The Taipei Tianhou-gong and the Shikoku *Henro*: A Place-based Approach

MA Thesis

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Word count: 26,551

Date of completion: July 27, 2017

Research Master Asian Studies

Leiden University

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1. Introduction

The Taipei Tianhou-gong 台北天后宮 is a temple in the Ximen district of Taipei dedicated to the Fujianese sea goddess Mazu 媽祖 (alternatively known as Tianhou 天后 or Empress of Heaven). As is the case with most temples found in Taiwan, the Taipei Tianhou-gong is home to a whole pantheon of Chinese deities with backgrounds in various Asian religious traditions. Particular to the Taipei Tianhou-gong is the presence of Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師 (774-835), the founder of Japanese Shingon Buddhism. The several images of him that can be found at the temple attest to its colonial past. Before the Taipei Tianhou-gong as it stands today was constructed, the headquarters of Kōyasan Shingonshū 高野山真言宗 (a sect within Shingon Buddhism) in Taiwan, the Kōbō-ji 弘法寺, was located there. Although seemingly nothing more than Kōbō-ji leftovers, the images of Kōbō Daishi found at the Taipei Tianhou-gong are more than relics of the past. When paying respect to the deities present at the temple, visitors are encouraged to burn incense in his honor. Since most of them come to consult Mazu, Kōbō Daishi long played only a minor role at the site. This, however, is currently changing.

In the last few years, the Taipei Tianhou-gong has become an important place to Taiwanese walkers of the Shikoku *henro* 遍路[1] (a 1,200-kilometer-long Japanese pilgrimage circuit). Up to the year 2010, barely any Taiwanese knew about the Shikoku *henro*. Those interested in making the journey had to rely on partial information available in Chinese on the internet. The few people who did manage to complete to Shikoku *henro* returned to Taiwan to share their experiences on the web and in various publications. It is hard to make an estimation of the number of Taiwanese people who have since gone on the *henro*. Many rely on social media such as Facebook in order to obtain up to date information about the trail and events related to the *henro* in Taiwan. As of May 22, 2017, the biggest two groups on Facebook have 1,300 and 1,400 members – though the member base probably knows a lot of overlap. Put into perspective: the biggest international Facebook group on the *henro*, where information is exchanged in English, has only 600 members.

Kōbō Daishi is a figure central to the *henro*. It is believed that pilgrims walk the *henro* spiritually accompanied by Kōbō Daishi himself, a phenomenon known in Japanese as *dōgyō ninin* 同行二人. Since completing the *henro* is physically and spiritually demanding, many become affected by a condition popularly known as *shikokubyō* 四国病, or Shikoku sickness. This condition denotes the intense longing for, and nostalgia to, the island's pilgrimage circuit.

Now that an increasing number of Taiwanese have a connection to Shikoku, more of them are becoming interested in Taiwan's colonial past. The Taipei Tianhou-gong in particular is an

1 The word '*henro*' both denotes the actual pilgrimage itself as well as pilgrims who walk it.

important site to these people as Kōbō Daishi forms an integral part of it. Taiwanese *henro* can visit the Taipei Tianhou-gong in order to pay their respects to Kōbō Daishi before going to, or after having returned from, Shikoku. In November of 2016, a Buddhist service lead by Japanese Shingon priests was held there. It was organized by representatives of the Taiwanese *henro* community. That the Taipei Tianhou-gong now caters to the needs and wishes of Taiwanese *henro* is additionally interesting when taking into account that the former Kōbō-ji was the starting point of a copy of the Shikoku *henro* created by the Japanese during the colonial period. The Kōbō Daishi of the Kōbō-ji has thus been given a second life at the Taipei Tianhou-gong as a beacon to departing and returning pilgrims.

In the final months of 2016, I was able to conduct fieldwork in Japan, where I walked parts of the Shikoku *henro*, and Taiwan, where I visited sites affiliated with Shingon Buddhism during the Japanese period. Although my initial goal was to carry out ethnographic research into the status of Kōbō Daishi at the Taipei Tianhou-gong itself, the focus of my fieldwork shifted upon the discovery that the site used to function as the starting point of the Taipei *henro* and is today reprising a similar role with regard to the actual *henro* on Shikoku. I now started viewing the Taipei Tianhou-gong as a place simultaneously offering services to those who come to consult Mazu and those who feel a connection to Kōbō Daishi. The site is characterized by the interpenetration of two different folk religious discourses, both of which have informed the site at varying intensities over the course of the previous century, and today interlock.

The primary aim of this thesis is to untangle and specify these two discourses and show how they have, in the past, informed the site in turn, and how they, today, do so simultaneously. This requires me to situate these discourses historically, and consider the various social, political and cultural circumstances that have contributed to their emergence. Each chapter of this thesis therefore proceeds in a similar fashion: after discussing the most important political developments in any period related to either the Mazu cult or Shingon Buddhism, I zoom in to consider how these developments affected the site under scrutiny.

In order to achieve my primary aim, I make use of the place-based approach to pilgrimage sites. This approach focuses on the identification of historical layers that intertwine at any given site. It has its starting point in the idea that multiple meanings can be projected on any site simultaneously by a whole range of people with different spiritual needs and wishes. In my analysis of the Taipei Tianhou-gong, I will be explicating four historical layers. These are taken up in the four chapters that follow the next one on methodology.

The chapter on methodology begins with a discussion of past and present approaches to the study of pilgrimage. Victor Turner's theory of *communitas* holds that upon embarking on a

pilgrimage, pilgrims temporarily leave behind their social roles and become part of a community of equals. John Eade and Michael Sallnow have challenged the universality of this conception of pilgrimage. They argue pilgrimage sites are contested, and reject the idea that there can be a single official discourse fully determining the meaning of any site. The place-based approach has its roots in Eade and Sallnow's ideas, but does not assume meaning to be necessarily contested. Instead, multiple meanings can coincide at a single pilgrimage location.

