too there was only one truth which was theoretically valid for the whole world. But this truth did belong to the Chinese tradition, and to the degree that other nations did not accept the Chinese way they were barbarians. The Middle Kingdom was the centre of the world, unequalled by other civilizations. While, as we have seen, the claim of uniqueness is not completely abandoned, the new universalism still represents a decisive innovation. The pretension to Chinese superiority could not be reconciled with the events of history since the last century. In the first phase the national consciousness refused to take cognizance of other nations as being equal or even superior. The result was a rigid rejection of and hostility towards everything foreign. But reality could not be disputed for long. In the second phase the pendulum tended to swing to the other extreme. China was seen as backward and unenlightened and the Chinese intellectual tradition, especially Confucianism and religious thinking, was held responsible for this backwardness. By contrast the West was idealized as a model which had to be emulated.

On the popular level the replacement of the traditional symbol system by Western science and philosophy, which might be possible for intellectuals, was never a realistic alternative<sup>45</sup>. To be sure, the success of Christian missions during the last hundred years would probably be unthinkable had there not been the strong need for new world interpretations which promised to be more consistent with the

changed reality than were the old religious symbol systems. The adoption of Western science and philosophy and Western religion can be interpreted as a means of finding legitimation systems which are compatible with the new conditions created by modernization. They have the advantage of reconciling the consciousness to the reality of modern society, at least they do it better than the traditional legitimation systems. But they have one crucial shortcoming: they are not able to symbolize the Chinese cultural identity.

At this point we come back to the role of traditional religions. In so far as they are traditional they express continuity and identity. But, on the other side, in so far as they are traditional they contain many elements which do not harmonize with the changed reality. However, only dead traditions are unchangeable. There are many signs that religions in Taiwan today are changing. This is obviously true of Buddhism. In the case of Taoism it is more difficult to demonstrate since recent research has put the emphasis on the revival of the Taoist *tradition* and not on changes in this tradition. As to popular religions, I have tried to give some hints as to what is going on. The tendency towards universalism is just one element. There are others which could not be dealt with here, and many which await further research. In any case we should be aware that traditional religions in present-day Taiwan may not just be survivals of a bygone age doomed to extinction, but living traditions which could even gain importance in the future.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cf. C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967) pp 294 – 340

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chin Yao-chi 金耀基, *Ts'ung Ch'uan-t'ung tao hsien-tai 從傳統到現代*, (Taipei, 1979, third edition).

<sup>3</sup> Of course, in the People's Republic there were other factors which made a great impact on the religious life, esp. the official anti-religious propaganda and the suppression of religious activities.

<sup>4</sup> Yang, *op. cit.*, pp 363 – 377

<sup>5</sup> "As a result of industrial development, farm population has gradually moved to urban areas. The share of employment in agriculture decreased from 59.3 per cent in 1952 to 27.3 per cent in 1977, while that in industry increased from 14.5 per cent to 37.6 per cent in the same period." (*China Yearbook 1978*, p 165)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*. (Cambridge, Mass. 1968).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Y. Raguin, "Buddhismus auf Taiwan", in *Buddhismus der Gegenwart*, ed. by H. Dumoulin (Freiburg 1970) pp 113 - 116.

<sup>8</sup> "Taoism" (by A. K. Seidel), in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia*, p 1042.

<sup>9</sup> For example, the Taoist Association of the Republic of China is run mostly by laymen who try to get rid of many of the more "vulgar" practices of religious Taoism and to restore the intellectual tradition of former times. These efforts seem not to be supported by many of the Taoist priests, possibly since they make their living by performing these practices.

<sup>10</sup> See for example G. G. H. Dunstheimer, "Religion et magie dans le mouvement des Boxeurs", in *T'oung Pao*, 47 (1959) pp 323 - 367; G. Miles, "Vegetarian Sects", in *The Chinese Recorder*, 33 (1902) pp 1 - 10; D. H. Porter, "Secret Sects in Shantung", in *The Chinese Recorder*, 17 (1886) pp 1 - 10, 64 - 73; M. Topley, "Chinese Religion and Rural Cohesion in the Nineteenth Century", in *JHKBRAS* 8 (1968), pp 9 - 43.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, *Religioses Leben im heutigen China*, (München, 1955) pp 109 - 156.

