

INTRODUCTION

In my study on example of the 18 deities' cult in northern Taiwan I observe how ideas, beliefs, and values are created and transmitted in religious cultures during the periods of cultural changes.

PROBLEM

My paradigmatic case study of the “Temple of 18 Deities” will demonstrate a row of stable Eurasian religious symbols which were preserved in the Taiwanese cult. I study the question of stability and change in Taiwan religious culture and introduce some elements, which remained stable in Taiwan religion from Paleolithic and Neolithic epochs. The traces of these long-lived elements could be found in many other religions and cultures all over Eurasia, from Ireland to China, Taiwan, and Oceania.

METHOD

The case study will be based on the non-dualism theory application. I support holistic approach which allows understand popular religion as phenomenon contributed both cultural unity and cultural diversity.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Literature and researches I use in my work are divided into three main parts. The theoretical studies constitute the first part and include the studies in anthropology, sociology of religion, and theory of mythology. Religions and cults genesis in the history framework is the second part of researches. The third big part of researches is connected to the problem of understanding the meaning and genesis of particular symbols.

OUTLINE

My work consists of introduction, three main chapters and a part of discussion. In the first chapter *Taiwan Popular Religion in the History Framework* I overview researches devoted to Taiwanese and Chinese popular religion genesis. In the second chapter *Temple*

of 18 Deities in Shi Men I analyze the temple origin mythology describe my fieldwork, and reveal a set of stable symbols in the cult. In the third chapter *Evidence of Particular Symbols Stability in Eurasian Peoples' Mythologies* I show the traces of these symbols in mythologies of other cultures in Eurasia and Oceania, analyze main symbols common meanings, and try to reconstruct their origins and stages of transformation. In discussion I overview my findings and give a general reconstruction of the stages in 18 deities cult development.

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

After analyses of the symbols in the temple foundation mythology I supposed that the 18 Deities cult is a mixture of many different cults, which during the long period of its development were piled on each other and whose traces went back to the periods of Paleolithic and Neolithic Eurasian cultural unity; those cults were transformed, but some symbols stayed unchangeable inside various "indigenous" cultures all over Eurasia. Among those symbols *underworld*; *dog*; *grave*; *boat*; *shipwreck*; and *18 or 17 deities* seem to be the most important.

To understand the stages of the temple cult development it is necessary to date the symbols origins. Of course it is impossible to date them exactly, but it seems we could organize them in order from the oldest to the newest ones.

Underworld: The underworld conception stability occurred everywhere spreading and its origin should be dated by Upper Paleolithic epoch (35,000 years ago).

Dog: A dog's image is another stable element in the 18 Deities cult. The geographical area of the former dog's worshiping cults distribution is also spread all over Eurasia. The dog symbol origin should be dated by the time of dog domestication in the late Upper Paleolithic about 17,000 - 14,000 years ago.

Grave; Tomb: It seems that during the Neolithic revolution former hunting dog's cult meaning was preserved, but transformed to serve for the *excarnation* rituals and should be connected with first megalithic constructions, which are dated by Neolithic and Bronze Age about 11,000-6,000 years ago.

Boat: Probably a boat as religion symbol originates from the epoch of the first transportation revolution – and is connected with invention of a boat. People had developed a means of traveling on water even before they had domesticated the horse. The oldest boats to be found by archaeological excavation are log boats from around 9,000-7,000 years ago.

Shipwreck: The parallel between shipwreck records in Taiwan and the Trobrianders' shipwreck mythology suggests that the myth of Taiwanese 18 Deities cult origin is connected with the shipwreck mythology of sea nomadic peoples, who passed by and settled in Taiwan shores.

18 or 17 deities: In Chinese tradition there is the idea of 18 levels of underworld, which corresponds to 18 deities of the Taiwanese cult. I suppose also that the Taiwanese cult has connections with Yao 17 and 18 deities' tradition. Another assumption is that the numbers 17 and 18 reflect a specific boat type.

The study of the popular religion transformations in China put me on to an idea that the previous local zoomorphic dog cult, which could exist in the area around nowadays "Temple of 18 Deities" before Chinese immigration, was incorporated into a new state-sanctioned bureaucratic structure of Qing official religion. In the process of local cult adaptation the unbelievable mythological combination of a dog in a boat with 18 Buddhist Arhats was created.

CHAPTER I:

TEMPLE OF 18 DEITIES AND TAIWAN POPULAR RELIGION

1.01. ANALYSES OF THE TEMPLE ORIGIN MYTHOLOGY

The first impulse to start my study of the Temple of 18 Deities (十八王公廟) in northern Taiwan was an intrigue list of several unique details in the temple characteristic.

[Uniqueness] First of all it was a unique case of a dog worshipping temple. Dog worship is a rare phenomenon not only for Taiwan, but also all over the world. The second phenomenon is the night time worshipping practice. The third detail was mysterious fact that among worshipers in the temple there were prostitutes, gangsters, smugglers and gamblers. Another unique feature of the temple was the practice to sacrifice cigarettes with the shocking name “Long Life” instead of traditional Chinese incense sticks.



Photo 1: “Long Life” Cigarettes. Author, 2009.

It was interesting also that the location of the temple is closed to the nuclear power plant. Not less intrigue were horrible gossips suggesting the fact of vindictive character of the dog-god, which could bring deathly illness for the person who showed disrespect for the

temple. And lastly the temple origin mythology was notable for variety and contradiction. (Informer: Tso, M. 2008)

[Legends] In my disposal there were four variants of the myth, describing the temple origin. Here there are three versions translated by Jensen, A. (2008):

Version 1

The first story claims that 17 people and a dog were on a boat during the Qing dynasty. There was a sudden storm and all 17 died when the boat was destroyed. The bodies washed up on shore but the dog survived. The dog then died, or killed himself because of his sadness. The people in the village buried the bodies and the dog in the same place.

Version 2

17 rich people from Fuzhou were taking a boat to Putuo Shan (mainland China). The boat sank during a storm and only the dog survived. The bodies floated over to the coast of Taiwan (Shi Men) and the dog killed himself. The local people buried the dog with the 17 people.

Version 3

17 people from Tangshan (mainland China) were going to Taiwan but they died in a storm. The dog killed himself; story took place during Qing dynasty.

(傳說十八王公廟: www.wingnet.com.tw)

The fourth variant of the legend was retold by Blundell, D. (2008).

Version 4

A ship washed ashore, and to the surprise of the local coastal people - fishermen - all were dead except a dog (as this dog was a miracle guarding over the dead spirits) on the drifting ship.

[Studying of Legends Informative Symbols] First of all I assumed that should be connection between those unique features of the cult and the stories of the temple origin.

To find the connections I decided to focus on the cult main symbols, which could help to solve the temple puzzles. My first step to find such symbols was to analyze the texts of those legends. I supposed that most often repeated symbols which are represented in all four versions of the legend should be the stable ones and so the most important. In the beginning I underlined all the symbols, which looked to be informative for the analysis:

Version 1

The first story claims that 17 people and a dog were on a boat during the Qing dynasty. There was a sudden storm and all 17 died when the boat was destroyed. The bodies were washed up on shore but the dog survived. The dog then died, or killed himself because of his sadness. The people in the village buried the bodies and the dog in the same place.

Version 2

17 rich people from Fuzhou were taking a boat to Putuo Shan (mainland China). The boat sank during a storm and only the dog survived. The bodies floated over to the coast of Taiwan (Shi Men) and the dog killed himself. The local people buried the dog with the 17 people.

Version 3

17 people from Tangshan (mainland China) were going to Taiwan but they died in a storm. The dog killed himself; story took place during Qing dynasty.

