

# Religions in Taiwan: Between Mercantilism and Millenarianism

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## INTRODUCTION

In November 1996, I was asked to participate in the recording of a TV program which had religious and supernatural issues as its focus. Such programs are common in Taiwan. Around the table were the host, two Buddhist monks (one of them an adherent of Tibetan Buddhism), an Iman, a Taoist scholar and myself, a Catholic priest and the only foreigner. The theme chosen for this particular program was “the end of the world”—and the recording did not go smoothly. The host had to ask for several breaks, trying each time to push us into a more heated argument. She was hoping that the debate would draw a clear-cut opposition between “Oriental” religions, critical of the very concept of “end of the world” or postponing the event to a time a few trillions years from now, and “Western religions”, including Islam, which would proclaim that the final cataclysm was at hand. I, for my part, could only repeat that I was absolutely ignorant of the time of the final happening, and that Jesus himself did not claim to know this ultimate secret which is hidden in the heart of the Father. And, although Taoist and Buddhist representatives differed in their estimate, it was certainly difficult even for them to start a debate on the exact number of millennia still required before the world would witness the end of all things. But interest was finally aroused by the fact that most participants seemed to expect the imminent coming of *some* catastrophic event, such as an earthquake or invasion, which would look very much like the end of the world for Taiwan, or Taipei at least. I was obliged to strike a different chord by stating my belief that, in today’s world, risks and opportunities were conjointly increasing and that our future was not necessarily catastrophic but would be determined by the decisions we take in everyday life.

The debate was very much symptomatic of some of the tendencies at work in the religious landscape of Taiwan today. In some respects, Taiwanese people distance themselves from Western religious influences

with their strong eschatological flavour and are anxious to assert the uniqueness of the Chinese religions they embrace. In this respect, they may differ from their Japanese or Korean neighbours. They seem to channel their anxieties about their lives and their society through creeds and practices rooted in the Chinese millennial tradition. Although millenarian beliefs are not (or are not yet) a leitmotif of the message delivered by the rapidly growing “new religious” movements in Taiwan, anxiety about social and political uncertainties, and fears about an apocalyptic future are certainly powerful forces behind the transformations affecting the religious psyche in contemporary Taiwan.

The argument of this paper will run as follows: The main danger affecting religious activities in Taiwan is mercantilism, which goes along with a strong individualistic focus that characterizes the spiritual quest of many Taiwanese. However, the way mercantilism answers the needs expressed within the “religious market” reveals deep social fears which could one day crystallize into millennial movements, which are not unknown in the Taiwanese tradition. Furthermore, the way millennial tendencies are at the same time generated and controlled has much to do with the very peculiar political situation of the island.

I shall first say a word about the religious landscape in general. From there, I shall focus on the new religious movements as well as on a recent series of religious scandals. This will help me to demonstrate what I shall call the “millennial potential” of Taiwanese religious movements and to draw out a descriptive model of religious phenomena in Taiwan.

#### TAIWAN’S RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

In the Chinese context, determining the boundaries of religious affiliations is always a risky process and, to a certain extent, a meaningless one.<sup>1</sup> The concept of “diffused religion” is widely used when observers seek to describe the unique intertwining of social and religious rites, as well as the intermingling of different religious traditions and practices that has taken place throughout Chinese history. Studies have shown that nearly half of the people of Taiwan define themselves as Buddhists when they are asked about their religious affiliation.<sup>2</sup> However, some surveys that include more detailed questions about observance of Buddhist beliefs and practices have indicated that only 7 to 15 percent of Taiwanese are Buddhist believers *stricto sensu*, the lowest figure i.e. 7 percent or so of this estimate being probably more accurate.<sup>3</sup>

It is generally estimated that folk religion constitutes the religious system of at least 65 percent of the population. It should be stressed that the beliefs

held by followers of new religious movements are not easily distinguished from those pervading folk religion. The “folk-religion” label comprises believers belonging to the traditional social and ritual network as well as members of small-scale organizations with a strong sense of identity.