After this discussion of theoretical approaches to pilgrimage, I critically discuss two terms essential to my purposes in this thesis, namely 'pilgrimage' and 'religion'. The problem with the word 'pilgrimage' is that it calls to mind connotations absent in Chinese and Japanese equivalents of the term. In order to meaningfully discuss the practice of pilgrimage in Japan and Taiwan in the chapters that follow, it is necessary to introduce and elaborate these equivalents. The term 'religion' is plagued by all kinds of suppositions rooted in Christian sensibilities. Most Taiwanese and Japanese do not feel the need to subscribe to a single religious creed – their worldview is rather combinatory in nature. They moreover do not consider themselves necessarily engaged in religious behavior whenever they visit a temple or shrine. The term religion is therefore only of importance when discussing matters at the abstract level of government policy or academic theory, not when analyzing the behavior of ordinary people.

In chapter three, I take up the analysis of the first historical layer: Taiwan's pre-colonial Mazu cult. This chapter covers the period from the defeat of the Dutch by remnants of the Ming dynasty in 1662 to the moment the Japanese arrived in 1895. The Taipei Tianhou-gong may have the Kōbō-ji as its spatial predecessor, but its spiritual predecessor is a temple called the Xinxing-gong 新興宮. This temple used to be located in the nearby Banka 艋舺 district of Taipei, but it was destroyed by the Japanese in 1943. The icon of Mazu that can now be found on the altar of the Taipei Tianhou-gong originates from the destroyed Xinxing-gong. In order to fully appreciate the role this icon plays at the Taipei Tianhou-gong, it is necessary to consider the history of Mazu herself. Temples belonging to her cult are locked in battles for legitimacy, and construing the much older Xinxing-gong as the spiritual predecessor of the Taipei Tianhou-gong should therefore be seen as a strategy meant to convince visitors of the temple of the efficacy of its Mazu icon. The construction of such historical narratives is directly tied to financial flows and vital to any temple's continued success.

Chapter four concerns the second layer as it was constituted by adherents of Shingon Buddhism, and takes us into the Japanese period (1895-1945). The first section of this chapter relates the religious policies that the new government pursued. Although the Japanese initially adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards Taiwan's 'native' religions, they become more repressive as

time went on. When the second war with China broke out in 1937, the Japanese began to more intensively Japanize the inhabitants of the island in order to make sure that they would serve the emperor, rather than defect to the enemy. It is in this period that Chinese cultural assets came to be under threat, and against this background that the 1943 destruction of the Xinxing-gong can be explained. In this chapter's second section, I show how Shingon Buddhism disseminated in Taiwan, focusing primarily on Taipei. I here discuss the history of the Kōbō-ji, the Taipei *henro*, and several other sites. In order to understand how ordinary Japanese inhabitants of Taiwan experienced this copy of the Shikoku *henro*, in the third section, I turn to the explication of a personal account written by a person who walked it.

The fifth chapter considers how, as part of the third layer, the Kōbō-ji is appropriated by followers of the destroyed Xinxing-gong in the years immediately following the war. I begin this chapter by describing how religious policy changed under Taiwan's new rulers. In order to set up the sixth chapter, I relate changes in religious and cultural policy up to the new millennium. The period between 1945 and 1949 (the year the Nationalist government fled from the Mainland and settled in Taiwan) is a particularly tumultuous one, and it is in 1948 that the former Kōbō-ji is handed over to the followers of the Xinxing-gong. This handover is shrouded in controversy – those of the Mazu cult claimed it was legit, while the *Zhongguo fojiaohui* 中國佛教會 (Buddhist Association of the Republic of China) argued that it was inappropriate for a Buddhist temple to be given to a folk religious cult.

In chapter six, I begin with a survey past the deities of the Taipei Tianhou-gong. Doing so offers a means of comparing how Taiwanese visitors to the Taipei Tianhou-gong interact with the statues of Kōbō Daishi that can be found at the site. I will argue that the status of Kōbō Daishi there is somewhat ambiguous, as many visitors do not know who he is and are likely to regard him as yet another deity in the Chinese pantheon of gods. However, with the recent popularity of the Shikoku *henro* among Taiwanese, the temple's Shingon Buddhist heritage is in the process of being reactivated. Taiwanese pilgrims who depart to and return from Shikoku may visit the Taipei Tianhou-gong in order to pay their respects to Kōbō Daishi. I discuss how a Buddhist service recently held by Shingon priests at the Taipei Tianhou-gong was organized by representatives of the Taiwanese *henro* community. This particular event is exemplary of the way in which the various historical layers informing the Taipei Tianhou-gong today interlock to produce what I describe as a parallelism of discourses.

In the conclusion, I summarize the main results, and consider future directions for research. Some sites touched upon only briefly in this thesis, for example, themselves warrant more in-depth scrutiny. The Taipei Tianhou-gong is but one site in Taiwan where heritage from the colonial period

is being rediscovered and reactivated. The investigation undertaken in this thesis can moreover be turned around to consider, not the role Kōbō Daishi plays in Taiwan, but the role Mazu plays in Japan.

2. Methodology

This chapter begins with a critical discussion of two influential theories that shaped the study of pilgrimage, namely Turner's theory of *communitas* and Eade and Sallnow's contestation model. I then discuss the merits of the place-based approach to pilgrimage as it has been applied to two sites in Japan – respectively Kumano and Mt. Konpira – by David Max Moerman and Sarah Thal. I end the next section by arguing Rob Weller has done something similar in the case of the Eighteen Kings temple in northern Taiwan, and briefly summarize how I apply the place-based approach to the case under scrutiny in this thesis. Section 2.2. delves into the problem of the word 'pilgrimage', which is a generic term for a mode of travel that has multiple non-generic equivalents in Japanese and Chinese, each carrying their own specific connotations. In section 2.3., I argue that we should be careful when applying the word 'religion' to the East Asian case, especially when our object of study is the common people. While the term has its uses to academics and policymakers, we should be careful to needlessly describe ordinary visitors to temples as engaged in a form of religious behavior. In section 2.4., I consider a few cultural presuppositions about sacred travel that both the Japanese and the Taiwanese share.