Version 4

A ship washed ashore, and to the surprise of the local coastal people - fishermen - all were dead except a dog (as this dog was a miracle guarding over the dead spirits) on the drifting ship.

In the next step I calculated the most often repeated symbols.

Number of people on the boat: (17): [## 1; 2; 3 = 3 stories] All 17 died (# 1); 17 rich people from Fuzhou (# 2); 17 people from Tangshan (# 3).

Crossing the waters: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] 17 rich people from Fuzhou *were taking a boat* to Putuo Shan (# 1); 17 rich people from Fuzhou *were taking a boat* to Putuo Shan (mainland China) (# 2); 17 people from Tangshan (mainland China) *were going to Taiwan* (# 3); *A ship washed ashore* (# 4).

Boat or ship: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] 17 people and a dog were on *a boat* (#1); 17 rich people from Fuzhou were taking *a boat* (# 2); *were going to Taiwan* but *they died in a storm* (# 3); *A ship washed ashore* (# 4).

Dog: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] 17 people and *a dog* were on a boat (# 1); only *the dog* survived (# 2); *The dog* killed himself (# 3); all were dead except *a dog* (# 4).

Shipwreck: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] *the boat* was *destroyed* (# 1); *The boat* sank during *a storm* (# 2); *they died in a storm* (# 3); *A ship washed ashore* (# 4).

Dog's survival: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] *the dog* survived (# 1); only *the dog* survived (# 2); *The dog* killed himself (# 3); *all were dead except a dog* (# 4).

Drowned corpses: [## 1; 2; 3; 4 = 4 stories] *The bodies* were *washed up on shore* (# 1); *bodies floated* over to the coast of Taiwan (# 2); *they died in a storm* (# 3); *A ship washed ashore... all were dead* (# 4).

Dog's self-sacrifice: [## 1; 2; 3 = 3 stories] Dog then died, or *killed himself* (# 1); *The dog killed himself* (# 2); *The dog killed himself* (# 3).

Burial: [## 1; 2 = 2 stories] People in the village *buried the bodies* and the dog (# 1); the local people *buried the dog with the 17 people* (# 2).

Dog's burial: [## 1; 2 = 2 stories] People in the village *buried the bodies* and the dog (# 1); the local people *buried the dog with the 17 people* (# 2).

Dog's burial with people together: [## 1; 2 = 2 stories] People in the village *buried the bodies and the dog* (# 1); the local people *buried the dog with the 17 people* (# 2).

Grave: [## 1; 2 = 2 stories] People in the village *buried the bodies and the dog* (# 1); the local people *buried the dog with the 17 people* (# 2).

Place of departure and wanted place of destination:

From Fuzhou to Putuo Shan: [# 2 = 1 story] 17 rich people from Fuzhou were taking a boat *to Putuo Shan* (mainland China) (# 2).

From Tangshan (mainland China) to Taiwan: [# 3 = 1 story] *People from Tangshan* (mainland China) were going to Taiwan (# 3).

Time of accident (Qing dynasty): [## 1; 3 = 2 stories] During the *Qing dynasty* (# 1); Story took place during *Qing dynasty* (# 3).

Chinese nationality of the people on the boat: [## 2; 3 = 2 stories] 17 rich people from Fuzhou (# 2); *People from Tangshan (mainland China)* were going to Taiwan (# 3).

Immigrants' shipwreck: [## 2; 3; 4 = 3 stories] 17 rich people from Fuzhou (# 2); *People from Tangshan (mainland China)* were going to Taiwan (# 3); to the surprise of the *local coastal people - fishermen - all were dead* (# 4).

Rich Chinese: [# 2 = 1 story] 17 rich people from Fuzhou (# 2).

Then I classified the symbols according to the degree of their presence in the legend versions. During the process of calculating I found that some of symbols could represent variants or reinterpretations of main symbols. In result I got 4 categories of the symbols and their variations, which I placed in 4 lists. The first is a list of symbols represented in

all four versions of the legend. The second list is constrained by symbols and symbols variations, which are represented in three versions. The third list includes symbols and symbols variations represented in two versions of the legend. And the last one is the list with unique informative symbols variations.

List 1 (6 symbols):

- (#1) Crossing the waters;
- (#2) Boat or ship;
- (#3) Dog;
- (#4) Shipwreck;
- (#5) Dog's survival;
- (#6) Drowned corpses.

List 2 (1 + 2 [reinterpretations of initial symbols ##4; 5]):

- (#7) Number of people on the boat: (17);
 - o Dog's self-sacrifice [reinterpretation of #5];
 - o Immigrants' shipwreck [reinterpretation of #4].

List 3 (2 + 4 [reinterpretations of earlier symbols ##4; 5]):

- (#8) Burial;
 - o Dog's burial [reinterpretation of #5];
 - o Dog's burial with people together [reinterpretation of #5];
- (#9) Grave;
 - o Time of accident (Qing dynasty) [reinterpretation of #4];
 - o Chinese nationality of the people on the boat [reinterpretation of #4].

List 4 (3 [reinterpretations of earlier symbol #4]):

- o From Fuzhou to Putuo Shan [reinterpretation of #4];

- From Tangshan (mainland China) to Taiwan [reinterpretation of #4];
- Rich Chinese [reinterpretation of #4].

[Stages of the Legends Development] Ter Haar suggests (Ter Haar 1990, 352) that “to understand the initial rise of a cult, it is necessary to attempt to separate its historical origin, and the earliest extant myths, from later elaborations”. I suppose that the degree of the symbols presence in the legend versions could mean the historical stages of the myths development. The first list of 6 symbols probably represents the earliest stage. The second list could mean the fact of first cultural change, which added to the mythology 1 new symbol of 17 people on the boat and 2 reinterpretations of earlier symbols of *shipwreck* and *dog’s survival*. The third list, which adds 2 new connected symbols of *burial* and *grave*; and 2 new variants of both *shipwreck* and *dog’s survival* symbols, could mean a new stage of cultural change. The richness of the third list could mean that the cultural change was caused by long time and powerful influence. The last list, which contains only reinterpretations of other symbols, could represent latest and less influential elaborations. It is interesting that calculation shows high changeability of only 2 stable symbols: *shipwreck* and *dog’s survival*. But what could it mean? For the further research the fieldwork was a necessary stage.

1.02. FIELDWORK AND FURTHER SYMBOLS ANALYSES

I visited the temple in 2008 two times, both times with my classmates: Tso, May and Jensen, Aaron. The field work stage I started from the assumption, that the most stable cult symbols should be represented both in the temple origin mythology and in the temple itself as subjects of the cult. Such symbols probably could be the oldest ones also.

[Location: Area of Fishers and Smugglers Activity] Another assumption was that the cult development and its mythology should be connected with its environment. My assumption is based on Steward’s concept (Steward 1955) that the environment is the chief determining factor of culture. During my field trip observation first of all I paid attention to the temple specific location on the sea shore, on coastal fishing area between

two ports Keelung (基隆) and Damshui (淡水). The Temple of 18 Deities is situated in the most Northern part of Taiwan between Shi Men (石門) and Cao Li (草里), closer to Shi Men (石門). An interesting detail is that in that area, close to Jin Shan (金山), is situated a huge custom-house – the fact, which signifies that the area has smuggling tradition.



Map 1: Northern Taiwan Area between Tamsui and Keelung Ports.