The 1996 report of the Interior Ministry offers some of the most accurate information to date.<sup>4</sup> Among the twelve religions officially recognized in Taiwan, it lists 3,938 temples of various Buddhist obediences served by a clergy of 9,360 monks and nuns. The faithful registering with these Buddhist associations totals 4.8 million people. The number of temples affiliated under the Taoist association’s banner, and home for most folk religious practices, amounts to 8,292, with registered persons numbering 3.8 million. A very loose definition of Taoist clergy results in a total of 31,950 persons in this category. Among the recognized new religions, Yiguandao—貫道 (see below) claims a membership of 942,000 persons. It is followed by Tiandejiao 天德教, whose claim of having 200,000 followers appears rather dubious to many observers, while the 185,000 members attributed to Tiandijiao 天帝教 seems a plausible estimate. Tiandejiao was founded in the Mainland in 1923 and legalized as a religion in Taiwan in 1989. Tiandijiao, founded by Li Yu-chieh 李玉階 in 1980, might be the fastest growing new religion in Taiwan. Xuanyuanjiao 軒轅教, established by the legislator Wang Han-sheng 王寒生 in 1957 claims to have a membership of 136,000, and Li-ism 理教, one of the syncretistic religions that has flourished in China throughout the ages, gives a figure of 140,000.

According to the 1996 report, Catholic membership is 304,000 and the membership of the various Protestant denominations is 402,000. The Catholic Church and the main Protestant denominations have remained at a standstill in growth, or might even have experienced a slight decline, for the last twenty-five years. This might be partially due to the fact that Christianity is still considered as a “foreign” religion, which is an impediment now that cultural pride has been restored and further enhanced by economic successes. However, the influence of Christianity in Taiwan goes beyond its institutional boundaries, and some of its core ideas and symbolism sometimes appear in new religious movements. Nevertheless, the latter basically rely on the pattern provided by “Chinese religions” throughout the ages. It should also be noted that, strictly speaking, millennial movements are restricted to a few marginal Protestant sects. Several years ago, the “Church of Sion” was the most vocal of these groups. These days, it is the “Church of Jacob” which proclaims that the days of wrath are coming soon. But all these groups have a very limited impact and no visible influence on the creeds of the other religious movements.

The above mentioned figures cover only the religious movements legally recognized, and thus partly ignore the flourishing of movements and masters outside these official associations. However, many new movements fall under the umbrella of the Buddhist or Taoist associations and it would be inaccurate to draw too strong a distinction between “established” religions and “marginal” ones. The Taiwanese religious landscape is characterized by its fluidity, which may explain why many Buddhist masters are anxious to draw a line between self-declared spiritual leaders and mainstream associations through the enacting of a law on religions (see below).

Thirteen denominations have been recognized by the government as “religions”, the last group to attain this coveted official status was the Unification Church 同一教. The recognition of a religious group as an “official religion” is generally done on political grounds and such recognition facilitates its establishment within society. Furthermore, in the process of gaining official recognition, the religious movement may lose its messianic or millennial overtones. But even religious groups not recognized officially can become channels of social integration rather than of radicalization. This is due to the fact that many new movements emphasize the importance of literacy, relying on a given set of “classics” and enhancing the status of its followers by the cultural background they claim to provide them with. A continuous process may lead from the fluidity of folk religion to the boundaries of institutional organizations through the channel provided by new religious movements. Furthermore, the transitional function played by small-scale religious movements is manifested in the fact that some of their adepts may later evolve towards orthodox forms of Buddhism: The movement has provided a first contact with Buddhist scriptures, and this contact will continue, while other beliefs and practices they were associated with in the first place will eventually falter.<sup>5</sup>

Does this mean that millenarianism is not relevant to understanding and analyzing Taiwan’s religious situation? On the contrary, the nature of the millennial tendencies at work in Taiwan today requires further analysis. A look at a series of recent religious scandals might help us to understand better what is at stake here.

#### TAIWAN’S RELIGIOUS WORLD IN CRISIS

Let me begin with some of the events I have recently observed in the religious landscape of Taiwan :

- Throughout the year 1996, there has been a craze about TV shows centering on after-worldly experiences such as encounters with the souls of

dead people. These shows have been accused of having too strong an impact on the psyche of vulnerable individuals and even to be partly responsible for the suicide of some teenagers. The Ministry of Interior has announced the setting-up of some regulations for limiting the scope of such psychic manipulations.

- In September 1996, a well-known Buddhist temple in central Taiwan received as monks and nuns 132 university students who had just participated in a summer camp within the premises of the temple. Such an *en masse* ordination aroused the fury of the relatives of the newly ordained monks; some of these relatives gathered in front of the temple and, in some cases, forcibly took away their loved ones. Most of the young converts stuck to their decision and later returned to the temple. The abbot of the monastery is not a marginal figure but the respected Master Wei-chueh 惟覺.