2.1. The place-based approach

Turner's work is generally considered pioneering in the academic study of pilgrimage. He is a typical product of his era, the seventies, in which anthropologists were searching for the structural characteristics of pilgrimage, that is to say, a set of formal qualities that would apply to pilgrimage across cultures. Turner analyzes pilgrimage as though it were an extended *rite de passage*. A pilgrim is someone who leaves behind his or her daily social role and corresponding status in order to become a part of an idealistic community of equals. The pilgrim thus finds himself in a kind of social limbo, a condition to which Turner refers with the term 'liminality'. It is this state of liminality that allows for *communitas*: the opportunity for pilgrims to socialize with each other without being defined by previously established social roles and hierarchies (Turner, 1973: 204).

The downside of the Turnerian approach to the study of East Asian pilgrimage can be considered by scrutinizing Hoshino Eiki's 1997 article *Pilgrimage and Peregrination: Contextualizing the Saikoku Junrei and the Shikoku Henro*. The context alluded to in the title of this article includes the practice of pilgrimage across a great many cultures. In his discussion, Hoshino compares a number of Japanese pilgrimages with Christian, Islamic, and Hindu counterparts. For example, Hoshino deploys the difference between the circuit-type and single-line type of Japanese pilgrimage to argue that single-line pilgrimages outside of Japan are in many cases not truly single-line, because even when one travels to Santiago de Compostela there are many sites one can visit

along the way (1997: 278-279). Similarly, he notes how Asian pilgrimage in general tends towards being circular, only to downplay the importance of this fact in the Japanese case by arguing that the average *henro* does not experience his pilgrimage to be circular, at all (Ibid.: 286).

Quite a few results obtained through Hoshino's approach are only valid within the Turnerian paradigm, that is to say, when one tacitly assumes that pilgrimage is a universal practice one encounters across a variety of differing cultures. Under this assumption, the Hajj to Mecca, the Camino to Santiago de Compostela, and the *henro* on Shikoku are all species of the genus 'pilgrimage'. This leads to a theoretical framework in which one can compare the world's pilgrimages by considering structural similarities and differences. To those researchers operating outside of this paradigm (for example, to those departing from a place-based approach), the typological and structural differences among the world's pilgrimages uncovered by Hoshino are too restricted to the realm of the abstract and the arbitrary to be meaningful. The sites compared are simply culturally too diverse, and his results become highly problematic in nature as soon as one begins to question the validity of the idea of pilgrimage as a universal practice.

Although Hoshino's work makes it clear that Turner's ideas have found fertile ground even in Japan, his acceptance of Turner's conceptual framework to explain the practice of pilgrimage in no way warrants its universal validity and application. Henny van der Veere has objected that the uncritical application of notions such as liminality and *communitas* to Japanese pilgrimage is not without danger (2014: 261). It is indeed unclear how concepts developed through the study of Christian pilgrimage can tell us anything about pilgrimage in Japan or Taiwan.

Yoshida Teigo has argued that the driving force for many a Japanese pilgrim to undertake pilgrimage has in many cases been practical, not idealistic. He shows how, during the Edo period, poor farmers facing a failing harvest would travel to Shikoku to become pilgrims – in practice meaning they went to beg for food.[2] People could also go on a pilgrimage to any of the temples belonging to the *henro* order to hold a Buddhist service for recently deceased relatives (in which case we are speaking of *reijō mawari* 霊場回り). To some villages in Ehime, a pilgrimage to one of Shikoku's sacred places was a form of spiritual training (*shūgyo* 修行), a kind of *rite de passage* for the young to pass to adulthood (Yoshida, 2007: 55-56). These concrete examples show that there are certain ideas motivating Japanese people to go on a pilgrimage that are easily overlooked when uncritically resorting to Turner's model. The farmer who traverses Shikoku as a pilgrim in order to obtain food is certainly not motivated by the ideal of *communitas*.

An alternative approach to pilgrimage was developed by Eade and Sallnow in the early nineties. They argue, *pace* Turner, that pilgrimage does not belong to the realm of the idealistic, but

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2 These are referred to as *kojiki junrei* 乞食巡礼 by Hoshino; see 1997: 275.

rather that mundane conflicts are played out using pilgrimage as a stage. Instead of taking any pilgrimage to be informed by only an official discourse, they see sites as potentially reflecting a whole range of competing discourses. Turner's idea of pilgrimage as conducive to anti-structural *communitas* is not an empirical description of how pilgrimage is supposed to function everywhere, but simply one among many available discourses – or culturally determined ways of speaking – about pilgrimage (Eade and Sallnow, 1991: 5-16). The whole idea of 'pilgrimage' as a formal, universal structure is here challenged – what requires study is the way in which the category 'pilgrimage' is itself historically and culturally determined. Doing so means the study of pilgrimage is slowly but surely disentangled from the theological, unmasking the idea of *communitas* as quintessentially determined by Christian ideals. Room is thus made for a whole host of different – that is to say non-religious – motivations for undertaking pilgrimage, including Yoshida's case of the farmer who goes on a pilgrimage with no other goal than to beg for food.

While Eade and Sallnow's model forms an attractive alternative to Turner's, it has been criticized by scholars such as Simon Coleman for placing too much emphasis on the contested character of pilgrimage sites. Coleman's remarks are instructive in this regard:

> Just as the Turnerian argument about *communitas* was rejected by scholars who went looking for it and could not find it in any way that they found ethnographically convincing, so the contestation paradigm could potentially be challenged by a simplistic reading that looks for it at a given site and instead finds a predominance of apparent harmony. (Coleman, 2002: 359)

I, too, was confronted with the apparent harmony Coleman is writing of while engaged in fieldwork at the Taipei Tianhou-gong. The two discourses that I take to inform the site and will discuss in the coming chapters seemingly do not compete, but rather appear to run parallel. I return to this parallelism of discourses in chapter six. Here, however, it is important to note that I do not understand these discourses to be set in stone. They determine the way in which individuals experience any given site, but since individuals have their own motivations for paying visits to temples and undertaking pilgrimages, discourses are continually adapted to correspond to ever-changing spiritual needs.