[Joss Paper; Zongzi] In Taiwanese and Han Chinese culture food very often has symbolic meanings. That is a reason why I paid attention for the market in front of the temple and to the food, which were sold there. As it was told to me by worshipers the temple is famous with it *zongzi* (糰子) and spicy shells. Everybody who comes to visit the temple buys *zongzi* as well as worshiping set, which consists of incense sticks, *Joss paper* (*jingzhi* 金紙 or *mingbi* 冥幣), and medallions with the dog image. By the way, this stuff is a subject of rumor: if you unrespectable leave it somewhere you will get deathly illness. I still keep this stuff in my home collection.



Photo 2: The 18 Deities Temple: Ghost Money. Source: Author, 2009.

[Joss Paper] *Joss paper* is also known as *ghost money*. It is sheets of paper that are burned in traditional Chinese deity and ancestor worship ceremonies. In every temple in Taiwan there are large furnaces to burn *joss paper*. The Temple of 18 Deities is not an exception.

[Zongzi + Ritual Suicide + Drowning] It is important that *zongzi* is symbolic food, which is eaten by Han Chinese during the traditional *dragon boat festival*, which is connected with the cult of the famous Chinese poet Qu Yuan. Qu Yuan (屈原) lived in the Warring States period (ca. 340 BC - 278 BC) in southern Chu and was also a minister in the government of the state of Chu. According to the legend Qu Yuan committed ritual suicide as a form of protest against the corruption of the court, drowning himself in the river. After that the local villagers carried their boats with dumplings to the middle of the river. They threw dumplings in the water in order to keep fish and evil spirits away from his body; they beat drums and splashed the water with their paddles.



Photo 3: The 18 Deities Temple: Zongzi. Source: Author, 2009.

Late in the night, the spirit of Qu Yuan appeared before the villagers and told them that he died because of a river dragon. He asked them to wrap their rice into three-cornered silk packages to ward off the dragon. These packages became a traditional food known as *zongzi*; although the lumps of rice are now wrapped in reed (or bamboo) leaves instead of silk. The act of racing to search for his body in boats gradually became the cultural tradition of dragon boat racing, which is held on the anniversary of Qu Yuan death every year on the fifth day of the fifth month.

[Drowning + Dragon Boat Festival] From the other hand the *boat festival* is spread very wide in China and tradition similar to it is known among many other peoples in Asia: in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Also in the territory of the former state of Wu the festival commemorated another person Wu Zixu (伍子胥) who lived even earlier than Qu Yuan, between 526 BC and 484 BC. According to legends Wu Zixu was forced to commit suicide by the king, with his body thrown into the river on the fifth day of the fifth month. After his death, Wu Zixu was associated with a river god, and in some parts of China, Wu Zixu was worshiped as a river god, with the title of “God of Waves” (濤神).

[River God + Human Sacrifices] These two stories, which are connected with the *boat festival* and ritual food (*zongzi*), remind ancient Chinese tradition of sacrificing to the river god, who often had the image of a dragon. There are many Chinese myths which have plots describing human sacrifice to river gods. Human sacrifice was a very common religious practice in Shang dynasty and records on human sacrifice have been revealed by the oracle-bone inscriptions.

[Zoomorphic Cults Transformations] Gregory and Ebrey (1993) overview the great changes in Chinese religion in the period from the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.) to thirteenth century Sung dynasty. In later periods of Chinese history gods became more bureaucratized and “originally local zoomorphic gods and nature spirits often were reidentified as the deified spirits of deceased heroes and officials (*ibid*: 9)”. For example, Kleeman (1993) describes long period transformations of the local fearsome serpent cult of Szechwan (China) origin into the nationwide phenomenon. The local snake cult, which had a simple name “The Viper” (E-tzu 蜃子), was anthropomorphized, then it broke out of its regional boundaries, went through numerous metamorphoses and finally during Ming and Qing times it developed into Wen-chang (文昌), the “God of Literature.”

Cults fazes were as follows: (1) The Viper, the zoomorphic nature deity: from prehistory to the 10 century; (2) Chang E-tzu (張蜃[惡]子), romantic real-life hero who fought a battle in northern Szechwan during the 4 century: from 4 to 11 century; (3) God of Tzu-t’ung (梓潼), a martial protector of the populace and the legitimate ruling dynasty against social disorder and foreign invasion: the Sung dynasty; (4) Transcendent Chang, the patron of childbirth: before the Ch’ing dynasty; (5) The Divine Lord of Tzu-t’ung, the Taoist healing and oracular deity: 12 century; (6) Wen-Ch’ang (文昌), Confucian scholars supporter and patron of the examinations till presence: from the Han. (*ibid*: 48-56)

[Legends and Temple: the First Parallel of Symbols] It seems that *the boat festival* tradition was developed in the similar way: from the stage of river dragon worshipping with human sacrifices into the last human self-sacrifice of Qu Yuan (or drowning of a martyr - Wu Zixu) with anthropomorphic replacement of the animal deity and symbolic

reinterpretation of human sacrifices into ritual food – *zongzi* – within the frames of traditional *dragon boat festival*, which origin probably traces back to the very far away past and is connected with the cult of river gods. Here it is a time to remind the *Dog's survival* symbol reinterpretation into *dog's self-sacrifice* symbol from the List 2. *Zongzi* and *dog's self-sacrifice* is the first parallel between symbols in the legends of the temple origin and ritual objects of the temple itself.

[Inside the Temple: 2 Bronze Dogs' Statues + Grave Image] When you approach the temple the old women, worshipping set sellers, will bring you to the two huge bronze statues of the dog, which are situated on both sides of the grave, where according to the legend 17 drowned people and the dog were buried together. The women insist you will touch the dog's statue and fasten near it one of the just sold ritual objects.

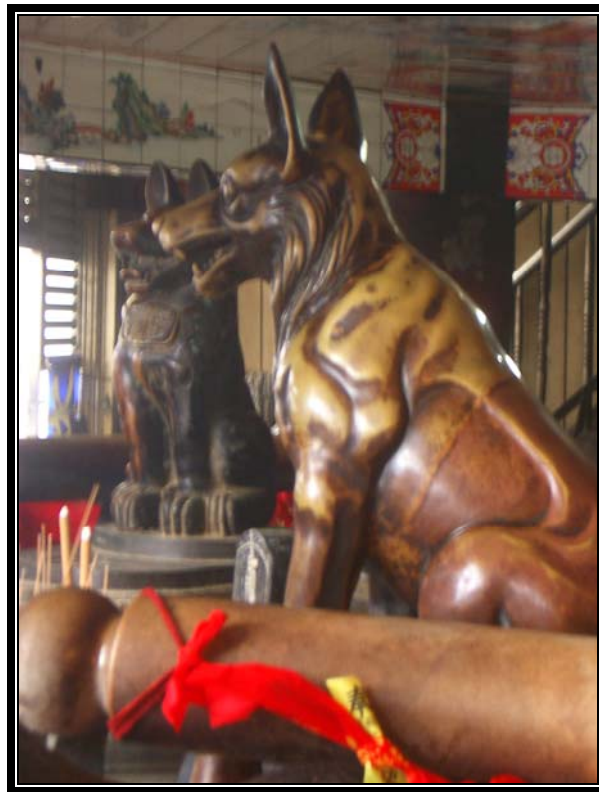


Photo 4: The 18 Deities Temple: Two Bronze Dogs' Statues.
Source: Author, 2008.

In front of the grave there is a long rectangular incense burner with the inscription: *Eighteen Deities*. I don't know why the shape of the incense burner in front of the grave is rectangular, while the temple has a typical round incense burner in front of altar as well. Probably the shapes of the incense burners have special meaning. It will be a subject of my further investigation. By the way the shape of the grave itself seems to be different from the majority of graves, which I saw in Taiwan. I didn't study the types of Taiwanese and Chinese graves yet, so can not say anything about it. It also could be an important part of my further studies.



