The Politics of Narrative Identity in the Mazu Cult*

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In examining the development of Taiwan's identity issue since 1987, we will investigate the reformation of discourse on religious identity in central Taiwan. On the one hand, our inquiry concerns what may be called the politics of discursive identity. It is politics in a microscopic sense: as we shall see, the religious identity of Peikang [Beigang] became a problem when another temple in Tachia [Dajia], which had maintained a branch relationship with Peikang and annually paid the latter homage, suddenly stopped its pilgrimages and switched its loyalty to Peikang's neighboring rival temple, Fengtiangong in Hsinkang [Xingang].

On the other hand, our inquiry is also about "talking" politics. Hence, we shall introduce a post-structuralist view which renders discourse on identity fragmentary and self-conflicted, and reveals how workaday local people think about their equally fragmentary identities in a storytelling manner. Therefore, our main purpose will be to demonstrate how, by invoking an ancient territorial name of Penkang [Bengang] and its original Mazu temple, Peikang has attacked its rival, Hsinkang. However, amid its alternative recourses to aggressivity and narcissism, it also has yearned for the unification of both places. In short, it demonstrates a process of fragmentary politics involving narrative identity at the local level.

Keywords: identity; Mazu; metonymic-aggressive; metaphoric-narcissistic; narrative

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(W)e cannot assume that for most people national identification—when it exists—excludes or is always or even superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being.

—Eric J. Hobsbawm[1]

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*I thank the anonymous reviewers' comments for improving the quality of the paper.

[1]Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), 11. This paper is inspired by Hobsbawm's insights and proposes to take the (re)formation of a religious identity, as fashioned by the discourse of relevant temples, as the point of departure. By what mechanisms this religious identity is related to that of nationalism clearly goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

> (I)dentity is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it.
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> —**Homi K. Bhabha**[2]

Mazu (est. 960-1048) was claimed to have been a witch who could foretell people's fortunes, and because of her talents was officially sanctified as a local goddess by the North Song government after her death.[3] In the subsequent millennial evolution of her cult, she has stood out as the goddess of the sea, particularly in the Taiwan Strait. This is partly due to her alleged birthplace, Meizhou Isle, which is located in the Strait and under the administration of Fujian Province, China. Since most early immigrants to Taiwan came from Fujian and their migration took them across the Taiwan Strait, they understandably brought the branch images of Mazu from their hometowns and constructed new temples to enshrine the images. In the past century, the Mazu temple that has enjoyed the most visits from the worshippers in Taiwan has been Chaotiangong in Peikang [Beigang], Yunlin County. The popularity the Peikang temple enjoys is explained by its worshippers to be the magical power, or *ling*, of the Mazu image in answering their prayers. Whether this is true or not, this assumed magical power, as manifested in the particular locality of Peikang, forms the backbone of our inquiry into the challenges to and reformation of local (religious) identity in contemporary Taiwan under the impact of drastic social change.

Our inquiry really concerns what may be called the politics of discursive identity. It is politics in a microscopic sense: just as the above quotation from Eric Hobsbawm suggests, scholastic focus on national identity in the past decade has probably been misplaced, since the ambiguities so often found in a "national" entity have deeper roots at a local level and in a mundane manner. In the case we shall analyze shortly, Peikang's religious identity became a problem when another temple in Tachia [Dajia] which had maintained a branch relationship with Peikang and annually paid the latter homage suddenly stopped its pilgrimages and switched its loyalty to Peikang's

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[2]Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 75.
[3]Li Feng-mao, "Mazu and Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism," *Shijie ribao* (World Journal) (New York), April 30, 1993.

neighboring rival temple, Fengtiangong in Hsinkang [Xingang]. We submit that understanding the twists and turns of this local identity (re)formation comes *before* understanding them on the macroscopic, national level.

Furthermore, our inquiry is about "talking" politics. Contrary to a structuralist view of the identity issue, which tends to see unchangeable formal logic functioning back and forth between positive and negative poles (so-called *binary oppositions*) behind volatile events concerning identity formation, we lean to a post-structuralist position which seriously considers how people talk about identity-related events. That is, we pay special attention to the very superficiality of people's talk as it appears in the "texts" they produce, and try, not unlike literary critics dealing with Shakespeare's plays, to understand their self-image in reference to a post-structuralist framework. Hence, on the one hand, we shall criticize a strictly structuralist account of Taiwanese religious identity which relies heavily on anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss' logic of binary opposition. On the other, we will introduce the post-structuralist view which, while recognizing the importance of binary opposition, reduces the notion's abstract and overarching nature and renders it fragmentary and self-conflicted so that it can accurately examine how workaday local people[4] think about their equally fragmentary identities in a *storytelling* manner. Our main objective in this inquiry, therefore, is to demonstrate how, by invoking an ancient territorial name of Penkang [Bengang] and its original Mazu temple (Tianhougong), Peikang has attacked its rival, Hsinkang, but despite its alternative recourses to aggressivity and narcissism, has also yearned for the unification of both places. In short, it has demonstrated fragmentary politics involving narrative identity at the local level.

The Story

Our story begins at the time when anthropologist Steven Sangren

[4]In the following analysis, "local people" will boil down to the local religious or intellectual elite only, for we are interested in the politics contained within the texts produced precisely by this group of people. As for one of the anonymous reviewers' comments concerning my confusion of both units of analysis, i.e., that of the Mazu temple and the community that the temple claims to represent, I frankly admit that, given the scope and the preliminary nature of the paper, I only take the temple, and its discourse, as the object of my analysis. How the "real" local people in Peikang,

ends his;[5] that is, when he mentions a "controversial pilgrimage from Dajia [Tachia] to Meizhou in spring 1988 [*sic*]."[6] The purpose of our story is twofold: to delineate the chronological context in which a new trend of what may be called the local politics of religious identity has developed, and foreshadow the necessity of changing from Sangren's holistic structuralist analysis to a fragmentary post-structuralist view of identity politics.