<sup>12</sup> Such a healing-cult is treated by Wang Chih-ming 王志明 *T'ai-pei-shih Ch'i-lung-lu ti i-ko min-su i-sheng he t'a-ti hsin-t'u-man* 台北市基隆路的一個民俗醫生和他的信徒們 (unpublished B. A. thesis, National Taiwan University, Dept. of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1971)

<sup>13</sup> An example of this is the *Sheng-hsien-t'ang* community in Taichung. The publications of the revelations of the mediums of this temple are distributed and read everywhere in Taiwan.

<sup>14</sup> Some sects (e.g. *Li-chiao*), however, are copying Buddhist or Taoist ceremonies and dress so that it is difficult to decide whether the performers are priests or layment.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the "new religions" are treated in Hsiao Ching-fen, "The current situation of new religions in Taiwan", *Theology and the Church*, 10:2 - 3 (Tainan, 1971) pp 1 - 28;

<sup>18</sup> *I-kuan* is actually derived from a passage in the Confucian Analects (IV, 15).

<sup>17</sup> The popular name is *Ya-tan chiao* 鴨蛋教. Other names are *T'ien Tao chiao* 天道教, *K'ung-tzu chiao* 孔子教, *Ta Tao chiao* 大道教, *Lao-mu chiao* 老母教. Cf. Tung Fang-yüan 董芳苑, *T'ai-wan min-chien ts'ung-chiao hsin-yang* 台灣民間宗教信仰 (Taipei 1976) p 123.

<sup>18</sup> Tung, *op. cit.*, p 123f. According to Su Ming-tung 蘇明東, *T'ien-tao kai-lun* 天道概論 (Kaohsiung, 1979) p 197, there are more than 300,000 followers of *I-kuan Tao* in Taiwan today.

<sup>19</sup> Li Shih-yü 李世瑜, *Hsien-tsai Hua-pei mi-mi-ts'ung-chiao* 現在華北秘密宗教, (Chengtu, 1948, repr. Taipei, 1975) p 32.

<sup>20</sup> It seems certain, however, that the *I-kuan Tao* has followers outside Taiwan, esp. in Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. In contrast to Taiwan, in these places the sect is not forbidden by the government and can operate openly (cf. Su Ming-tung, *op. cit.*, p 198f). For the propaganda of the Communist government

against *I-kuan Tao* see L. Deliusin, "The I-kuan Tao Society", in *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840 - 1950*, ed. by J. Chesneaux, (Stanford, 1971) pp 225 - 233.

<sup>21</sup> In orthodox Buddhism *San Pao* stands for *Triratna*, i.e. Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (W. E. Soothill and L. Hodous: *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, Reprint Taipei 1970, p 63)

<sup>22</sup> Cf. for example Ching-fen Hsiao, *loc. cit.*, p 17.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Shih Wen-t'u 施文塗, "Wo tsen-yang t'uo-li I-kuan Tao" 我怎樣脫離一貫道, in *Chieh Shih 覺世* 6 (Kao-hsiung, Sept. 1977) pp 20 - 32.

<sup>24</sup> Since these accusations can neither be proved nor refuted by the observer it is very difficult to give a fair description of the sect.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Chao Wei-pang, "The Origin and Growth of the Fu-ch'i", in *Folklore Studies*, 1 (1942) pp 9 - 27; Hsi T'ien-shan 許地山, *Fu-chi mi-hsin ti yen-chiu 扶箕迷信底研究* (Taipei 1966).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. G. Seaman, *Temple Organization in a Chinese Village*, (Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs, No. 101 Taipei 1978) pp 20 - 35.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hsiao, *loc. cit.*, pp 12 - 16. For a case-study ref. Seaman, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> The members trace the origin of the sect back to Fu Hsi and have an elaborated list of the transmission of the *Tao* through the centuries. The historical evidence for the existence of *I-kuan Tao* as a *separate* tradition does not reach beyond the last century, however.