Photo 5: The 18 Deities Temple: the Grave Image, the Incense Burner and the Tray for Cigarettes Sacrifice. Source: Author, 2008.

In front of the rectangular incense burner is placed a special tray, designed in the way that worshippers could place cigarettes sacrifice. On the tray we found exactly “Long Life” cigarettes, and according to tradition burned and placed there our “Long Life” cigarettes, which Aaron Jensen bought before our field trip.

[Two Levels of the Grave Worshipping] For our surprise after an initial interview the daughter of the temple keeper brought us to a downstairs chamber, informing us that the real grave is situated there exactly under the upper one, which is only the later image of the original grave. According to her story during the nuclear plant construction the real

grave should be buried in the fundament for the highway bridge. So, it was decided to move the whole temple on the top of the bridge base, but construct the special underground chamber to give the worshippers an opportunity to address to the original grave. So, nowadays in the temple there are two cult objects with the same meaning and function – the real grave underground and its symbolic image on the ground surface. Such combination gives me an idea that the ‘original’ grave also could be just a symbol, which could replace something else by the influence of any other powerful events in the past, now forgotten.

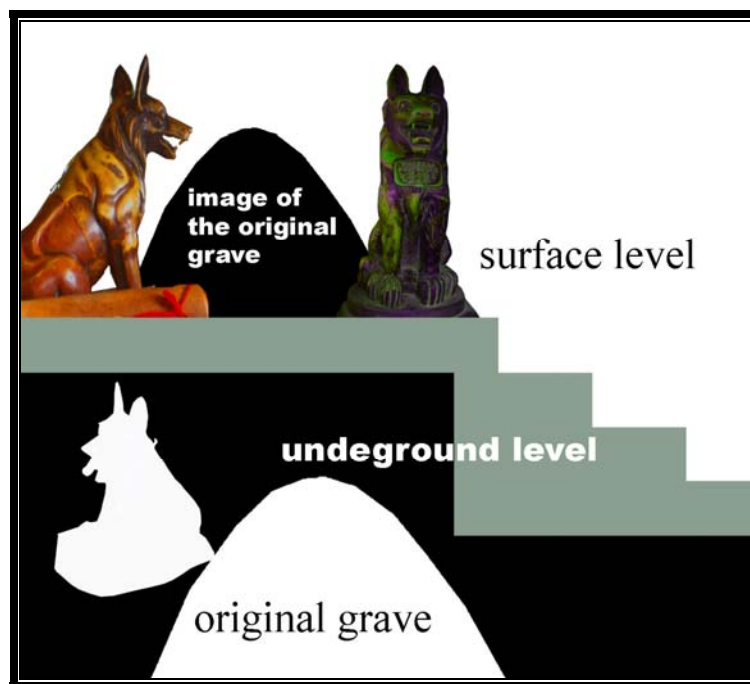


Figure 1: The 18 Deities Temple: 2 Levels of the Grave Worshipping. Author, 2009.

It looks to be important that in the underground level the color of the dog's statue is black, the same as on the medallion. I would like to mention here another bigger in size temple nearby with the huge dog's statue, which is also black. The bigger temple was built close to the original one, when the 18 deities cult became very popular. On the underground level I paid attention to the wooden image of the boat, which seems to be a cult object also, because on the deck of the boat and on its masts were placed numerous visiting cards and lighters with addresses of night and karaoke clubs – the places of prostitution

activities - the proof of the information that prostitutes are among the main worshippers in this temple. We returned to the ground floor to observe the altar and to continue the interview with the temple keeper's daughter. The altar has images of 18 deities and a traditional round incense burner in front of it.



Photo 6: The 18 Deities Temple: Nightclubs Visiting Cards and Lighters on the Deck of the Wooden Boat. Source: Author, 2008.

[Historical Legends] From interview of the temple keeper's daughter it became clear that besides temple foundation mythology there are also oral historical stories which informs that the temple was founded by the local fishermen, members of the Lian (練) family, who were Hakka immigrants from the earlier times and had their village on the shore. The time of Lian family arriving to Taiwan is unknown. But according to interview (Tso 2008) of the temple keeper Mr. Lian it seems to be that the family had the temple for ancestors worshiping in the village before the boat with dead corpses was washed ashore.

All the people in this village were Hakka Chinese immigrants and Lian family relatives also. And *they got used to worship all the ancestors* every time before going out to *fishing*. But only one group of Lian family buried *17 drown corpses with a dog* and

started to include *the tomb* worshiping ritual in their *annual Hakka sweeping tomb ceremony*. And then, seeing most other *fisherman's boat* was return empty, they had at least some harvest at each time. That made them starting to believe that it's *the tomb* was bringing them harvest of fish. Only that group of people was first to believe being *protected by the tomb*. And gradually, all the village people came *to worship that tomb* for good luck and safety. Later on, they built a little temple out of *the tomb* when their economy became better. (*ibid.*)

[Dating of the Symbols Origins] To understand the stages of the temple cult development it is necessary to date the symbols origins. Of cause it is impossible to date them exactly, but it seems we could organize them in order from the oldest to the newest ones and place them according to the main stages of Taiwanese and Chinese history. Only one approximate date, which we have in our disposal and which we can make a fulcrum, is the Qing dynasty period, when according to the 18 Deities temple origin mythology the boat with dead corpses and a dog arrived to the north Taiwan shore.

As Mr. Lian (the temple keeper) mentioned “It was not very common (rather rare) to bring a dog on a boat in that time.” So he supposed that the event had deal with the immigration of the whole village people from mainland to Taiwan. As it is known from Taiwan history, between 1683 and around 1760, the Qing government limited immigration to Taiwan. However an illegal immigration from unsafe Fujian province continued. The immigrants mostly were men, who did not want to return in Fujian. Very often they married local aboriginal girls, resulting in the idiom “mainland grandfathers no mainland grandmothers” (有唐山公無唐山媽). Such restriction was relaxed after the 1760s and in 1811 there were more than two million Chinese immigrants on Taiwan.

So most probably the cult of “18 deities” corresponds to the period of the mass migration from the mainland China. It means that the reason to create the newest form of the cult transformation appeared between 1760 and 1811; and I guess the reason was to find the way to adopt earlier local cult to the new political and ideological reality.

In Taiwan everyone of the same surname took part in collecting money to construct ancestral halls. If to apply this phenomenon to the case of Lian family, fishers who

became founders of the “Temple of 18 Deities”, it is not necessary that all the people of the village with the same surname were of the same descent line, and the village origin probably traces back to the early immigration period, before 1862. As Chuang (1989, 226) says, “Like the surname associations of overseas Chinese society, immigrants are formed as a kind of colonial lineage organization in order to adapt to the particular environment of a location.” It means that Lian family village cult in its earliest period could be already a complicated combination of various believes, which have been brought by individual Hakka immigrants.

[Fieldwork Results] Fieldwork proved main part of initial information. The temple indeed is a dog worshipping temple, but the worshipping of the dog is only a part of very complicated cult, which seems to be an eclectic mixture of different cults. Night time worshipping practice is also only a part of the cult – it is not a necessary practice. The nightclub visit cards on the wooden boat model deck proved the fact that prostitutes and pimps are among worshipers in the temple. The temple location in the fishers’ village and a huge custom-house nearby show that among the worshippers could be fishers and smugglers. The traditional Chinese incense sticks are in use here like in other Taiwanese temples, they are not replaced by cigarettes; the cigarettes sacrifice practice also is just a special ritual added to the traditional way of worshipping.

[Stable Symbols of the Cult] Further cult symbols analyses I show in the following table, which demonstrate the correspondence between symbols in the legends and in the temple itself.