The territorial cult of Mazu reached its peak when the Peikang temple, the Mecca for Taiwanese Mazu worshippers, launched an island-wide tour for its sacred image under the guidance of the Taiwan Provincial Government in October 1987, celebrating the alleged millennial anniversary of Mazu's martyrdom.[7] At exactly the same time, Tachia's temple committee crossed the Taiwan Strait to worship the goddess' original temple in Meizhou, Fujian. When it enshrined a Meizhou branch image of the goddess and brought it back, Tachia legitimized its branch relationship with the original temple and set out to sever its previous subordinate relation to Peikang. This resulted in Tachia's refusal to join the century-old pilgrimage to Peikang in spring 1988. Instead, under the name of *raojing*, which connotes "egalitarian visit,"[8] it went to Hsinkang's Mazu temple, Peikang's traditional rival and just five kilometers away on the south side of the Peikang River.

The rerouting of Tachia's pilgrimage was obviously a heavy blow to Peikang, as the annual tour was the largest of its kind, consisting of more than twenty thousand pilgrims walking for eight days and bringing in millions of tourist dollars to Peikang.[9] Under the circumstances, the identity politics issue has arisen in how Peikang

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Hsinkang, or Tachia feel about being represented in their respective temple's discourse is an empirical question subject to a longer and much more comprehensive fieldwork than has been undertaken and reported here.

[5]P. Steven Sangren, "History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy: The Ma Tsu Cult of Taiwan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 692.

[6]The actual date was October 1987. The correction is important because the pilgrimage resulted in the consequences that we shall discuss shortly. In the quotation, Tachia is located in Taichung County of central Taiwan, while Meizhou, the site of the original Mazu temple, is a small offshore island in southern Fujian, China.

[7]Tsai Hsien-hui, *Beigang Chaotiangong zhi* (The annals of Chaotiangong in Peikang) (Peikang: Chaotiangong, 1995), 118.

[8]Kuo Ching-wen, ed., *Dajia Mazu tingzhi wang Beigang jinxiang shiliao huibian* (Collected historical materials concerning the termination of the pilgrimage to Peikang by Mazu of Tachia) (Peikang: Bengang Mazu wenjiao jijinhui, 1993), 11-60.

[9]Ibid., 50.

has tried to maintain its leading position, which it had held since the late nineteenth century, in the hierarchy of Taiwanese Mazu temples.[10] Its subsequent strategies and proliferated texts (which we will analyze later) have included, on the one hand, a radical attack on its rival temple for fabricating the history of Penkang, the old territorial name which surrounded today's Peikang and Hsinkang.[11] On the other hand, it has set out, in a different context concerning repairing Hsinkang's temple, to "correct" history by reaffirming the senior and hence superior relation of the Peikang temple to Hsinkang. In addition, it has found a substitute for the Tachia pilgrimage by promoting an equally old and more mysterious walking pilgrimage from Paishatun in northern Taiwan (mysterious in that within the average ten-day walk, the Mazu image's will determines which way to go and when and where to stop).

It is the discourse on these strategies, most of which has been generated by the Mazu temple at Peikang,[12] that forms our point of departure from Sangren's dated circular logic, which legitimizes both state and local temple control over their respective subjects.[13] It is dated because since the ROC government ended its four-decade rule in Taiwan under martial law in mid-1987, socioreligious dynamics have been set free, so to speak: the old hierarchical cult of Mazu could no longer sustain itself within circular logic when an "entrepreneur" temple such as Tachia was determined to create its own legitimacy. Secondly, Sangren's explanation is dated because it cannot incorporate the above strategies fashioned by another temple under the pressure of delegitimation. What we need instead is a new conceptual vocabulary admittedly borrowed from trendy, so-called "post-structuralism," which can address the contradictory dimensions of a religious identity which have been simultaneously aggressive and narcissistic.

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[10]Wen Chen-hua, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Formation of the Mazu Cult Center in Peikang," *Shilian zazhi* (Journal of United Historians), 1984, no. 4:16.

[11]The character "*kang*" [*gang* in *pinyin*] in the three names means "port," which suggests that the origin of the three areas all had to do with their function as ports on the Peikang River.

[12]In the following, we shall anthropomorphize the Mazu temples in Peikang, Hsinkang, Tachia, or even Penkang as speakers in their relevant discourses. By this practice, we tacitly understand that the real, and sometimes anonymous, speakers are almost always those religious or civilian intellectuals whose interests are intertwined with the development of the specific temple that they support.

[13]See next section for more discussion.

A Conceptual Tool-Kit

Our story brings us to Sangren's powerful but flawed argument about the importance of history both in authenticating state and local cult legitimacy and minimizing conflicts between the two levels.[14] In the following, we shall first criticize Sangren's holistic theory, which is based on two sources: the Durkheimian thesis that people attribute the power of their own social collectivities to the magical power of supernatural entities, and the Levi-Straussian notion of binary opposition which is deep-rooted in people's mystification.[15] We will then draw on the discussions of recent post-structuralists such as Craig Calhoun, Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson, and Homi Bhabha to construct a tool-kit which will help shed light on the elusive but ultimately split religious identity in a narrative form that emerges from local history.[16] In this explication of the two theoretical orientations, we will demonstrate that the holistic view of an abstract categorical identity such as "Taiwanese" in one orientation has given way to a fragmentary local nature in another, and that such a local identity is not only fragmentary but also ambiguously contradictory, as the narrator and his/her audience may alternatively assume two opposed positions in telling and listening to the formative story of their collective identity.

The gist of Sangren's argument is that the history of the goddess Mazu, in both state and local versions, reproduces meanings for her worshippers in two senses. First, the state history, which records an emperor's orders to enshrine her and offer her wooden steles, reaffirms both the power of the emperor (as derived from heaven) to sanctify (*feng*) a deity, and his recognition of Mazu's magical power (*ling*) to protect her worshippers. Second, the local version also

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[14]See Sangren, "History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy," 674-97; and P. Steven Sangren, *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987).