With Eade and Sallnow, we have entered, to use Coleman's terms, the era of postmodern fragmentation. Recent research on pilgrimage both in Japan and Taiwan no longer departs from the application of universal theories to specific cases, but instead draws on a variety of conceptual tools and research methods in order to focus on the analysis of specific sites and places that form the end-goal or a stop on the pilgrimage under scrutiny. This place-based approach puts less emphasis on the

ethnographic study of a pilgrim's journey, and more on studying the cultural, historical and political factors that have contributed to the social construction of sacred sites. Let me here discuss three studies that make use of the place-based approach to pilgrimage in more detail – the first two on sites in Japan, and the third on a site in Taiwan.

Max Moerman, in his 2005 study *Locating Paradise*, shows how the study of a single location, in his case the mountains of Kumano, can bring to the surface a layered complexity of traditions that all contributed to the cultural construction of a landscape that even today does not fail to exert a pull on the imagination of the average Japanese person. At Kumano, the real and the ideal continue to coincide in a place that was at different points in time shaped through the projection of various worldviews – Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike – onto the landscape. Even though these worldviews were shared by large groups of people, the individuals making up these groups each had their own specific motivation for traveling to Kumano. Following Eade and Sallnow, Max Moerman takes pilgrimage to Kumano to have been a practice with multiple and contested meanings. Since so many different worldviews interlocked at Kumano, it is only natural that the pilgrims traveling there did not constitute a single, heterogeneous community. Rather, throughout its long history, Kumano meant a great many things to a wide range of people, from the priests and nuns who ran its temple and shrines, to the pilgrims of all backgrounds and classes who traversed its mountains in search of the positive effects contact with one of many ideal worlds was supposed to yield.

Sarah Thal's 2005 work *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods: The Politics of a Pilgrimage Site in Japan, 1573-1912* similarly inverts the relationship between universal theories and specific places. Rather than descending from the universal to the particular, Thal departs from the particular and considers how specific localized events relate to the bigger historical picture. She carefully reconstructs the history of Shikoku's Mt. Konpira by studying the discursive changes that ran parallel to shifts in political power, focusing on the changes over time in the use of the word *kami* 神 (god). Before 1868, use of the word *kami* had largely been ambiguous – it could denote any number of things, from an entire mountain, to a single rock, to both at the same time –, a situation which was apparently not perceived to be a problem. After the Meiji restoration and the establishment of the modern Japanese state, attempts were made by the political elite to end the ambiguous status of *kami*. Newly introduced Western categorizations made it necessary to sharply demarcate the various spiritual beings inhabiting Japan's ideal worlds. Buddha's came to be seen as beings of foreign origin, while the *kami* were touted as entities native to Japan. Other beings such as *tengu* 天狗 (long-nosed flying goblins) were delegated to the category of *meishin* 迷信, or superstition. Western categories, as soon as they were applied to Japanese phenomena, ceased to be

descriptive and rather began functioning as normative ideals. I will return to this problematic in my discussion of the use of the term 'religion' in section 2.3.

In the Taiwanese case, Rob Weller wrote extensively on the Eighteen Kings temple (located at the northern tip of Taiwan), including in the 1994 article *Capitalism, Community, and the Rise of Amoral Cults in Taiwan*. Although his work on the Eighteen Kings temple prefigures the place-based approach by a decade and concerns a different country, I consider him to have had a similar orientation as Max Moerman and Thal in the case of Japan. He shows in detail how the fate of a specific site came to be intertwined with changes in Taiwan's national economy. Weller's characterization of the Eighteen Kings temple as an 'amoral cult' is illustrative of the way in which non-religious motivations play a decisive role in explaining the popularity of certain shrines in Taiwan. It were in fact mostly people concerned with making money that flocked to the Eighteen Kings temple. Until the early 1970s, the temple had only been a minor ghost shrine[3] dedicated to seventeen shipwrecked wealthy Chinese and a dog. This dog is considered to be the eighteenth king because it supposedly remained loyal to its masters until the very end. Ghost shrines grew in popularity when Taiwan's economic boom had an increasing amount of people bet their earnings in lotteries. To win these lotteries, people tried to obtain lucky numbers in any way possible – requesting ghosts to communicate these numbers thus became a popular practice. The deities inhabiting the regular temples were considered unwilling to listen to such immoral wishes. Economic stagnation and government crackdowns on illegal lotteries eventually lead to the decline in the number of visitors to ghost shrines. Today, the Eighteen Kings temple is only a shadow of its former self.

The place-based approach as presented here allows me make to make sense of the way in which the Taipei Tianhou-gong serves as a crossroads of pilgrimage. Drawing inspiration from the above-mentioned studies, I will analyze the various traditions that have shaped the Taipei Tianhou-gong and its predecessor (the Kōbō-ji) in terms of alternating and ultimately interlocking layers. The first layer is determined primarily by the Xinxing-gong, and must be situated against the history of Mazu in Taiwan. The second layer takes definitive shape in 1910, when the Kōbō-ji is constructed using money made available by Kōyasan's Kongōbu-ji 金剛峯寺. I take this layer to have lasted until 1945, when Japan loses Second World War and the Japanese priests working at the Kōbō-ji are expatriated home. The third layer lasts until the end of the first decade of the new millennium; during this period, the site is shaped primarily by the Mazu cult. In chapter six I will

3 Taiwanese people distinguish between *yinmiao* 陰廟 and *yangmiao* 陽廟, that is to say, between 'dark', *yin*, and 'light', *yang*, temples or shrines. Ghost shrines are *yinmiao* and therefore thought of as places where one can have one's immoral wishes granted by ghosts (*gui* 鬼); *yangmiao*, on the other hand, or lofty places where the gods (*shen* 神) reside and where does not go to, for example, request money.

argue that today, we are witnessing a transition to a fourth layer, in which the first, second and third layer interpenetrate to produce a parallelism of discourses similar to the one Max Moerman has identified at work in the mountains of Kumano.