- (#1) Crossing the waters; >> There is no correspondence in the temple;
- (#4) Shipwreck; >> There is no correspondence in the temple;
- (#2) Boat or ship; >> Wooden boat model in the temples underground floor;
- (#3) Dog; >> Dog statues in the temple;
- (#5) Dog’s survival; > Dog’s self-sacrifice >> Zongzi = sacrifice symbol in the temples market;

- (#6) Drowned corpses >> Zongzi = sacrifice for drowned heroes;
- (#7) Number of people on the boat: (17) >> $17 + 1 = 18$ statues in the temples altar;
- (#8) Burial or Grave; >> 2 grave images in the temples ground and underground floors.

According to the above table the most often repeated symbols which are represented both and in myth of temple origin and in the temple itself as subjects of the cult are the following:

- boat;
- dog;
- dog's survival and dog's self-sacrifice;
- drowned corpses;
- number of 18 or 17 deities;
- grave.

It is 6 symbols altogether.

1.03. ROBERT WELLER AND HIS STUDY OF "EIGHTEEN LORDS" CULT

After the temple origin legends analyses and fieldwork it was reasonable address to other scholars' researchers in that field. Fortunately the temple was studied already by Robert Weller, who observed the temple in the time of its highest popularity. Weller published two works (Weller 1994, 1999) devoted to the temple phenomenon. Weller says (Weller 1994, 125) that in 1970s the "Eighteen Lords" temple (十八王公廟) at the northern tip of Taiwan was a simple roadside shrine for unidentified bones. Author defines the "Eighteen Lords" as ghosts. He suggests the fact that they are honored with burning cigarettes instead of incense sticks brings to light their real nature. According to Weller's observations the temples to ghosts never grow to a large size, so he surprises that the shrine developed into "one of the hottest and noisiest temples". He connects this phenomenon with the sudden burst of ghost worship in Taiwan in the 1980s.



Photo 7: Temple of 18 Deities: Burning Cigarettes Instead of Incense Sticks.
Source: Author, 2008.

Weller (1994, 1999) focuses in suddenness of the changes in the “Eighteen Lords” cult when explains the reasons for its fast development into the temple from a small unknown shrine and the cult boom in 1980s, the period of unexpected burst of ghost worship in Taiwan. In that period fast changes in social and economic life in Taiwan evoked the phenomenon of unbelievable high commercialization of religious services. During my own observation of the temple I paid attention to its situation on the shore, Weller also underlines (Weller 1994, 125) that the temple is situated on coastal fishing area. According to the temple origin myth version, which Weller adduces, a fishing boat with 17 corpses and a dog was washed ashore in 17th century. I believe that such event could take place in that time as many other times during long period before and many times later also. More important is why the tellers focus on the dating. The main reason could be a wish to support cultural change at the time of first waves of Chinese emigrants, who came with Koxinga.

Weller doesn't say anything about that. It seems he believes that in the story about the "Eighteen Lords" cult origin is described an isolated event, which has to take place in some point of time, and then developed into the ghost worshipping cult in the frames of traditional Chinese believes. Weller observes that the similar events were very usual on Taiwan shores, but he does not generalize them to become a background for the story, which from my point of view could be an instrument of cultural change of 17 century; Weller's observation focuses only on the cultural change of mid-1980s.

Weller's informants describe (*ibid*: 126) the shrine on the temple place as a simple gravestone and incense pot in the 1950s and 1960s. They said also that at that time only soldiers on coast guard occasionally worshipped there and an old woman swept up sometimes. Weller explains (*ibid*: 126-127) the cult transformation by the reason of conflict between general Taiwanese superstitions and government needs. In the early 1970s the government needs to construct a nuclear plant on the grave site met problems with local people's and construction workers' superstition. The government was forced to preserve the grave and even to build the temple. Because of government officials' support and wild economic boom of 1980s in Taiwan the ghosts' temple received an unusual popularity. The reason was its possibility to satisfy the religious needs of gamblers, prostitutes, and gangsters, who could not receive support from the general gods: 1980s in Taiwan was a boom time for such kind of black business. I agree with Weller, but think the ghosts' temple popularity in 1970-80s was only a last section in the long chain of cultural changes, which many times transformed the mixture of several cults used to meet each other at the northern-most tip of Taiwan during history and prehistory times.

1.04. THE CHINESE ORIGIN OF TAIWAN RELIGION

[Earth God Temples] Weller's (1999) article *Identity and Social Change in Taiwanese Religion* gives introduction ideas about religion development in Taiwan. He emphasizes (*ibid*: 340) the Chinese origin of Taiwan religion and says that early Chinese immigrants brought tablets commemorating their ancestors with them. The next stage was building earth god temples (土地公, *Tu Di Gong*) in settlers' villages. Weller suggests (*ibid*: 348) that building a new earth god temple is generally a declaration of independence by a new social community and most often these cults were associated with the subethnic groups.

The large temples branched off from mother temples in Fujian became organizing points for Taiwan's social groups and helped mobilize people to battle aborigines and competing subethnic Chinese groups. In China, every village had a shrine to the earth god. The earth god is the deity who is in charge of administering the affairs of a particular village. Another name for earth god is *Fude Zhengshen* (福德正神), which means an earth god of wealth and merit.

1.05. SPREAD OF CULTS AND TRADE / MIGRATION / PATTERNS

[Fen-hsiang] Schipper's work (Schipper 1990, 397-416) describes the *fen-hsiang* (分香) or *fen hsiang-huo* (分香火) phenomenon in Chinese culture. *Fen-hsiang* is the name of the very important social institution in Chinese religion tradition. The origin of the institution is based on tradition to collect the incense ashes in the special burner, which is the main ritual object of any existing cult group. The new cult group traditionally should to fill the new incense burner with the ashes provided by the senior cult. After that the newly affiliated group makes yearly pilgrimages to the temple of the senior cult on the occasion of the saint's festival.

Schipper (1990, 397-398) observed that "most, if not all, unofficial organizations in traditional China tended to define themselves as a cult groups. If their size and income allowed it, they would invariably build temples (miao 廟)." Among such groups Schipper names (*ibid*: 398) guilds and merchant corporations, village and regional associations, professional corporations, local defense groups, and water distribution consortiums. Schipper mentions also (*ibid*: 410) that the *fen-hsiang* did not mean the wish to worship a common god, but the construction of supportive network of affiliated groups, which would provide shelter, food and political assistance for traveling throughout China.

Ter Haar (1990, 387) mentions that "the situation in Taiwan shows a very close link between the spread of deities from the mainland to Taiwan and trade / migration / patterns". Chuang (1989) analyzes the organizing principles of lineages in Chinese societies in Taiwan and this information is important because it helps to understand the process of Taiwanese cult groups' development. Chuang (*ibid.*) underlines that lineages and clans (as patrilineal descent groups) always played an important role in Chinese

society because they were functional units which helped identify the rights of property, inheritance and regulate obligations of the members.



Photo 8: Earth God: Poster in Fude Miao 福德廟,
Alley 45, Sec.2, Zhinan Rd., Taipei. Source: Author, 2009.

[Lineage Groups: He-yue-tzi] Chuang (1989) pays special attention to *he-yue-tzi* (合約字) lineage groups because they generally appeared during the initial stages of pioneering on Taiwan. Pioneers organized such groups for mutual cooperation on the basis of contracted shares. According to Chuang's definition (*ibid*: 210) *he-yue-tzi* were "composed of pioneers who originated in the same native place and who all contributed money to buy estate fields by means of a contract; descendants are limited to the patrilineal agnates of those who invest money."