[15]Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1915); Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 45-63.

[16]Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 9-36; Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Construction of Identity," ibid., 37-99; and Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in his *The Location of Culture*, 66-84.

signifies both acceptance of the state sanctification and the enhancement of Mazu's power through the same blessing. The dichotomy of *feng* and *ling* mutually reinforces the legitimate power of both state and local cults. In addition, the essence of the magical power is simply "the mystified power of local social institutions," which "in this case [means] Taiwanese identity."[17] Hence, the local history of *ling* is a mystified expression of the Durkheimian "sacred power of social collectivities."[18] In sum, the religious history of Mazu requests the worshippers to subordinate themselves to society, which manifests itself in the legitimate power of both state and local cults.

To criticize this theory, let us first note that Sangren's structuralist account is inclined to take what worshippers think and do only at face value. It tries hard to maintain that the social structure places worshippers in their subject position *and* makes them think that their subordination is natural.[19] Clearly, the structure, with its built-in logic of dichotomy, is meant to be immune to change; hence Sangren can assert, the transformation from imperial to Republican China in 1911 notwithstanding, that the Republican government in Taiwan since 1949 still relies on the dichotomy of *feng* and *ling* to reinforce its ruling legitimacy.[20] It is no wonder that he has a hard time trying to balance the enduring logic of mutual legitimation with the pioneering Tachia pilgrimage to Meizhou in late 1987 which upset the hierarchical status quo of the local Mazu temples.[21] The event challenged what the immobile logic stipulated: that the magical power of Tachia's image was reinforced by the goddess' original temple, which was located in a communist regime which by no means legitimized itself with the power of *feng*, or sanctification.

The event also highlighted the second contradiction in Sangren's argument. Sangren asserts that the Mazu cult "is a mystified projection of the Taiwanese community,"[22] which accords with the holistic logic of mutual legitimation. But, in explaining the Tachia rerouting,

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[17]Sangren, "History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy," 684.

[18]Ibid., 689.

[19]Roland Barthes has an excellent explication of how ideology, as a system of signification, operates in naturalizing people's understanding. See Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in his *Mythologies* (New York: Noonday, 1972) , 111-26.

[20]Sangren, "History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy," 689-92.

[21]The pilgrimage happened in conjunction with the ROC government accelerating its democratization process by terminating rule under martial law.

[22]Sangren, "History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy," 684.

he freely admits that there is "a nested hierarchy of local social identities . . . variously invoked depending on context."[23] Since the rerouting privileged the local identity of Tachia vis-à-vis a categorical Taiwanese identity, what remains unclear is how the religious history of Mazu, embodying the immutable logic of *feng* and *ling*, can sustain both the overarching categorical identity and a set of local identities at the same time. Sangren's structuralist account is thus biased toward the reification of a categorical identity which is, in our view, subject to constant internal differentiation. Therefore, by placing structure above history, Sangren must maintain a holistic logic which imputes to every Mazu believer a categorical Taiwanese identity. However, current events suggest that the *ling* aspect of local history has developed in spite of the demise of the official history of *feng* in the communist regime, and the issue is actually the ever-fragmentary tendencies of identity, categorical or otherwise. To discuss this latter point, we now turn to post-structuralist views of narrative and identity.

As "post" in the neologism "post-structuralism" indicates, this trendy intellectual movement reveals both continuous and innovative relationships with structuralism.[24] In the context of discussing the Mazu cult and local religious identity, we find both the continuous element in the notion of subject position and the innovative element in seeing history as storytelling. That is, in narrating the past, both narrators and listeners alternatively assume subject positions that are mutually contradictory within the story.

Post-structuralists accept Sangren's views on Taiwanese identity as a subject position assumed by people in Taiwan.[25] But unlike Sangren's further assertion that the Taiwanese subject position is imposed upon by comprehensive binary logic, i.e., the dichotomy of *feng* and *ling*, post-structuralists reject theoretical attempts to ground history in an immutable core which functions according to a holistic logic. In this new view, subject position or identity "(i)n the modern era . . . is always constructed and situated in a field and amid a flow of contending cultural discourses."[26] The quotation may be unpacked

[23]Ibid., 692.

[24]Structuralism was then associated with names such as Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, and Claude Levi-Strauss.

[25]Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," 13.

[26]Ibid., 12.

into three parts: first, identity construction has undergone qualitative changes between premodern and modern times, an insight derived from early Foucault, who suggests that with the rise of philology, biology, and political economy in the nineteenth century, discourse on self was completely separated from that of previous times.[27] Second, modern identity is constructed by contradictory discourses, one of which is narrative. We shall discuss the contradictory construction of a narrative identity shortly, but here we underscore the importance of the notion of a narrated identity in illuminating our case: the history of Penkang and of local Mazu temples as a story told by Peikang people. Finally, identity is situated in a field; it is viewed both as closely related to people's daily lives and as anti-essentialist—not in the essence of a person which makes his/her talk, but how he/she constructs his/her malleable identity in his/her talk.

In terms of post-structuralism's innovative aspect, we shall focus on how a narrative identity in its immediate context is theorized. Recent discussions seem to point to two important aspects. The first aspect emphasizes a "relational setting." In this view, a locally produced history is regarded as a public narrative about who we are with four important features:[28] the story is unfolded in a spatio-temporal context; it connects social events into episodes; it weighs the episodes and turns them into "causal emplotment," or the sense of the story lines that a narrative provides; and it practices "selective appropriation" by embedding evaluative criteria in the plots so contrived. In a nutshell, this theory of relational setting provides some key categories through which a story of identity formation may be decomposed.