2.2. The term 'pilgrimage' and its Japanese and Taiwanese equivalents

To the Western mind, pilgrimage involves a journey, often long and arduous, to a religious location; often, we take the journey to be more important than the goal, and see pilgrimage as an experience aimed at self-transformation. The word 'pilgrimage' therefore has an ascetic ring to it. These connotations may interfere with a correct understanding of the phenomenon of pilgrimage in the cultures of East Asia. As Susan Naquin and Yu Chung-fang write in the introduction to their volume on Chinese pilgrimage, Western scholars have had to '...shake off the influence of Western religions – with their clear definitions of religion and believer, identifiable acts of worship, and assumption of hardship as part of the pilgrimage journey' (1992: 3). In order not to force our definitions onto the way in which Japanese and Taiwanese people experience and talk about the phenomenon we know as 'pilgrimage', it is important to here consider the various Japanese and Mandarin equivalents of the word.

In the Japanese case, the miniature pilgrimage circuits (*utsushi reijō* 写し霊場) that can be found all over the country are a clear example of a form of pilgrimage to which none of the above-mentioned connotations apply. The *henro*'s many copies, however short, have the same function as the actual route past eighty-eight sacred places on Shikoku itself: to allow pilgrims to enter an ideal space from where they can accumulate merit (or *kudoku* 功徳, a term I discuss in more detail in section 2.4.). Japanese pilgrimage is thus not necessarily long. Nor does it have to be arduous; thousands of Japanese complete the Shikoku *henro* each year by car, and an even larger number by bus. It is moreover not uncommon for people to stay in luxurious hotels and guesthouses along the way.

A miniature copy of the Shikoku *henro* can still be found in Taiwan at the present-day Qingxiu-yuan 慶修院 in Hualien, originally a Shingon Buddhist missionary post set up in the colonial period that has now been preserved as a tourist site. This particular miniature copy of the Shikoku *henro* can be performed in a few minutes, but may take longer depending on the inclinations of the visitor. To those Japanese living in Hualien during the colonial period (mostly immigrants from Shikoku's Tokushima prefecture), performing this copy must have meant partaking in a little piece of home. It is highly likely that the *utsushi reijō* of the Qingxiu-yuan was made possible through the process of *bunshin* 分身, in which some ground is taken from a certain location to another in order to allow for the transfer of the original location's perceived spiritual benefits.

During the colonial period, someone may have brought some ground from all of Shikoku's eighty-eight temples to the Qingxiu-yuan in order to guarantee the efficacy of its miniature *henro*.

Besides the word '*henro*', another Japanese term corresponding to our word 'pilgrimage' is *junrei* 巡礼, which refers to the idea of visiting multiple temples and performing rites there. If one undertakes a journey with the goal in mind to only visit one temple, it is instead referred to as *sankei* 参詣 (Yoshida, 2007: 49). Not only did Taiwan offer a copy of the eighty-eight sacred places of Shikoku, it also had multiple copies of the thirty-three sacred places making up the Saikoku *junrei*, which is dedicated to the bodhisattva Kannon 観音. Similar to what happened at Max Moerman's Kumano, features of the Taiwanese landscape were taken by the Japanese to be indicators of sacred space. The Guanyin-shan 観音山 in Taipei, which featured its own copy of the Saikoku *junrei*, is exemplary of such spatial projection.

In Taiwan, the idea of pilgrimage has a strong communal ring to it. The generic term in Mandarin for pilgrimage, c*haosheng* 朝聖, simply refers to the act of traveling to and visiting a sacred site that is of importance to a certain individual. This term could therefore also be taken to describe, for instance, the Hajj to Mecca. More specific to Chinese culture is the undertaking of *jinxiang* 進香, which generally involves group travel to multiple sacred sites in order to perform *baibai* 拜拜 there. As Naquin and Yu mention, sacred sites are seen in Chinese popular religion as places where people can share in *ling* 靈, or the manifest spiritual power of a deity. *Jinxiang*, then, refers to bringing and burning incense in front of a deity in order to make contact with it (Naquin and Yu, 1992: 11).

The word '*baibai*' is a more popular way of expressing the act of visiting a site's deities in order to consult them, or make specific requests (usually related to overcoming personal hardship). Temples help their visitors by putting up instructions on how to properly perform *baibai*, which is different in every case. The Taipei Tianhou-gong, too, offers such instructions. These have the visitor go past all of its main images, including Kōbō Daishi, in order to offer incense. It is important to note here that most people who perform *baibai* are only interested in consulting one deity in specific. They will greet and offer incense to other deities present at any given site, but mostly do so out of respect. *Baibai* is often, but necessarily, accompanied by acts of divination that are meant to elicit responses from the deities. In Taiwan, even a simple *baibai* to a temple can be taken to be an act of pilgrimage. The image of hardship that sticks to the Western notion of 'pilgrimage' is absent in most *baibai* behavior, which in many cases is also meant to be enjoyable. In Taiwan, tourism and *baibai* to a temple often go hand-in-hand. As I argue in more detail in the next section, it is partly for this reason that we should not consider it religious behavior by default.

I make use of the Japanese and Mandarin equivalents of the English word 'pilgrimage' introduced above whenever possible in the coming chapters. Referring to the different modes of travel these people regularly undertake with the term 'pilgrimage' in each and every case needlessly invokes all kinds of out-of-place connotations that are best avoided if a correct understanding of the subject at hand is to be obtained.

2.3. The term 'religion'

As Robert Ford Campany argues in his 2003 article *On The Very Idea of Religions*, the application of the thoroughly Western notion of 'religion' to Eastern religious traditions and practices is not without a certain amount of danger. In the West, we tend to think of religious traditions as separate entities – that is to say, as systematic, coherent and clearly demarcated wholes. The word 'religion' is thus charged with certain presuppositions, meaning that there is nothing neutral about the term (Campany, 2003: 289-291). We should be careful to uncritically assume the existence of sharply demarcated religious traditions when studying the East Asian case. What we call 'Daoism', 'Confucianism' and 'Buddhism' have come about through a long history of mutually implicative – and by no means necessarily continuous – development; it is therefore unsure where one tradition ends, and another one begins. It is furthermore dangerous to assume that the people whose behavior we observe at temples and shrines subscribe to only a single one of these creeds. When visiting sacred sites, they may in fact not even consider themselves to be engaged in religious behavior at all.