Chuang gives some important timing landmarks when mentions (*ibid*: 217, 213) that most *he-yue-tzi* in Taiwan appeared during the first period of immigration in the reigns of the emperors Qianlong (1736-1795), Jiaqing (1796-1820), and Daoguang (1821-1850). Chuang (*ibid*.) explains that phenomenon in terms of survival necessities: the pioneers

faced extremely difficult environment and organized mutual assistance groups based on both real and fictional blood relationships. The immigrants often regarded people with the same surname as having a common ancestor. In Taiwan everyone of the same surname took part in collecting money to construct ancestral halls.



Photo 9: Fude Gong 福德宮: Incense Burner.
No. 1, Sec.2, Muzha Rd., Taipei. Source: Author, 2009.

1.06. DOMINANCE OF LOCATIVE RELIGIONS IN TAIWAN

In his work *Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period* Jones (2003, 12) operates using Winston Davis's (1992, 30-32) terms of the "locative" and the "adventitious" religions. According to Davis "locative" refers to religions that serve to integrate hometown, kinship, and occupation groups and draw members on the basis of their social and familial relationships. "Adventitious," on the other hand, refers to religions with members who join them voluntarily by undergoing a period of training and initiation after accepting certain set of doctrines. These religions transcend ethnic and clan identifications to include all humanity. Among them are Buddhism and Taoism.

Describing the period of early Taiwan immigration Jones determines (*ibid*: 15) the island as the place with the dominance of locative religions. He explains it by the reason that Taiwan in that time was a frontier province and was “not attractive as a destination for eminent Buddhist and Taoist figures.” Another explanation is that in that period immigrants came from rural areas that were dominated by a single surname and in which the extended clan was the main form of social organization with ancestral temple served as their primary symbolic focus and source of local unity and political authority.

1.07. MAIN FACTORS IN TAIWAN RELIGION CHANGES

[Political Changes] Jones (2003) focuses on changes in Taiwan religion under the influence of two main factors - political and social changes. Describing the specific Taiwanese religion activity transformations he uses the term of “political dislocation” which refers to the repeated changes in sovereignty. As he mentions even the act of immigration itself resulted new religious responses. Taiwan during its history

“went from an independent island peopled by indigenous tribes, to a Dutch and Spanish trade entrepot, to an independent state under the Chinese rebel Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), to a part of the Qing empire, to a Japanese colonial territory, and, finally, to a politically autonomous but not formally independent part of China”. (*ibid*: 10)

Jones emphasizes (*ibid*: 12) Zheng Chengong’s fleet arriving into Taiwan in 1661 as most important event which determined the religious landscape of the island. The fleet brought several thousand troops which occupied Tamsui and Tainan and the event marked the first large-scale influx of Chinese settlers into Taiwan. These first immigrants were almost all men and came from southern Fujian and Guangdong. They spoke southern Fujianese (“Min nan hua,” “Hokkien,” “Holo,” “Hoklo,” or “Taiwanese”), Hakka, and Cantonese. Later when Taiwan came under the political control of the Qing dynasty in 1683, authorities restricted immigration to the island, and “with a few brief interludes, this restriction remained in force until 1788 (*ibid*: 12).”

Jones resumes his description the early immigration period as follows. Because the early immigrants came to Taiwan alone they had to organize themselves for mutual aid,

protection, and political cooperation. People brought with them an image from the temple in their home region and installed it in their homes or in a temporary thatched hut, and later in a proper temple. There were two of the most common ways to organize themselves: by common regional provenance and by trade guild, although often groups organized by both. As the immigrants settled into such groups “a few dominant temples became the foci of religious, political, and social life, often eclipsing Qing officials and state-sponsored temples in their influence (*ibid*: 15).” These dominant temples provided a multitude of services: entertainment; religious processions and renewal rituals in the event of plagues, natural disasters, and economic downturns; office space for local trade guilds; self-defence forces to ward off attacks from rival ethnic and subethnic groups; and a center for worship. (*ibid*: 15)



Photo 10: Longshan Temple, No. 211, Guangzhou Rd., Taipei.
Source: Author, 2009.

[Longshan Temple] Jones names the Longshan Temple in Taipei (龍山寺)¹ as an example of such religious centers. Describing the case of Longshan Temple he defines it also as an example of locative religion (*ibid*). Longshan Temple was built in 1738 by

¹ Dragon Mountain Monastery, popularly known as Longshan Temple. The last character shi denotes a Buddhist monastic living space inside.

settlers from Fujian. Like in most temples in Taiwan, in Longshan is worshiped a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist, and popular religion deities, such as Mazu (媽祖)².

[Social Change] Another main factor which resulted changes in believes is “social change” which refers to those developments—modernization, and economic and industrial development. Jones underlines (*ibid*: 28-30) that building railroads during the Japanese rule, connecting all parts of Taiwan in a single transportation system, resulted in the situation, when temples could grow beyond their local boundaries and “begin serving an island wide clientele.” Before that period the geography of Taiwan prevented any temple from attaining greater than local patronage. Taiwan was naturally broken into several discrete geographic zones because of the rivers that cut across the western alluvial plain. In early colonial period in and around urban areas started appear temples which were not built as traditional, community-based temples. These temples were large, eclectic in the variety of gods and were not connected to the local communities. These new temples were designed to be pilgrimage sites, and their features were typical for an adventitious religion. Jones names (*ibid*: 29) several temples founded in the first two decades of the twentieth century—the Zhinan Gong (指南宮)³, the Xingtian Gong (行天宮), and the Juexiu Gong (覺修宮).

[Zhinan Gong] In Zhinan Gong as in Longshan and in majority of Taiwanese temples it is worshiped a mixture of Buddhist, Taoist, and popular religion deities. I visited the temple many times. It is a complex of four temples. In the temple’s introduction information is said that Lu Dong-bin (呂洞賓) is Zhinan Temple’s main god and is “one of the Taoist deities most worshipped by Chinese people”. Lu belongs to the group of Taoist deities known as Eight Immortals. He was a historical figure and lived during the Tang Dynasty. The first temple which you reach going from downstairs up is the oldest in the complex and is devoted to the concept of bagua. According to Hester Chen (陳茂松), a fortune-teller and teacher of *Book of Changes* in Chao Yang University of Technology,

² Mazu is the East Asians’ goddess of the sea who protects fishermen and sailors.

³ Directly South Palace (Zhinan Gong) denotes a prominent temple in the hills of Mucha pointing south as a spiritual orientation.

in the oldest temple, which is the Taoist one, is worshipped Spirit of Forefathers (仙祖) but the huge model of bagua in the center of the temple is an instrument of fortune-telling.