In the second aspect, subject positions in a stereotypical story are highlighted. Homi Bhabha,[29] by combining Roman Jacobson's and Jacques Lacan's vital dichotomies, provides two conflictual positions which both narrators and listeners may alternatively assume in the course of storytelling: metaphoric-narcissistic versus metonymic-aggressive. Let us begin with Lacan's dichotomy of narcissism and aggressivity. For Lacan, these two forms of identification happen simultaneously when a child, at the formative mirror phase, identifies

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[27]Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage, 1973).
[28]Somers and Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other'," 59-60.
[29]Bhabha, "The Other Question," 77-78.

him/herself with his/her image in the mirror and, at the same time, separates him/herself from the image as a discrete entity.[30] Narcissism is looking for a self amid diverse kinds of objects; aggressivity is finding alien, and thus threatening, elements in oneself. It is Lacan himself who drew on Jacobson's distinction of metaphor and metonym to reinterpret some of Freud's psychoanalytical concepts.[31] In terms of narcissism, we can readily see that the capacity to recognize oneself among different objects relies on a logic of analogy, just as a poet, by using the metaphor of seasons, illuminates his/her moods. Aggressive identification, on the other hand, relies on a logic of contiguity to find in the same self-image an alien other (the discrete image-entity): one sees both entities on the spot *and* at the same time, just as the crown is metonymic of the king because one always sees both together.

This recombination of the two key dichotomies by Bhabha is clearly a theoretical advance in underscoring the very contradiction of discursive identity formation, for there are now two positions oriented in opposite directions, i.e., other vs. self and hatred vs. love. But what we need here is another concept which takes features from both sides of the opposite directions, thus blurring the clear-cut line between Bhabha's dichotomies, and injects into them an abyss of ambiguity—i.e., self-love amid hatred against others and vice versa. We find our needs met by an old structuralist notion, that of Levi-Strauss' anomalous category, or the third position generated by the mixing of the features belonging to either side of the dichotomous positions. We submit that only with this addition to Bhabha's theory of subject position are we able to examine the fragmentary and ambiguously conflictive formation of identity in Peikang's discourse under the pressure of Tachia's rerouting.

Synthesizing both the theories of relational setting and contradictory subject positions, we have a ready-made tool-kit to analyze a particular version of the local history of Penkang, as narrated by the Mazu temple of Peikang. This tool-kit forgoes the holistic tendency of the structuralist account of abstract identities and pays attention to the very fragmentary and ambiguous nature of local

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[30]Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977), 16-25.

[31]David Macey, "Introduction," in Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1977; reprinted in 1994 with an introduction), xxviii.

identities as narrated in workaday discourse. Therefore, in the following analysis, we shall proceed from two angles: the relational setting where we will look for the episodes, their causal "emplotment," and the selective criteria embedded in the story of Penkang; and the notion of subject position, with which we shall underscore the importance of metaphorical narcissism and metonymic aggressivity as windows for viewing the formation of a religious narrative identity.

Relational Setting and Narrative Identity

In our story of the rerouting of the Tachia pilgrims, we have mentioned that Peikang, upset by the switch to Hsinkang, resolved to "correct" the local history of Penkang, the old territorial name that included today's Peikang and Hsinkang. With analytical tools borrowed from post-structuralism, we will now study how the correction of history was accomplished; that is, how Peikang inserted its internally conflictive subject positions into the equally conflictive narratives of Penkang. Our thesis is that Peikang, by replacing Hsinkang's story of a flood with its version of the blood feud (*fenlei xiedou*), has renarrated its identity along two conflictive lines: attacking Hsinkang of usurping the prestige of Penkang which Peikang claims, and invoking Penkang for a dual purpose of articulating its identity in terms of inheriting the latter's territorial development and the magical power of the Mazu temple, and looking forward to a day of unification between Peikang and Hsinkang, as both are, after all, siblings from the same origin, Penkang.

After the switch of pilgrimages in 1988, the publications of the Cultural Foundation of Penkang (CFP), an organization patronized by the Peikang temple, suggested several reasons for Tachia changing its loyalty.[32] Foremost was the fact that Tachia had received a branch image of Mazu from her original temple in Meizhou, Fujian, but the most strategic reason was because the Mazu temple in Hsinkang had successfully persuaded Tachia to reroute. Hsinkang's unfriendly move was considered to be consistent with what it had been doing for the past thirty years: delegitimizing the authenticity of the Peikang temple. Under the blow of Tachia's change of tour, Peikang was now determined to set the record right. The task involved here,

[32]Kuo, *Dajia Mazu tingzhi wang Beigang jinxiang shiliao huibian*, 2-3.

on the one hand, was a critique of Hsinkang's version of local history,[33] which was based on historian Dr. Li Hsien-chang's research in 1967 and constitutes, in our terms, the relational setting into which the subject positions of Peikang were woven. On the other hand, Peikang had to reinterpret Peikang's local history, aiming not so much at reaffirming the authenticity of the Peikang temple itself but its superior relation to the Hsinkang temple.[34] These two aspects of the task provide us with key texts in analyzing the reconstitution of Peikang's identity in strictly post-structuralist terms.

The Relational Setting

Episodes. In the eyes of the Peikang commentator on Dr. Li's paper, Li erroneously introduced two theses which, when connected into a causal plot, put the leading position of the Peikang temple in jeopardy. The first thesis was that some time between 1796 and 1820,[35] when Penkang's economy was so prosperous that its township expanded from the south side of today's Peikang River to the north (hence the name, Penpeikang),[36] the river flooded for a consecutive number of years and destroyed the south town completely, along with the first Mazu temple (allegedly founded in 1700) in Penkang. The Peikang commentator was strangely mute about Li's statement concerning the founding year of the north town;[37] presumably there

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[33]Tsai Hsien-hui, ed., *Bengangshi de zhenxiang* (The truth of the history of Penkang) (Peikang: Bengang Mazu wenjiao jijinhui, 1990). The critique is done anonymously and in an anachronistic format in which Dr. Li's text and the criticisms are laid out side by side. In the following we shall designate the writer(s) of the critique as the commentator.