- In October 1996, a famous medium named Sung Chi-li 宋七力 was arrested for allegedly swindling NT\$3 billion from his followers in Taiwan and 400,000 renminbi from 20,000 followers in Mainland China. He had sold a huge number of “miraculous” objects such as lotus seals or pictures of him featuring his “halo”, but later admitted that his claims to possess supernatural powers were fraudulent. It was estimated that at least one hundred mediums operating in the Sung Chi-li style were active throughout the island.<sup>6</sup>

- At almost the same time, another religious leader, Master Miao Tien 妙天 was accused of cheating followers of more than NT\$2 billion by selling space in illegally built pagodas and temples that would supposedly benefit the owner’s ancestor. A third similar case involved Master Chin Hai 清海無上師, although it should be noted that allegations made against her are somehow more controversial. In any case, the association she founded is among those accused of having made dubious contributions to the Clinton election campaign. Similarly, around the end of December, a well-known Taiji master was accused of various financial malpractices.

It should be noted that none of these financial scandals affected the large-scale Buddhist organizations, although the extent of their wealth is now the subject of public attention. The cases disclosed are certainly to be understood in the light of the struggle presently engaged against corruption, a struggle whose scope and efficiency is often questioned. Furthermore, they allowed the government to advance the drive for a law controlling the activities of religious organizations. This is a project supported by prominent Taoist and Buddhist organizations, but staunchly opposed by the Catholic hierarchy, afraid of anything which would limit religious freedom or tighten the government’s control on religious activities.

Analyzing what had recently taken place, scholars are agreed on several points :

- During the last two or three years, religious fervor in Taiwan has reached a climax: one witnesses a “religious consumerism”, with people anxious to buy religious goods supposedly ensuring happiness, security and enlightenment.
- In this perspective, religious consumerism is the result of a mix of material affluence and psychological insecurity.
- The popularity of the book entitled “August 1995” (1995閏八月), featuring a Communist invasion of Taiwan, and the steady emigration of Taiwanese are also signs among others of this social anxiety.
- This climate has provoked an influx of money for religious organizations, which has in turn aroused the interest of local mafiosi and unscrupulous individuals in this potential source of profits.
- The media have likewise participated in the dramatization of the religious phenomena, playing on fear and curiosity.<sup>7</sup>

#### NEW RELIGIONS AND MILLENARIANISM

In Taiwan, small-scale religious movements presently emphasize individual spiritual needs and provide psychological support which can sometimes supplement that offered by the village community, especially when it comes to movements aimed at simple people. Such is the case with the “Church of Compassion”, Cihuitang 慈慧堂, which is very much an association of local chapters. They may offer a religious world-view tainted with millenarianism, but in fact their impact on millenarian thought in Taiwan remains limited. Likewise, it would be interesting to know exactly how many new religions are of Japanese origins, and, of those that are, if they display clearer apocalyptic features. But the small scale and secrecy of such organizations make any evaluation problematic. Experts believe that “at least twenty religious movements” come from Japan, though they are not specific about which ones.<sup>8</sup> Actually, considering how close links generally are between Japan and Taiwan, it seems that the impact of the Japanese “doomsday cults” has been rather limited. Furthermore, the “Aum Shinrikyō” scandal has caused new religious movements in Taiwan to distance themselves from new religions in Japan.

Therefore, I shall focus rather on two of the more important new religions, Yiguandao and Tiandijiao. To what extent do such movements display millenarian features? As we shall see, the answer is not a clear-cut one.

Yiguandao or “Unity Sect” shows certain affinities with the White Lotus Society (*bailianjiao* 白蓮教),<sup>9</sup> although this assertion has been recently challenged by the organization itself, a further sign of the “legitimization process” noted above.<sup>10</sup> The history of its foundation is obscure. It was active on the Mainland during the 1920s and 1930s and banned by the Communist regime in 1949 as a result of accusations of collusion with the Nanjing puppet government. Some of its leaders began arriving in Taiwan in 1945. Internal rivalries within the organization, its tradition of secrecy, and the constraints imposed by political prohibitions (see below) divided the movement into a large number of small associations, organized around family altars. The proselytic character of the religion, whose main target now seems to be overseas Chinese communities, is certainly a sign of its initial millennial focus, as the increase in numbers of faithful and places of worship is seen as the means for bringing *xitian* 西天, the “Western Paradise” to earth. Yiguandao, therefore, is partially of millennial origin and has a tradition of secrecy and esoterism which influenced its earlier development in Taiwan. However, its success has coincided with the social promotion of the kind of people it was aiming to proselytize, such as native Taiwanese who are small entrepreneurs for example, and who are able to bring their employees into the church. This has made the religion something of a success story and, on the whole, a firm supporter of Li Teng-hui’s government. Might its millennial potential be reactivated if social circumstances were to change? The question remains an open one, though I personally doubt it.