I have already briefly touched upon the problematic nature of the Japanese equivalent of the Western category of religion, *shūkyō,* while discussing Thal's work in section 2.1. I there wrote that the newly minted category *shūkyō* had normative implications resulting in a specific arrangement of the Japanese religious landscape – an arrangement that certainly did not exist before. This also affected the modernization of Taiwan and the way in which religious affairs on the island were run. As I will show in more detail in section 3.2., the Mazu cult was at some point designated as a form of *meishin* (superstition) that needed to be combated in favor of Shinto. To make things more complicated, the Japanese themselves did not regard Shinto as a form of *shūkyō*, but rather took it to be the expression of the Japanese spirit – if anything, Shinto was an ideology, not a religion. This is the reason why Taiwanese students often made field trips to Shinto shrines. Such visits were not by the Japanese themselves regarded as religious in nature, but meant to instill Japanese values in the population. The use of the label 'religious' in this context is therefore also not without its problems.

These issues, both with the present-day Western application of the word 'religion', and the way in which the term *shūkyō* was deployed by the Japanese from the Meiji period (1868-1912)

onward, additionally reveal the merits of the place-based approach. As Barbara Ambros points out in the introduction to her 2008 book *Emplacing a Pilgrimage: The Ōyama Cult and Regional Religion in Early Modern Japan*, the typically Western orientation towards doctrine and sectarian affiliation creates a tension in the study of the Japanese worldview, since the latter is above all combinatory in nature (i.e. taking its inspiration from and synthesizing many different traditions), while the former implies the constant search for a form of religiosity that can be taken to representative of a specific place or a given period in time. With so many different traditions acting as cultural determinants, and with so many sites regularly changing sectarian affiliation throughout history, it seems nearly impossible to clearly identify and demarcate the boundaries between the various traditions informing specific places – and the question has rightly been posed by Ambros why we should in the first place. She argues that it might be better to methodologically depart from the idea that the Japanese worldview is combinatory in nature.

The term 'combinatory', however, is still not entirely appropriate when describing the Japanese worldview. It suggests that there are a number of elements that together compose a complex whole of interpenetrating ideas, but precisely this is the kind of analytical view we need to move away from. The Japanese worldview is best studied as a given – trying to isolate different traditions means one is at risk of ending up with meaningless and artificial demarcations that do not assist one in understanding the cultural presuppositions that determine the way in which Japanese people experience a visit to a sacred site.

What strikes me about the current literature on Taiwan is that the words 'religion' and its supposed counterpart 'secularization' are invoked frequently, as if these are real oppositions, and as if these are actually existing entities. While this opposition may function well when studying phenomena at the societal level, I am unsure whether they are going to be useful when looking at the level of the individual. In my fieldwork, I have found that many of the people I interviewed did not feel as if visiting a temple to perform *baibai* was an act of religious behavior. Instead, I found that many do *baibai* for psychological reasons, and believe others to do so as well. Speaking with a deity and consulting a fortune teller can have a strong therapeutic effect. Many Taiwanese do not seem to subscribe a specific religious creed, but instead feel free to regularly visit temples and shrines of various backgrounds in order to see what services are on offer. Describing these people as 'secularized' misses the point completely: they never considered themselves religious to begin with.

Yet another paradigmatic distinction that I find problematic in the case of the literature on Taiwan is C. K. Yang's between diffused and institutional religion. The latter term is used by Yang to describe the kind of religion that has been embodied by independent social institutions, while the former refers to the kind of religion that exists primarily in the minds and hearts of the people and

does not need rely on separate institutions for its propagation. Since it has not been systematized, diffuse religion can affect the workings of even those institutions we would consider secularized. Yang goes on to defend that in the Chinese case, diffuse religion has always been more prominent than institutional religion (Yang, 1961: 294-340).

The problem I have with this distinction is that it turns the term 'religion' into one that can be applied across societies, as if it were simply a neutral, purely analytical term. Yang himself admits of the universal nature of religion when he writes that '...religion in any form stems from psychological sources which are independent of the structure of secular life' (Ibid.: 295). While it is true that there is little institutionalized about the average *baibai* to a site belonging to the Mazu cult, I am apprehensive about immediately referring such an act to the category of diffuse religion. Our theoretical model needs to have room for the possibility that *baibai* is not necessarily religious at all.

In the concrete example of the Taipei Tianhou-gong, we quickly see how application of the category 'religion' needlessly induces all kinds of problems. To the informed Western observer, it may seem rather strange that Kōbō Daishi, supposedly belonging to the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism, shares the same sacred space as Mazu, who is taken to belong to popular Chinese folk religion. However, to the Taiwanese or Japanese visitor, who do not think along the lines of such sharply defined categories, nothing is thought to be out of place at all. If a Japanese visitor to the Taipei Tianhou-gong is confused, it is rather because he or she is unfamiliar with Taiwanese ritual practice – not because the combination of Kōbō Daishi and Mazu is felt to be strange.

When I interviewed one Japanese priest, who has been involved with performing Shingon ceremonies at the Taipei Tianhou-gong and other Taiwanese temples affiliated with Shingon Buddhism for a couple of years now, and asked him whether he finds it odd to perform services with an image of Kōbō Daishi standing on a central altar in front of an icon of Mazu, he replied that he does not find it to be strange at all, and remarked that Japanese Buddhist priests also have no problem celebrating Christmas. Similarly, a Taiwanese person performing *baibai* at the Taipei Tianhou-gong with a specific spiritual or psychological need in mind will simply go to the deity they believe can help them with their problems. Discussions on whether Guanyin is a Daoist or a Buddhist deity do not typically interest them. Nor do they particularly care about who Kōbō Daishi is – they will treat him as though he were just another obscure deity, possibly not even realizing he is Japanese.