[34]Li Cheng-lung, "The Research and Renovation Plan for Fengtiangong in Hsinkang Township, Chiayi County" (Manuscript in Chinese, 1992). This manuscript was prepared by Li, an architect, and an anonymous historian sympathetic with Peikang. It concerns the repair of the Mazu temple, called Fengtiangong, in Hsinkang. Because the temple was classified as a national historical site of the third rank, it was entitled to governmental subsidies for maintenance and repair. Eventually, Hsinkang turned down the subsidy, as the local people thought that in the manuscript, Hsinkang's history was represented completely from Peikang's point of view.

[35]This was the era of Emperor Jiaqing in the Qing Dynasty.

[36]It literally means the "north of Penkang." Dr. Li suggests that the founding of Penpeikang, or the north town for short, occurred sometime before 1724. See Li Hsien-chang, "The Founding of Penkang Site and the Development and Belief of Its Mazu Worship" (in three parts), *Dalu zazhi* (Mainland China) 35, no. 7 (1967): 7-11; no. 8:22-26; no. 9:9. Note that almost all the historical dates in our sources are rough estimates, indicating the paucity of the materials that can help reconstruct Peikang's local history.

[37]Tsai, *Bengangshi de zhenxiang*, 98-100.

was no reliable earlier record on the date. The commentator's attack focused on asserting that the flood only eroded the south town, not destroyed it; the attack makes sense in view of what Li said next.

Li's second thesis stated that because the south town was destroyed completely, the townspeople moved their belongings, including the branch image of Mazu, to a higher place east of the south town and constructed a new temple, Fengtiangong, to enshrine the image in the new settlement they called Penhsinnankang, literally the "new south town of Penkang."[38] According to this account, the new temple in present Hsinkang was the legitimate successor to the old temple washed away by the flood. To argue against this thesis, the Peikang commentator charged that the evidence Li used to support his statement, a stele on which the alleged history of the Hsinkang temple's foundation was carved, was fabricated by, among others, Li himself.[39] Besides the stele, the commentator claimed that there was no evidence whatsoever to indicate that the name "Penhsinnankang" was ever used and recorded. The accusation regarding the fabrication of the stele and a counteraccusation by Hsinkang that Peikang fabricated another stele are so important that we shall deal with them in the later discussion of narrative identity. Suffice it to say that what Peikang found intolerably threatening to its position in the hierarchy of the Taiwanese Mazu cult was both the series of floods that destroyed Penkang's main body and the post-flood construction of a new Mazu temple in Hsinkang.

Causal emplotment. The answer to why the episodes concerning a flood and a new temple have threatened the leading position of the Peikang temple seems plain. Because of the flood, the Hsinkang temple could claim itself as a legitimate heir, despite the fact that its foundation was laid during the second decade of the nineteenth century.[40] The causal sequence of the episodes dethroned Peikang from its leading position that it had held at least since the late nineteenth century.[41] Worse still, the threat was increased when, in addition to Dr. Li, two other historians either concurred with Li's timing of the flood, or else emphatically stated that "Hsinkang . . . is the

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[38]Li, "The Founding of Penkang Site" (part I), 10.
[39]Tsai, *Bengangshi de zhenxiang*, 103.
[40]Lin Te-cheng, *Xingang Fengtiangong zhi* (The annals of Fengtiangong in Hsinkang) (Hsinkang: Fengtiangong dongshihui, 1993), 452.
[41]See note 10 above.

embodiment of Penkang and . . . may be viewed as the extended settlement of Penkang."[42] The causal plot supported by Li and these historians formed a real danger to Peikang, not only because the Mazu image which was the source of its magical power was cut off, but also because the delegitimation was introduced by scholars who enjoyed a respected status in Taiwanese society; that is, they posed a threat from their bases of knowledge.

Selective appropriation. Between construction by historians of a Mazu relational setting favorable to Hsinkang and Peikang's furious denial, we see that both contenders have embedded their interests in the selection of historical evidence which favors their side of the story. For example, in terms of the steles which narrate the foundation of a temple, Peikang has fought hard to criticize the textual inconsistencies in Hsinkang's Jingduan stele.[43] However, it has virtually said nothing to rebut Hsinkang's accusation that it inserted the two characters *Pei-gang* into the stele regarding the repair of the first Mazu temple in Penkang.[44] More often, both contenders have simply bypassed the materials which might contradict their own assertions. Peikang, for example, accused Hsinkang of selectively using materials from official Qing Dynasty records.[45] Likewise, Hsinkang has charged that Peikang has never cited the official records compiled by the Japanese during Taiwan's colonial period (1895-1945).[46] Most symptomatically, Peikang was completely silent about old maps from Qing which supported the interpretation that the south town of Penkang was more prosperous than the north town (hence, implying that the latter was developed later than the south) in 1787 at the latest.[47]

Therefore, by the time Peikang determined to offset the impact caused by Tachia's change of pilgrimage, it found itself already implicated in a historical setting most unfavorable to its leading position. Its opponents "emplotted" the episode of Penkang's destruction by flood with that of the construction of Hsinkang temple

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[42]Ibid.; and Hung Min-lin, "The Geographical Changes of Penkang," *Taiwan wenxian* (Taiwan Archives) 23, no. 2 (1972): 41.

[43]The issue will be presented shortly.

[44]Lin, *Xingang Fengtiangong zhi*, 17-18.

[45]Kuo, *Dajia Mazu tingzhi wang Beigang jinxiang shiliao huibian*, 9.

[46]Li, "The Research and Renovation Plan," 1.

[47]Lin, *Xingang Fengtiangong zhi*, 5-8, 23.

as a legitimate inheritor; all these were carried out by selectively appropriating historical materials, just as Peikang did in its critique. Hence, Peikang's next move has been to "correct" this history of Penkang, that is, narrating its subject positions in a new version of history. How has this history been retold and what constitutes the contradictory subject positions of Peikang? These are the issues we now want to tackle.