Li Yu-chieh(1901-1994), the founder of Tiandijiao, has related his original spiritual experience to the Sino-Japanese war, when, secluded in Mount Hua, he received a message from *Tiandi* 天帝, the Lord on High,<sup>11</sup> a message which was at the same time about personal enlightenment and collective salvation in these times of hardship for the Chinese nation. Tiandijiao became an established religion only in 1980, after a split with Tiandejiao. The teachings of the religion stress the necessity for its followers to pray and strive night and day in order to delay or avert a global nuclear holocaust, and maintain world peace<sup>12</sup> and to safeguard Taiwan as a base for the peaceful unification of China under the Three People’s Principles.<sup>13</sup>

In the beginning, this stress on the nuclear threat reinforced the millennial outlook of the teachings of the movement. Recently, however, personal healing has been emphasized more than collective issues. As is the case for so many new religions, there is a strong belief in the healing powers of *Qi* 氣 and a cultivation of these powers. It may be the case, however, that the tension arising between Taiwan and Mainland China (where Tiandijiao is very active and has obviously high-level contacts) might lead the movement to emphasize its specific message on millenarian matters. Tiandijiao is certainly a new religion that states its political outlook clearly, and its

insistence on nuclear threats emphasizes its millennial tendencies. It seems to me that such tendencies might or might not be realized according to an assessment of the political situation made by the leadership of the organization.

Both Yiguandao and (perhaps more clearly) Tiandijiao provide us with examples of religious movements which exhibit a millennial potential without fully realizing it. It is not enough to look at their teaching however. The social context where it occurs also must be carefully examined.

#### THE MILLENNIAL POTENTIAL

The situation in contemporary Taiwan is not unprecedented. After the Taiping Tianguo rebellion (1850–1864), many leaders moved out of Fujian and came to Taiwan, where they somehow continued to spread their messianic world-view.<sup>14</sup> This was manifested by the development of vegetarian cults and halls in Taiwan during this period. Vegetarianism has always been strong in some areas of Taiwan, especially in the south, and is easily linked with marginal religious movements.<sup>15</sup> At the turn of this century, the cult of *Guandi* 關帝, the God of War, witnessed a tremendous increase, related to the development of automatic writing activities, the concern for opium addicts (who were often cured through the intervention of mediums) and the growth of nationalist feelings at the beginning of the Japanese occupation. Such a movement had obvious millennial overtones. However, none of these tendencies has developed into an open millenarian mass movement.

The millennial movement has always been in some way linked to the struggle conducted by Taiwanese people to assert their own identity, and is also connected to the fear that the Taiwanese autonomy and specific character might eventually disappear. Vegetarian cults, uniting villages and guilds outside the religious cults promoted by the Qing rulers, the devotion surrounding Guandi when Japanese were trying to assert their authority, and the spreading out of the Yiguandao religion in the south of Taiwan in the first period of the Kuomintang regime are examples of this permanent trend.

In this conceptual framework, the problem becomes this: what form of religious behavior has been preferred by Taiwanese people for expressing the fear of a Mainland invasion, since such an invasion could be easily perceived as a good substitute for an apocalyptic ending? Historical distinctions are required here: during the first part of the Kuomintang rule, there was strong political censorship of any movement which could have induced public disorder or anxiety. This explains, for instance, the successive bans imposed on the Yiguandao in 1952, 1959 and, in harsher fashion, in 1963. Starting in

the eighties, the liberalization of the regime and the Taiwanisation of the KMT occurred simultaneously. This was followed by an institutionalization of previously marginal religious movements, this institutionalization process expressing the move from the margin to the centre of power achieved by Taiwanese natives.

Once again, the dominant trend during the eighties and the first part of the nineties has been toward institutionalization much more than toward millenarianism, since social sectors formerly marginalized have begun to find a place in the social and political fabric.<sup>16</sup> We are beginning to witness the end of this process: the consolidated Taiwanese power is now faced with growing social and political troubles; likewise, Mainland China continues to assert its strength, and the take-over of Hong Kong puts Taiwan in an even more insecure position. Furthermore, after having induced social cohesiveness Taiwan's economic and educational apparatus has begun to show its propensity to marginalize categories of people unable to cope with Taiwan's success story. As we have seen already, these new trends have not merged into a consistent and recognizable millennial discourse, but the potential for this to appear is undeniably present.