This is not to deny that there is such a thing as institutionalized religion. I also do not deny that the term 'religion' forms a useful analytical category at the academic level. My only point of concern is that the regular people frequenting temples do not operate according to the lines laid out

by academics and policymakers. If Japanese and Taiwanese people rarely describe themselves as 'religious', then we should not needlessly regard their visits to temples and shrines as religious acts. More often than not visits to sacred sites are simply part of touristic outings with no intention of engaging in what we would describe as religious behavior whatsoever. That the way in which temples and shrines are experienced is – consciously or unconsciously – determined by established cultural patterns does not mean people cannot have their own motivations for visiting them, or that such patterns are necessarily informed by specific religious traditions and their doctrines.

2.4. Shared ideas on sacred travel

That the Shikoku *henro* is becoming popular among Taiwanese means that the practice of Japanese pilgrimage must appeal to them. In the case of walkers originating from the West, it is easy to see that certain preconceptions regarding Buddhism overwhelmingly determine the way in which the pilgrimage is experienced. If we take pilgrimage to revolve around the ideal of ascetic practice, then it is not to hard to understand how the Shikoku *henro*, because of its great length and many physical challenges, can resonate with so many people in the West. There are plenty of reasons, however, to assume that both Taiwanese and Japanese *henro* are motivated by different ideas regarding sacred travel and its purpose. In this section, I take up three such ideas that I consider the Japanese and the Taiwanese to share: first, the modes of sacred travel known as *jinxiang* and *junrei*; second, the concept of *ling* or *rei* 靈; and third, the notions *gongde* 功德 and *kudoku*.

The Taiwanese practice of *jinxiang* displays strong similarities with the manner of travel known by the Japanese as *henro* and *junrei*. To be sure, I here by no means intend to say that *jinxiang*, *henro* and *junrei* are all species of the (universal) genus 'pilgrimage'. The structural similarities referred to here are the result of shared cultural values finding a similar expression in certain forms of sacred travel. The idea of following a set path at any given temple or shrine in order to pay a visit to a site's most important deities (the idea of *baibai* in Taiwan or *junpai* 巡拝 in Japan) is also present in both cultures, as is the belief that traveling to a sacred site enables one to share in the spiritual power of a deity thought to be emanating from an ideal other-world (a power known as *rei* in Japanese or *ling* in Mandarin). In fact, as I briefly noted in section 2.1., the practice of visiting temples belonging to the Shikoku *henro* can also be referred to as *reijō mawari*, literally meaning 'going around places where spiritual power is present'. It is no surprise, then, that Taiwanese will feel somewhat at home walking the Shikoku *henro*.

That Taiwanese and Japanese can so easily make sense of each others' way of experiencing travel to sacred sites is perhaps mainly the result of a shared history. Sixty years of colonial rule left its mark on the post-war development of Taiwanese culture. Priests from various sects of Japanese

Buddism arrived in Taiwan almost immediately after it had been ceded to Japan through the Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895. Their first priority was to set up missionary posts, *fukyōjo* 布教所, from where missionary work could be coordinated (Lin, 2012: 26). Japanese Buddhism was thus present in Taiwan during the entire colonial period, leaving its mark on the generation of priests and nuns that would step into the spiritual vacuum left behind by the Japanese upon their departure.

In the past few decades, the this-worldly character of Japanese Buddhism has come to the attention of cultural anthropologists and scholars of religion. In their 1998 book *Practically Religious: Wordly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*, Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe argue that Japanese people are generally concerned with the extent to which certain ritual acts can provide *genze riyaku* 現世利益, that is to say, concrete practical benefits (such as good health, professional success, and a sense of personal well-being) in this world rather than the next. Moreover, as Van der Veere argues, the attraction that sacred places exert upon Japanese people does not only owe to their perceived status as heterotopia (ideal other-places that actually exist as utopia, a notion to which I return in section 4.3.), but also hinges on the Buddhist concept of *kudoku*, or merit (2014: 266). The acquisition of *kudoku* is thought to be inexorably linked to the kinds of *genze riyaku* just mentioned. Pilgrimages in Japan, then, can be considered to be travel circuits set up to enable the acquisition of significant amounts of *kudoku*.

The this-worldly character of Japanese Buddhism influenced the development of post-war Buddhist organizations that focus on social work and community service rather than only on monastic life – organizations that have a great number of volunteers working for them, and that exert considerable influence on present-day Taiwanese society (Madsen, 2008: 320-321). The most influential of these is called the Buddhist Compassionate Relief Association, or *Ciji Gongde-hui* 慈濟功德會, which has the Mandarin equivalent of *kudoku*, *gongde*, in its name and was established in 1966 by Buddhist nun Zhengyan Fashi 證嚴法師. This organization focuses on this-worldly activities such as charity and education; local branches raise money which is then used to aid people in need in the immediate vicinity. They furthermore operate three hospitals in Taiwan (Ibid.: 298-300).

That the Taiwanese are no strangers to *kudoku* and *genze riyaku* is readily apparent when paying a visit to any temple regardless of denomination. People can donate money into so-called *gongde-xiang* 功德箱, boxes that can be found in almost every temple and into which one is also often expected to put one's money when buying temple merchandise. Exchanging money for goods and services in this manner is seen as a transaction with the other-world, where the gods and one's ancestors are taken to reside. Similar to Japan, people can buy books that can be used for copying

Buddhist sutra's, which is linked to the acquisition of *gongde*. Instructions in such books sometimes make explicit mention of that fact that accumulated *gongde* can be transferred to relatives and friends, which is also possible with its Japanese equivalent (*ekō* 回向). The motivation for seeking out contact with the ideal world is thus not necessarily ascetic or aimed at personal transformation, as the Western person would be inclined to think, but can also be aimed at obtaining certain practical benefits for oneself or one's (deceased) relatives through the accumulation of *gongde*.

To sum up, what the Japanese and Taiwanese share is the expectation that the interaction with places where *rei* or *ling* is palpable – by definition mysterious places such as temples – yields certain amounts of *kudoku* or *gongde*, the acquisition of which is related to certain practical benefits, *riyaku* or *liyi* 利益, that one hopes to obtain.