The Subject Position

Before Peikang could reformulate its identity or its subject position in the text, it had to "emplot" the history of the old Penkang in such a manner so that the articulation of its new composite identity appeared "natural." The emplotment was done by highlighting three episodes in the relational setting that was originally constructed in favor of Hsinkang: the critique of Hsinkang's Jingduan stele, which was by far the most solid evidence indicating the latter's legitimate inheritance of its Mazu temple; the age-old feud in Penkang between emigrants from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, two neighboring counties in southern Fujian in imperial China; and the Paishatun walking pilgrimage as an alternative to Tachia. We will present the three episodes in that order before we explore the metonymic-aggressive and metaphoric-narcissistic dimensions of identity reformation.

In Peikang's 1990 and 1991 publications,[48] one could clearly see how Peikang systematically found faults with the Jingduan stele of Hsinkang. First, Peikang charged that the stele's text mentioned an official title of a general Wang Delu in 1812, but Wang had not won the title by that year. Second, the stele was said to be erected by "managers of the eighteen villages," but the administrative units were not set up until much later than 1812. Finally, the contents of all the steles carved in Qing Taiwan were officially recorded between 1957 and 1961,[49] but there was no account of the Jingduan stele in the government archives. All these criticisms combined to deny the authenticity of the stele and, hence, the two claims that Hsinkang was built because the south town of Penkang was destroyed by flood and that the Hsinkang Mazu temple was the direct heir to the old

[48]Tsai, *Bengangshi de zhenxiang*, 90; Li, "The Research and Renovation Plan," 14.
[49]All the collected records were published in Huang Tien-chuan, *Taiwan nanbu beiwen jicheng* (Collection of inscriptions in southern Taiwan), 6 volumes (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1957-61).

temple in the south town. On the other hand, Peikang's own steles hardly answered Hsinkang's accusation that it also recarved the title of a stele believed to belong to the original Penkang temple.[50] Today, when one stands in front of the stele located in the middle yard of the Peikang Mazu temple, one is struck by the inconsistency between the head-title and the first line of the text: the former states "the recording stele regarding the repair of the Mazu temple in Peikang, Penkang, Chuluo County," while the latter repeats the title but omits Peikang. The odd expression "the Mazu temple in Peikang, Penkang, Chuluo County" is found in no records other than the stele.

Since in Peikang's view, the construction of Hsinkang and its temple was not caused by the flood, then what motivated people in Penkang to form the new town? Peikang has suggested that it was because of the blood feud between the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou immigrants in Penkang. What is called the "classified battle" (*fenlei xiedou*) was a distinctive phenomenon in the pioneer history of Taiwan.[51] Here Peikang has made beneficial use of Japanese records about the feud.[52] According to these records, Zhangzhou and Quanzhou groups massed to fight in 1782. After the incident, the remaining Zhangzhou people moved to the east and constructed Hsinkang. In 1850, another classified battle occurred. This time most of the Zhangzhou people who had lived in Peikang up to that point escaped to Hsinkang, and likewise, the Quanzhou people in Hsinkang moved to Peikang. Finally, in 1887, an alignment of places of origin with the new settlements was reinforced by the Qing government's decision to upgrade Taiwan to the status of a province. In the subsequent reclassification of administrative units, Peikang was now located in the County of Yunlin and Hsinkang in Chiayi,

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[50]Lin, *Xingang Fengtiangong zhi*, 16-18. For the only denial from Peikang, see Tsai Hsien-hui, "Comment on a Public Case Concerning the History of the Mazu Cult in Taiwan," *Bengang* (Peikang), no. 31 (July 1995): 3-4.

[51]Early Chinese immigrants to Taiwan were single males because the Qing government forbade them to migrate with families. They tended to come from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in southern Fujian, China. With this background, they were inclined to group themselves in terms of the two places of origin and very often engaged in collective fights, which were referred to as "classified battles" in Qing records.

[52]Li, "The Research and Renovation Plan," 14. In Li's paper, an anonymous historian constantly refers to the work of a Japanese anthropologist, Ino Yoshinori (1867-1925), who spent his career in the extensive study of Taiwan during the first decade (1895-1905) of Japanese colonial rule.

a reclassification which has survived to this date. Because of these historical reasons, when the Japanese investigated the origins of the Chinese emigrants in 1928, they found that 99 percent of Peikang residents answered Quanzhou and 86 percent of Hsinkang residents answered Zhangzhou. Thus, Peikang could claim that it was due to the feud, not the flood, that Zhangzhou people moved to Hsinkang, but the original Mazu temple could not have been moved because there were other people left in Penkang who could still maintain it. Furthermore, Peikang has always insisted that its temple is the same as the one in Penkang, and the Japanese sources simply reconfirmed it. It has reasoned that there would have been no problems with Penkang's and the Mazu temple's histories were it not for Hsinkang fabricating the events of the flood and its subsequent "inheritance" from the Penkang Mazu temple.

The final episode that Peikang sewed into its version of local history was the promotion of the legendary walking pilgrimage of Paishatun in northern Taiwan to replace the Tachia pilgrimage. Since 1991, when a performance group called Youjuchang took interest in the Paishatun tour and published the annual event as a model of theatrical performance, the Peikang temple and its cultural foundation (CFP) jumped in to promote the tour by printing introductory brochures and arranging press interviews.[53] There seems to be an immanent reason why Peikang turned its attention to the Paishatun pilgrimage, which is as equally traditional but much smaller-scaled than the Tachia walking tour. The reason may be detected in Youjuchang members' description of their feelings about joining the tour.[54] According to this source, the most striking feature of the pilgrimage is its unpredictability, as in the average ten-day tour to visit Peikang, every stop and every turning of the route all depend on the oracle of the Mazu image which sits on a sedan carried by four men. Very often Mazu will defy human wishes to take a break or have a meal and order pilgrims, after a four-hour walk, to speed up. Under the circumstances, some under extreme fatigue fall into a walking trance where they experience the fusion of their spirits

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[53]For example, CFP published special handbooks to introduce the Paishatun pilgrimage in 1993 and 1994. In 1996, a national newspaper also covered the whole event. See *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), March 18, 1996.