When assessing the millennial potential a word remains to be said about millennial tendencies in Chinese Buddhist thought and the way they find their way into Taiwanese religions. When speaking about Buddhist millenarianism, one inevitably evokes the figure of Maitreya, *milefo* 彌勒佛, the Future Buddha. The figure of Maitreya is indeed very much present in Taiwan's temples, as it is in so many parts of China.<sup>17</sup> However, it is rather complex : the kind of eschatological thought it embodies can have a revolutionary flavor or, as the reverse, it can lead one to believe that no cosmic change will occur before a term that goes well beyond any future the mind can possibly envision.<sup>18</sup> Maitreya's figure is important in the sense that it provides any aspiring religious leader with an opportunity to play a role by displaying the right combination of Master-like, Revolutionary-like and Savior-like features. Furthermore, Maitreya gives popular Buddhism its universal and cosmic dimension, and, mixed with other devotions, displays a very strong millennial appeal. In this case also, the realization of the millennial potential depends on the historical circumstances.

#### MILLENARIANISM AND THE TAIWANESE RELIGIOUS PSYCHE

If a millennial movement were to consolidate in Taiwan, what would its characteristics be? Would it belong more to a "Western" or an "Eastern" species of millenarianism? I have already noted that while some fundamentalist Christian movements are active in Taiwan, their audience

remains a very limited one. Even more important is the fact that millennial phenomena observable in Taiwan presently relate much more to classic Chinese millenarianism than to any Christian influence. Taoist overtones are especially obvious. Taiwanese people spontaneously draw a link between any crisis of cosmic nature, such as an earthquake, and the accumulation of social evil or the general disorder of the society. The world is viewed as a global equilibrium, and a dysfunction in some part of the system automatically affects the other parts. Too strong a disequilibrium might bring irreversible damage. The most renowned Taoist scholar in Taiwan, Li Fung-mao 李豐楙 has recently written several papers about Taoist eschatology, stressing its importance in today's context and the role played by Taoist liturgy for putting in order social mechanisms. If I interpret his latest productions correctly, he believes that the Taoist tradition can provide Taiwanese with an eschatology that allows them to cope better with the tensions provoked by their present situation and to reduce the impact of internal and external conflicts.<sup>19</sup>

To end, let me consider the following statement: "Chinese millenarianism ... exerted its greatest appeal among marginal or peripheral members of society who, though not necessarily economically deprived, were denied access to power and prestige in the orthodox world. Through mutual aid and group solidarity, these people were able to gain self-respect and a sense of worth from their affiliation with sectarian organization."<sup>20</sup> Given the general historical significance of this statement, do present day Taiwanese millennial tendencies fit into classical Chinese millennial categories? The answer to this question is complex. People at the periphery of culture are indeed likely candidates for entering marginal religious movements that rely on divination techniques and provide strong emotional support. Such an affiliation is also a way to claim a contact with the written word, with scriptures, and then to enhance one's status. However, these movements are not always the ones which display the most striking millennial tendencies. Millenarianism is rather a feature potentially present in most of the major religions represented in Taiwan. The island as a whole sees itself as marginalized by its position vis-à-vis Mainland China. This marginalization nourishes underlying fears about the future. But the very pervasiveness of these fears makes it difficult for a religious movement to assert its religious originality. In Taiwan, millenarianism does not allow one to differentiate between "marginal" and "orthodox" movements—a distinction which in itself is not a very meaningful one in the Taiwanese context. Furthermore, the stress on apocalyptic predictions would almost certainly induce a strong political response from the State because it would be seen as a threat to public security. Religious movements do know that the

issue is a sensitive one and downplay the collective threat, transferring it to the realm of the individual. In other words, the plausibility of a political apocalypses makes it more difficult to promote the idea of a religious apocalypses. It remains to be seen if the deepening of the political crisis might not overcome present day inhibitions, with the result that millennial thought might suddenly become a dominant feature of the Taiwanese religious landscape.