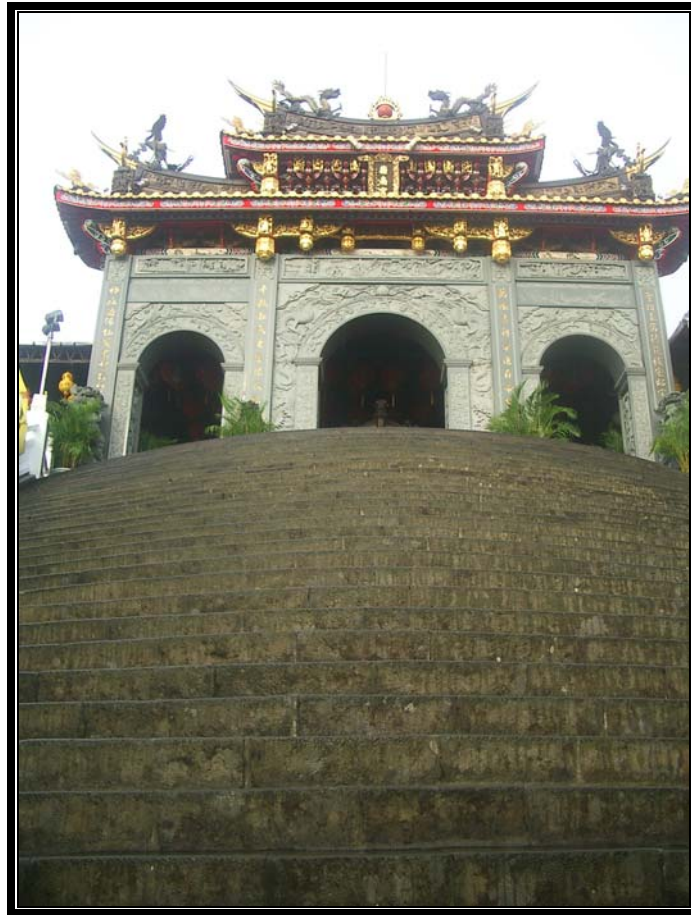


Photo 11: Zhinan Gong: The Oldest Temple in the Complex.
No. 115, Wanshou Rd., Taipei. Source: Author, 2009.

The second temple (which is younger), according to Hester Chen, is not the pure Taoist one and is devoted to Jade Emperor (玉皇 Yu Huang or 玉帝 Yu Di). Jade Emperor is the one of the most important gods of the Chinese popular religion and also the Taoist ruler of Heaven, Earth, and Underworld. In that temple there is a chamber where are represented deities of every year in traditional Chinese 60-year cycle with the statues, depicted them. In the introduction information near that temple is said that the “shrine is outstanding for its innovative design in which the main god is surrounded by subordinate deities to demonstrate his magnificent and peerless power.” This temple looks like most

eclectic one in the complex. It is interesting that near that temple there is a smaller one, which is devoted to Confucius. The image of Confucius however also is surrounded by numerous images of other deities. The third temple in the complex is devoted to Buddha Shakyamuni. So the Zhinan Gong complex is a typical example of the Taiwanese temples, which were created in epoch of modernization and its eclectic features are typical for an adventitious religion.



Photo 12: Zhinan Gong, Taipei:
Bagua in the Oldest Temple of the Complex. Source: Author, 2009.

The Temple of 18 Deities (in spite of its considerable younger foundation) seems to be developed in the similar eclecticism way. Notwithstanding it looks like very unique kind of Taiwanese temple – the way of its development looks to be inside the frames of Taiwanese modernization. In the 18 Deities Temple however was exploited an ancient local deity's image – the dog. The only reason why the dog's image was saved in the area of nowadays Temple of 18 Deities could be the assumption that there was a very strong local cult of the dog, which traces were conserved inside local legends. Later newcomers probably incorporated former dog's cult into legends describing shipwrecks. In 1980s, the period of economic boom and commercialization of religion, the former complex of believes in the area could be used for new cult development.



Photo 13: Zhinan Gong, Taipei: The Chamber of 60-Year Cycle in the Second Temple of the Complex. Source: Author, 2009.

1.08. POPULAR TRADITION AND CHINESE RELIGION CHANGES

Weller explains the complication and eclecticism of Taiwanese cults in terms of easy reinterpretation of people rituals in Taiwan in the absence of any higher theological authority (Weller 1999, 344). Weller says that this situation was typical of Chinese religion in general, but Taiwan's history of weak control from Qing dynasty followed by fifty years of Japanese occupation encouraged this behavior. From the other hand Weller also underlines that most of cults in Taiwan temples reflected the Chinese society and resemble magistrates' *yamens*. As Weller says:

“Many gods dress as imperial bureaucrats, and their periodic tours through their territory resemble the ones magistrates used to make. Many of them have official titles granted by past emperors. The committees who run temples usually include local elites and often represent one of the community's major political factions”.
(*ibid*: 343)

Taking in consideration this concept the transformation of the 17 ghosts and a dog into gods could be explained by the wish of local community add to the cult the image of official recognition. The overview of major changes in Chinese religion is a useful instrument which helps to analyze the Taiwanese “Temple of 18 Deities” symbols origin and observe deeper traces which pass back to the inner regions of Eurasian continent and Neolithic prehistory cultures. The practice of ancestor worship is one of such traces, which was a common feature of many Siberian shamanic cults.

Gregory and Ebrey (1993) give introductory overview of major changes in Chinese religion and society in the period from the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.) to thirteenth century Sung dynasty. They underline that the four Chinese religious traditions, the popular religion, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, always were in constant interaction and the high traditions of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism developed out of the popular tradition. The authors pay special attention to the broad continuities of the ancestor worship as cardinal religious practice running throughout the entire span of Chinese history. They focus also on the long history of such religious conception as combination of political and religious power, which in China traces back at least to the Shang dynasty. In the Shang dynasty period the spiritual world was seen already as a “projection” of the political world. By the Han dynasty period (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) the netherworld was thought of as a “subterranean spirit administration”. In later periods of Chinese history gods became more bureaucratized and “originally local zoomorphic gods and nature spirits often were reidentified as the deified spirits of deceased heroes and officials (*ibid*: 9)”. This Chinese tradition is very similar to midlevel European Christian tradition when Christian saints replaced popular pre-Christian gods.

Hansen (1993) describes how local indigenous deities in ancient China used to be converting into the new religion images to be worshiped instead. The author gives many examples of the legends, testifying the cult transformations which often were accompanied by ‘hand-to-hand combat’ with local gods (who sometimes accepted human sacrifices), and deconstruction of their temples or ‘demonic shrines’ during long period before the Tang, during the Tang and Sung dynasties (*ibid*: 76). Very often the government officials who implemented the irrigation works were transformed into new

gods and replaced the local river gods which used to accept human sacrifices. Sometimes the cult transformation was more peaceful with construction of new temples on the same place to pure it. Starting from 11 century the practice of relabeling local gods proved to be a far more successful strategy than suppressing them (*ibid*: 101).

The Gregory and Ebrey's (1993, 12) study and the Hansen's (1993) work put me on to an idea that the previous local zoomorphic dog cult, which could exist on the place of nowadays "Temple of 18 Deities" before Chinese immigration of Qing dynasty period could try to be incorporated into a new state-sanctioned bureaucratic structure in the way of creating an unbelievable mythological combination with 18 Buddhist Arhats of Qing official religion.

1.09. POPULAR CULTS IN TAIWAN

[Earth God Cult] Among popular cults the earth god temples are the first in numbers in Taiwan. Katz (2003b, 105) informs that in 1918 Japanese government registered 669 earth god temples. It means 19.25% of all temples in Taiwan. The second in numbers at that time were the temples of Royal Lords - 447 (12.86 % of all temples in Taiwan). During my own short trip (about 2 km) in Muzha (木柵) area of Taipei (near Chenchi University; from Zhinan Rd., sec.1 to Muzha Rd., sec.2) I found and visited 7 temples and shrines; 3 of them were devoted to the earth god (*Fude Zhengshen* (福德正神); it shows the statistics similar to the Katz's one. All of those earth god temples seem to be old. Two of them are situated by both sides of the bridge (道南橋) crossing Jingmei Stream (景美溪). In the temple on the University side, *Fude Miao* (福德廟), people couldn't say the proper date of the temple foundation; they supposed that the temple is about 200 years old, so it could be found in the beginning of 19 century.