[54]Chen Pan, ed., *Baishatun Mazu* (The Mazu of Paishatun) (Taipei: Laoquan, 1991), 26-29.

with that of Mazu, or what anthropologist Victor Turner calls the state of liminality.[55] In view of this mysterious experience, the Paishatun pilgrimage serves Peikang as a proper substitute for the lost Tachia tour since, in a folk sense, pilgrimages entail a visit back to the original temple in order to recharge the magical power of the local branch image. What better demonstrated the supreme power of Mazu in Peikang than the fact that its branch image in Paishatun was already filled with unpredictable magical power?

Thus, in Peikang's discourse, the recast local history of Penkang centers on the continuous, identical temple of Mazu, whose magical power can be immediately felt even in its branch image in the Paishatun temple. The admitted misfortune of Hsinkang's split from the core Penkang area was due to the classified battles between Zhangzhou and Quanzhou people; the flood which allegedly destroyed the old Penkang and allowed the Hsinkang temple to legitimately inherit the original one never occurred. As this new discourse aims to replace Hsinkang's version of history, we may now proceed to consider how Peikang enunciated its subject positions in the new matrix in the metonymic-aggressive (M-A) and metaphoric-narcissistic (M-N) dimensions.

Let us arrange all the key dichotomies we have encountered in both Hsinkang and Peikang's constructions of the relational setting along the M-A and M-N dimensions (see figure 1). What stands out in the figure is six pairs of dichotomies, or in Levi-Strauss' terms, binary oppositions, plus Penkang, an anomalous category which partakes most features from both sides of the dichotomies.[56] In the beginning of our analysis, let us first recall that the M-A dimension follows a logic of contiguity in the sense that whenever the Peikang temple declares what it is in the texts, it cannot help but refer to its counterpart, the Hsinkang temple, and what it is *not*; Hsinkang is the negative constituent of Peikang's very identity in the latter's discourse. Second, the M-N dimension follows a logic of analogy which means that, jumping between the different planes of the dichotomies, e.g., from north town to Paishatun in figure 1, Peikang always finds the identical "essence" of what it is in its texts.

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[55]Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 106-11.

[56]John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Routledge, 1990), 117-18.

Figure 1
Dichotomous Terms as Enunciated in Peikang's Discourse on the Local History of Penkang

	Metonymic-Aggressive
	South Town : North Town
	Zhangzhou : Quanzhou
	Chiayi County : Yunlin County
Metaphoric-Narcissistic	Fengtiangong : Chaotiangong
	Jingduan Stele : Chongxiu* Stele
	Tachia : Paishatun
	Penkang

*"Chongxiu" means "repaired."

In terms of the M-A axis, we notice that Peikang has nursed a grudge against Hsinkang in every confrontation, historical or fictional, in which both sides have taken part. The grudge has grown ever more intense because of the compounding effects from Peikang's written memory of the nonexistent flood, the blood feud, and the reclassification of the administrative units on the one hand; and the founding year of the temple, the accused fabrication of a stele, and the most recent bitter experience of the substitution of the pilgrimage on the other. In every reproduction of this written memory, especially in the annual April Tachia tours south to Hsinkang, Peikang has reinitiated unpleasant encounters with Hsinkang. Sometimes when the resentment becomes unbearable, a scapegoat has to be found in order to release the heat; Dr. Li Hsien-chang and his study on Penkang has served as a constant target. He has not only been accused of lacking academic integrity because of his support of Hsinkang,[57] but also assaulted with harsh character assassination. His position toward Hsinkang is attributed to a claim that in 1957, he asked Peikang for thirty thousand dollars to publish his research on Mazu. After he was denied, he thus resorted to the publication of his 1967 paper, dethroning Peikang from its leading position in the Mazu cult hierarchy.[58] In this account, the one who bears a grudge is not Peikang

[57]Tsai, ""Comment on a Public Case," 5.
[58]Kuo, *Dajia Mazu tingzhi wang Beigang jinxiang shiliao huibian*, 46.

but a person in the opposite camp; the Freudian notion of projection is interestingly manifested here.

In terms of the M-N axis, we may first group the first three dichotomies in figure 1 under the category of territory: they all refer to the spatial locations wherein Peikang finds itself. The remaining three may also be grouped under that of *ling*, or magical power: they are all considered to be manifestations of the magical power of Mazu. Territory and *ling* are thus the positive elements in Peikang's discourses on its identity, always under threat of being taken away by Hsinkang; it must therefore resort to aggressivity. Furthermore, the two categories are interchangeable: locating Peikang spatially amounts to invoking the history of *ling* centered on the Peikang temple, and vice versa. To Peikang temple supporters, these constitutive categories come naturally in their thinking of their collective identity. Kuo Ching-wen, once the chairman of the Peikang temple committee, said, "The magical power of Peikang's Mazu comes from three precious sources: her very image, the location of the temple shaped like a dragon cave [in a geomantic sense], and the committee organization."[59] Except for the last source, which catches a cynical glimpse of what makes the magical power of Mazu possible, Kuo makes plain that it is the enshrining of Mazu in Peikang, a specific configuration of both *ling* and territory in history, that constitutes the leading position and hence the identity of Peikang in the Mazu cult.