It is also noteworthy that millennial tendencies in today's Taiwan stress much more the apocalyptic character of the coming events than the utopian potential of these events. The focus is much more on the End than on the hope for a totally different New World. Anxiety has been nourished by Taiwan's impressive economic growth of the last fifteen years. To some extent, the golden age is already behind. Nowadays, much is at stake, much can be lost, and after having enjoyed so many opportunities, the Taiwanese people unconsciously fear that a counter-process might be under way. In fact, two conflicting versions of history are at work, very often within the psyche of a single individual: one is a traditional Chinese world-view that emphasizes the everlasting process of counterbalancing movements, the cyclical nature of things. Such a world-view, without explicitly waiting for a final Apocalypses, will express fears about micro-apocalypses which can bring glorious periods to an end. Another world-view, of Western origin, might find in the present growth in East-Asia the signal of a new superiority which could become stronger and stronger, without fear of any sobering regulating process. But such a dynamic version of history goes along with the acceptance of a *direction* and thus of an *end* of the historical drama. General optimism about the fate of Taiwan or of the Chinese nation can thereby exist alongside a growing awareness of an apocalyptic threat inherent in the historical process. This Western version of history is present in Taiwan on an intellectual level but, until now, has had few repercussions in the religious realm.

The future development of millennial movements in Taiwan will depend on the evolution of the political situation. There is strong potential for such development, potential which presently has more to do with the history of Chinese millenarianism than with the influence of Western tradition. For the time being, religious and social anxieties are seen more in individual responses more than in collective ones. But the Taiwanese religious landscape changes rapidly, and the situation is so volatile that nobody can predict what it will look like three years from now.

## NOTES

- 1 This development relies on two previous articles that I wrote. See VERMANDER, 1995a and b.
- 2 The figure sometimes varies. A poll provides the following estimates : 38 percent of the sample define themselves as Buddhist; 31 percent as belonging to traditional religion; 4.2 percent as Christians. 13 percent state they are not believers (*Zhongguo shibao*中國時報*China Times, CT*, 1996, October 13:3). On differences between religion, faith and practice in Taiwan, see my two articles quoted below.
- 3 CH'U, 1997: 1–40.
- 4 Internal document. See also *CT*, September 9, 1996:7 and MINISTRY of INTERIOR, 1993.
- 5 VERMANDER, 1995a: 10.
- 6 *Lienhebao* 聯合報, *United Daily New, UDN*, October 14 1996: 5.
- 7 See for instance a debate in *CT*, 24 October 1996: 37–38.
- 8 *UDN*, October 14 1996: 5.
- 9 An esoteric society, active at the end of the Yuan dynasty (1280–1367). The name “white lotus society” has been widespread, and to a certain extent was applied to any kind of secret millenarian grouping.
- 10 SUNG, 1982: 30–35. CH'U, 1997: 359–380.
- 11 Tiandijiao also uses the term *shangdi* 上帝, the commonest expression in Chinese for saying “God”, and stresses the fact that God is the creator of Heaven and Earth.
- 12 TIANDIJIAO, 1987: 54.
- 13 *ibid.*:54 and 22. The Three People’s Principles constitute the basis of Sun Yat-sen’s political theory.
- 14 CHEN, 1995: chapter VII.
- 15 See for instance the various contributions gathered in CONTEMPORARY MONTHLY, 1994.
- 16 When I was preparing this paper, rereading a study by David Jordan and Daniel Overmyer, *The Flying Phoenix, Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* (JORDAN and OVERMYER, 1986), I was struck by the fact that millenarianism was not at all a relevant question at the time. Very aptly, Jordan and Overmyer were analyzing marginal religious movements as networks for the “democratization” of the religious literacy and, consequently, for the democratization of the society as a whole. The question of millenarianism seems also secondary to Li Pen-hsu 鄭林本炫 in an article published after the Aum Shinrikyō affair (*CT*, 1995, April 26: 11)
- 17 However, since many Taiwanese Buddhist temples are small in size, they do not have a Hall of the Four Deva-Kings *Si tianwang tang* 鄭林本炫, the place where the statue of Maitreya generally stands. See HSING, 1983:139-142.
- 18 See SPONBERG and HARDACRE, 1988, especially D. Overmyer, “Maitreya, Savior and Revolutionary”: 110-134.
- 19 I especially refer to an unpublished presentation that he presented at a symposium held at the Academia Sinica in May 1996 on “Taiwanese Religions in the twenty-first century”. It is interesting to note that Lee Fung-mao’s presentation was unique in its genre and that other papers presented at this symposium focused primarily on questions of identity or symbolism for instance.
- 20 SHEK, 1987: 536.

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