The shrine on the other side of the bridge calls *Fude Gong* 福德宮. An old women there told me that the shrine is more that 100 years old. Surprisingly I found a sacred stone there. The third temple with the same name, *Fude Gong* (福德宮), on Muzha Rd., sec.2, is the most beautiful one. On its wall is written that it was founded in the first year of ROC, so in 1911. But from the other hand a man in the temple who could speak English told me that the temple is very old; he pointed the tablet on the wall inside the temple

near the altar and said that there is written there that the temple was founded around 1750. After that he pointed out the three images of the Earth God and informed me that the smallest one is the oldest, and the biggest one in the back is the youngest. When he explained me the name of the god in English he used words “stone god” and said that all the figures are made from stones. I guess it could mean that the Han Chinese Earth God cult was adapted to the former local sacred stones cult of that area. The sacred stone in nearby Fude Gong (福德宮) supports this assumption.



Photo 14: A Sacred Stone: Fude Gong 福德宮,
Taipei, Zhinan Rd., Sec.1. Source: Author, 2009.

[Royal Lords Cult] After the Earth God temples the cults of Mazu and Royal Lords are the most popular cults in Taiwan. According to Katz (2003b, 105) more than 700 Royal Lords temples registered now in Taiwan. Among others Lord Chi is the most popular

(131 temples enshrine him as main deity). Over 60 Royal Lords temples have Lord Wen (Wen Wangye) as the main deity. Lord Wen's cult is related to that of Marshal Wen. Katz (2003b) describing the cult of Royal Lords in Taiwanese popular religion claims that the local Taiwanese cult has Fujian origin and shows its development in Fujian and Taiwan during the Qing dynasty. The cult of Royal Lords reminds me many common features of 18 deities' cult; especially interesting is the rite of floating and burning boats. The Royal Lords cult involves the performance of plague expulsion festivals, which include sending off a "plague boat", small wooden boat, which represents the community's accumulated afflictions. Exactly such kind of the wooden boat image I saw in the underground floor of the "Temple of 18 Deities".



Photo 15: Temple of 18 Deities: Probably an Original Wooden "Plague Boat".
Source: Author, 2008.

Jones (2003) provides very impressive description of Taiwanese variant of the plague as a gang of ghostly bandits, the image which so clear corresponds to a Siberian Khanty floating caravan with diseases-spreading deities on the boats in the myth "Holy Legend about the Desirable Knight—Merchant of the Low World, Merchant of the Upper World" (Myths, Legends, Tales of Khanty and Mansi 1990, 105-125). I will describe it later in

the part devoted to Uralic mythology. At the same time Jones connects Mazu (媽祖) cult with the “plague boats” ritual and gives an interesting explanation of the cult popularity in the northern Taiwan:

“Traditionally, the Chinese population conceived of the plague as a gang of ghostly bandits terrorizing the area, so they responded to it by calling on a spiritual defense in the form of Celestial Generals and their forces. The people would take the image of the deity from the local temple and parade it as a way of calling the troops in. If the power of the local deity proved insufficient, they might go farther a field to find a more powerful god to come to their aid. Often, the imported god proved more successful than local deities, primarily because, by the time the local gods had been tried and found wanting and a new god transported in, the plague had already had time to run its course naturally and was beginning to abate. In this way, the image of Mazu from the Guandu temple became renowned for its efficacy all over the northern end of Taiwan”. (Jones 2003, 30)

The tradition to import gods to fight plague ghosts could be one among other explanations of a high eclecticism of Taiwanese cults. Katz informs (Katz 2003, 169) that later the tradition of floating wooden boats in Taiwan was changed to burning of paper or bamboo boats. Katz adduces also (*ibid*: 169) the very interesting fragment from the earliest Taiwan gazetteers of 1717 and 1720, which describes the reason to change the ritual in the island:

“...The Royal Lords boat was originally made of wood and floated out to sea, but this posed a threat to other communities along the coast who would have had to perform offering rituals should the boat land on their shores. As a result, more recent plague boats were built using paper and bamboo, and were burned instead of floated away”. (*ibid*: 169)

Very probably the original meaning of the 17 dead corpses and a dog on the boat was those of 18 plague bringing deities. The myth of the 18 Deities cult origin could reflect also the period of cultural change when the majority of fishers community on the shore started refuse to accept occasionally landing wooden “plague boats”, expelled by other communities.

[**Mazu**] About Mazu temples in Wikipedia is said that in 1980 in Taiwan were registered 509 temples, dedicated to that deity. Now in Taiwan there are about 800-1000 such temples (Wikipedia: Mazu). Describing Mazu cult origin Ter Haar informs that the cult started in the harbor of Pu-tian (莆田) in Ning-hai city. According to Ter Haar she was a shaman and lived during the end of the Five Dynasties period (907-960). She died very young and local people started to worship her. Later Mazu became known as a protector of local seafarers. It is believed that the goddess used a raft for transport instead of being able to fly or swim as water-gods. Ter Haar connects Mazu cult popularity with the fact that during the Song dynasty most of the crews of sea-going boats came from Fujian. Further spread of Mazu cult Ter Haar connects with Zheng He expeditions (鄭和) (1405 - 1433). Mazu was one among protectors of Zheng He expeditions, which helped to cult get the recognition by the central government. (Ter Haar 1990, 356-376)



Photo 16: Longshan Temple, Taipei: Mazu. Source: Author, 2009.

1.10. SPIRITS OF THE DEAD AND GHOSTS

According to Weller (1999, 341) “most Taiwanese religious ritual involves spirits of the dead in one form or another.” Weller mentions (*ibid*: 340) the phenomenon of construction the special temples which commemorate the dead from the battles. It reminds me the story describing the origin of another “Temple of 18 Deities”, which is located in Gaoxiung. My classmate Aaron Jensen provided me with the story, which was told to him by the temple keeper.

“There were 18 people on a ship traveling from mainland China to Gaoxiung. The ship encountered a storm and sank but the 18 people lived. The 18 people settled in the bay of Gaoxiung which was not settled at the time. These 18 people worked very hard to develop this area. However, an official from the Qing government thought that these people were rebels and the official had killed them all. The local people who were living in this area decided to build a temple for the 18 people who were killed. Many people would go to this temple to pray and their wishes would come true. The information I got did not have any specific dates and it did not say from what part of China the people came”. (Jensen, A. 2008)

Probably this story traces back to the great rebellion against Qing rule which happened in south part of Taiwan in 1721. During putting down the rebels many Fujian origin immigrants were killed by Qing government forces. Despite of many gods in Taiwanese cults are not ancestors they also are spirits of dead men and women and incorporated with society by other different ways like gods of certain crafts or sword brotherhoods. In contrast to ghosts most of them represent upright moral values and “protect the legitimate interests of their communities, but will not help supplicants with shady needs.” (*ibid*: 343)

Katz (2003, 167) mentions also that field data on a number of cults in Taiwan, indicates that the souls of those who die premature or violent deaths, and prove powerful enough to resist attempts at exorcism, are considered to be vicious ghosts. My Taiwanese informants told me that still now there is the superstition do not go ashore during the ghost festivals times, because there are multitude of drown people ghosts all around Taiwan, who could bring many troubles to anyone at that time.

Usually ghosts were worshiped in small shrines, which were raised in the places where unidentified bodies were found, such as battlefields or shipwrecks. Worshiping of such shrines was popular among people with the kinds of immoral requests such as gambling or prostitution (Weller 1999, 353). Such kind of rituals survived in Taiwan in the form of the annual ghost festival dating from the middle of the 19 century. Weller recognizes (*ibid*: 355) the 18 Deities cult of Shi Men (石門) of my study as one among popular cults which was developed from the ghost shrine during the economic boom of the 1980s. According to his research such kind of temples (in contrast to Earth Gods temples) could “grant all kinds of wishes, not limited by any accepted standards of morality.”