<sup>29</sup> The ordinary *fu-luan* cults have sessions much more often, in general eight or twelve times every lunar month.

<sup>30</sup> Obviously many teachings of the *fu-luan* cults have their origin in the popular "Buddhist" tradition which is also a main source of the *I-kuan Tao* teachings. It is difficult, however, to assess to which degree there is a direct influence of *I-kuan Tao* on these cults in Taiwan today. Probably there is a mutual influence since many followers of *I-kuan Tao* participate also in ordinary *fu-luan* cults. Actually, some *fu-luan* cults seem to be reservoirs of potential *I-kuan Tao* proselytes.

<sup>31</sup> *T'ian-jan* 天然, 2 (Hainchu Febr. 1980) pp 2 - 3.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. K. Ch'en: "Anti-Buddhist Propaganda During the Nan-Ch'ao", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15 (1952) pp 166 - 192.

<sup>33</sup> For examples see J. Chesneaux ed. *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840 - 1950*, (Stanford 1972).

<sup>34</sup> Of course, Mohammed is not regarded as a god in Islam. The knowledge of Islam in China, however, is rather poor and Mohammed is thought to be a divine person much like the Chinese "historical" gods or - for that matter - Jesus.

<sup>35</sup> The medium belonged to the *Sheng-hsien t'ang* in Taichung.

<sup>36</sup> W. Grootaers, "Une société secrète moderne, I Kuan Tao: Bibliographie annotée", in *Folklore Studies* 5 (1946) p 332f.

<sup>37</sup> *T'ian Tao Kai Lun* 天道概論 by Su Ming-tung 蘇明東 (Kaohsiung, 1978, 1979 2nd printing), p 61.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, pp 61 - 62.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p 20.

<sup>40</sup> A practical consequence of this universalism can be seen in the effort of *I-kuan Tao* to spread beyond the borders of China proper. Of course, most followers outside Taiwan are overseas Chinese, but it also tried to gain followers among foreigners. Up till now, these efforts have not been very successful, not least because of the language barrier.

<sup>41</sup> "Differentiation" is the key-concept in many neo-evolutionary theories. Bellah makes use of it in his theory of religious evolution which has implications also for the "secularization" of traditional forms of religion. Cf. R. Bellah: "Religious Evolution", in *American Sociological Review*, 29 (1964) pp 358 – 374.

<sup>42</sup> The decline of institutional Christianity does not necessarily imply a decline of religion generally. Cf. for example the considerations by Th. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, New York 1967.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. similar considerations in the case of a 19th century Korean religious movement by Chai Sik Chung, "Religion and Cultural Identity – The Case of 'Eastern Learning'", in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie* 5 (1969) pp 118 – 132.

<sup>44</sup> For other examples see Paul de Witt Twinem, "Modern Syncretic Religious Societies in China", in *The Journal of Religion* 5 (1925) pp 463 – 482, 595 – 606 and Hsiao, *loc. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Whether it is possible to substitute for the traditional symbol system Western science and philosophy depends on several parameters. Social and intellectual stratification is just one. Another important one is the degree of internalisation of the traditional symbol system. Older people – even intellectuals – who acquired their primary and secondary socialisation in terms of the traditional symbol system are less likely to be able or willing to substitute for it a new symbol system than are younger people (cf. Paul de Witt Twinem, *loc. cit.* p 163). It is noteworthy that the attitude toward traditional and foreign religions may change during the life of a person in the sense that he is willing to join a foreign religion during his youth but later on turns back to traditional religions. In a paper entitled "How I Happened to Join a Japanese New Religion": One Life History and its Significance for Interpreting Japanese New Religions" H. R. Earhart has analyzed an interesting example of such change. The paper was read at the XIVth Congress of the I.A.H.R., August 1980 at Winnipeg, Manitoba.