Finally, both the M-A and M-N axes pose an ambiguous relationship with the term "Penkang" in both the presumed origin of all local histories in Peikang *and* Hsinkang and an anomalous category that partakes in almost all the features of both townships and their temples *but not quite*. According to which side one is on, it was either the blood feud or the flood which split the original Penkang into the two townships and two temples, while destroying much evidence of the "birth certificates" which could fix the ranking of the twin. In a sense, one should not blame one's sibling, but the mother who died in childbirth and left behind so much confusion about which twin came first. However, in finding every bit of fault with Hsinkang, Peikang has discovered in the makeup of its opponent the sense of territory and *ling* that is the very constitutive essence of

[59]Ibid., cover page.

what it is, as inherited from the same origin of Penkang. Hence, it is no lip service when at the end of a furious critique, the Peikang commentator changes tone and states, "From history we know that . . . Hsinkang, the south town, and the north town [Peikang] were from the same family. . . . We sincerely hope that Chaotiangong of Peikang and Fengtiangong of Hsinkang will cooperate to bring in more worshippers of Mazu."[60] The feeling is echoed in another source: "Fengtiangong, in the minds of all the worshippers in Taiwan, is the real match of Chaotiangong in Peikang. In addition, its present status comes from its unique historical background which it and Chaotiangong both inherit from the legacies of ancient Penkang."[61]

To sum up, Peikang's discourse aims to somehow regain its religious eminence by narrating its troubled identity in terms of the ancient history of Penkang, which is also equivocally constructed. It strongly opposes the version of Penkang's history set forth by Hsinkang, its rival sibling, for in that version, the Mazu temple in Hsinkang is the real inheritor of the old Penkang which was completely destroyed by flood. This version cuts off what Max Weber has called the traditional authority of Peikang's Mazu temple,[62] for the temple's prestige, which was legitimized by a taken-for-granted history, was now debased. Peikang has countered by fashioning its own version of history which replaces the flood myth with that of the blood feud between the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou people: the defeated Zhangzhou people fled to found Hsinkang, whose Mazu temple had nothing to do with the one left intact in Penkang and is the same temple which is now located in Peikang. Although Peikang lost the Tachia pilgrimage to Hsinkang, it by no means hurt the magical power of Peikang's image of Mazu, for the latter's power is still manifested in its branch image located in Paishatun.

In the process of revising the relational setting of Penkang's history, we find that Peikang has narrated its identity along what Bhabha describes as the metonymic-aggressive and metaphoric-narcissistic dimensions. In the first dimension, Peikang has targeted its hostile other, Hsinkang, and criticized the categories it shares with Hsinkang,

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[60]Tsai, *Bengangshi de zhenxiang*, 133.
[61]Li, "The Research and Renovation Plan," 15.
[62]Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 226-41.

i.e, territory and magical power. But in the second dimension, Peikang has appropriated the same categories as the genuine sources of its identity formation: it can claim its leading religious position because it is the "real" heir to Penkang and its Mazu temple. We submit that these categories, which together contain six binary oppositions as in figure 1, are the foundation of both aggressive and narcissistic subject positions which Peikang has alternatively assumed in its discourse. However, the conflictive positions are made more ambiguous—not clear-cut opposed positions, but narcissism in aggressivity and vice versa—by the built-in anomalous category of Penkang, the presumed origin that made possible what Peikang and Hsinkang are. Therefore, in our analysis, we have increased the explanatory power of our analytical tool-kit by sneaking in a post-structuralist model of narrative identity through an old-fashioned structuralist notion of anomalous categories.

Conclusion

Due to the impact of the Tachia pilgrimage's rerouting, the Mazu temple of Peikang was forced to rethink what had fostered its leading position in the hierarchy of the Taiwanese Mazu cult for the past hundred years. In our analysis, this process and the texts of reflection it has produced have culminated in an ambivalent discourse on its position, or identity, in its triangular relations with Penkang and Hsinkang in the dual sense of territory and magical power. First, Peikang has relentlessly attacked Hsinkang for usurping the prestige of both Penkang and its first Mazu temple by allegedly inventing the story of a destructive flood that contributed to the foundation of Hsinkang as Penkang's inheritor. Second, Peikang has set out to contrive its own story both by substituting the blood feud between two groups of immigrants for the alleged flood and promoting the Paishatun pilgrimage which, like Tachia, demonstrates the magical power of the branch image out of the Peikang Mazu temple. However, whether attacking the opponent or boosting its own morale, we find that Peikang's discursive practices have been couched in terms of territory and magical power which ultimately originate from the bygone myth of Penkang. It has been Penkang as an anomalous category that has overridden whatever separated Peikang from Hsinkang, made both rivals what they are, and determined how they are different from each other. Peikang's aggressivity toward Hsinkang and its self-pity indicate that Peikang time and again has

appealed to Penkang for patching up relations with Hsinkang.

In discerning the twists and turns of the recent identity reformations of Peikang, we rely much more on a post-structuralist view which considers identity, collective or individualistic, as fragmentary, self-contradictory, and embedded in a relational setting which is also open to constant change, than on a structuralist view which stipulates a collective identity (e.g., Taiwanese) in an immobile, deep-rooted binary opposition, such as *feng* and *ling*, although the importance of the Levi-Straussian concept is duly registered (see figure 1).

In addition to Peikang's identity reformation serving as a typical case of the post-structuralist view, we think it also meets an allegorical purpose in considering the relationships between China and Taiwan since Taiwan's presidential election in March 1996. Of course, the so-called "one China" policy, which is the key barrier to resuming negotiation for both sides, can be accepted by both China, as a Peikang equivalent, and Taiwan, provided that both sides do not take it as a concrete policy (let alone as meaning that the PRC is the sovereign state representing Taiwan), but as a cultural premise connoting a "historical China" (read Penkang). With this premise, despite all the criticisms and hairsplitting from each side, a sense of goodwill can always be kept and promoted for eventual unification, as five thousand years of mutual collective memory outweighs a hundred-year history of separation in the minds of the people on both sides. Setting aside the strictly interest-based political issues of the "one China" policy, both China and Taiwan have much to do together in the domains of economy, trade, and culture. Thus, it is mutual cooperation in nonpolitical affairs that will bring the greatest good in reuniting separated people.