3. The Ming and Qing dynasties

The Taipei Tianhou-gong does not have one, but two predecessors: a spatial, and a spiritual one. Its spatial predecessor is the Kōbō-ji. Its spiritual predecessor is the Xinxing-gong, a temple once located in the Banka district of Taipei, built in 1746 but demolished by the Japanese in 1943. The Xinxing-gong's primary object of worship was a Mazu icon that is today the main image of the Taipei Tianhou-gong. Since the Xinxing-gong prefigures the Taipei Tianhou-gong, dedicating this small chapter to it is necessary in order to understand the site-specific developments detailed in the chapters that follow. Moreover, the impact Japanese religious policy had on the Mazu cult can only be fully appreciated if one is familiar with the currency of its spiritual economy: *ling*. The circulation of *ling* goes hand in hand with the practice of cross-strait *jinxiang*, which serves as a means to recharge the power of Mazu icons.

Section 3.1. aims to not only briefly sketch the dissemination of Mazu in Taiwan from the final years of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to the end of the rule of the Qing (in the Taiwanese case in 1895), but to also show how Mazu temples in Taiwan are locked in a struggle over which among them is the most legitimate descendant of the original temple. Possessing the icon of Mazu with the oldest connection to the original temple means one is bound to receive a lot of visitors – temples indeed depend on the belief in the efficacy of their icons for their survival. In order to convince visitors that an icon is potent, temples engage in the construction of historical narratives meant to prove old age and distant origin. In section 3.2., I briefly show how the Taipei Tianhou-gong has similarly constructed a historical narrative detailing its historical connection to the Xinxing-gong.

3.1. The history of Mazu

Speaking of a 'Mazu cult' makes it sound as though we can are dealing with a homogeneous community of people, but nothing could be further from the truth – and it is for this reason that the exact history of Mazu so difficult to determine. Temples and their adherents are engaged in disputes with other temples over who possesses the oldest Mazu icon, and these disputes are fought out using history as the primary weapon. No single historical account of the origin of the Mazu cult in Taiwan offered by any particular temple can therefore be taken at face value. To make things more complicated, different temples lay stress on entirely different parts of the history of Mazu in Taiwan in their battle for legitimacy. In his 1988 article *History and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy: The Ma Tsu Cult of Taiwan*, Stephen Sangren identifies three kinds of historical arguments deployed by temples and their enthusiasts in their struggle.

The first way of establishing legitimacy is by claiming one's temple to have a branching

relationship with Meizhou, the island off the coast of China's Fujian province where Mazu (originally named Lin Moniang) lived during the second half of the tenth century AD. There are possibly as many variations on the myth of Mazu as there are temples. The story generally has it that relatives of Mazu went out to sea one day and met with disaster; in attempting to save them using certain supernatural powers, Mazu lost her life. After her untimely death, people began to connect sightings of a girl roaming the oceans leading fishermen to safety to her activity. The myth thus served to establish Mazu as a powerful figure with divine powers. Any time people went out to sea, they would take an icon of Mazu with them for protection. In the case of shipwreck, sailors would attribute their survival to the divine intervention of Mazu and build a shrine in her honor. This is how she came to be one of the most important goddesses of the sea, and spread as far as Japan.[4]

The icons that sailors carried with them were the result of a ritual process called *fenling* 分靈. This ritual allows one to transfer *ling* from one image of a deity to another. The temple in possession of the oldest Mazu icon that is the result of *fenling* performed at the Meizhou temple can thereby claim to be Taiwan's most original Mazu temple. Since old icons produced in far away places are considered to be especially efficacious, people who want to perform *baibai* are drawn to them. There are thus economic reasons to dispute another temple's claims to have the oldest Mazu icon, as any plausible claim by a rival temple is likely to draw the crowds away.

The second way of establishing legitimacy is by demonstrating one's Mazu temple to have had the status of official temple during imperial times (that is, up to 1895). Many temples are in the possession of plaques either bestowed to them by court officials (*bianwen* 匾文) or even the emperor himself (*longbian* 龍匾). Establishing one's temple to have been an official one during imperial times is therefore relatively easy to prove.

Local cults such as Mazu's on Meizhou were generally at odds with imperial ideology. This tension was frequently resolved by having the emperor bestow titles on particular deities, whereby they came to be officially recognized. They were consequently drawn into official ideology, and thus came under a certain extent of imperial control. This also happened in the case of Mazu (her official name Tianhou, or Empress of Heaven, is the result of this custom). In official ideology, a deity's power was not linked to its *ling* – *ling* was an autonomous power that fell outside the control of the imperial court and was as such considered occult. Instead deities were dependent on their rank within the heavenly imperial court for their power, and emperors could control this power by promoting or demoting them. Although the Japanese would try to suppress the Mazu cult during the

4 See Nakamura, 1942. He reports that Mazu came to be called Tenpi 天妃 ('heavenly dame') in Japan. Not only did she spread to Okinawa and Nagasaki, but as far as present-day Ibaraki prefecture's Mito city.

later stages of their rule, it would be a mistake to assume that the Mazu cult had not met with hardship during imperial times. Since official ideology and local beliefs often clashed, the Mazu cult was at many points in its long history viewed with a certain degree hostility by those in power.

Third, there are also temples which stress that they are descendants of the first Mazu temple built by Koxinga (or Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功; 1624-1662). This general remained loyal to the Ming dynasty after it had been overthrown by the Qing. He rebelled against the newly founded Qing dynasty by using his sizable force to take Taiwan from the Dutch, establishing a court there in the name of the Ming. The military victory of Koxinga against the Dutch in 1662 was attributed to the divine power of Mazu. The image he enshrined on the beach where he landed with his troops is therefore believed to be especially efficacious, and those who can legitimately claim to be the successor of this temple are thought to share in its power.

These three arguments used by temples to lay claim to legitimacy show the relative complexity with which the dissemination of Mazu took place in Taiwan. The earliest Chinese settlers of Taiwan were people who crossed over from Fujian province in search of better fortune. When they managed to survive the crossing, they built a small shrine dedicated to Mazu. In many cases, temples claim to have been founded by people that accidentally drifted to Taiwan and attributed their survival and the discovery of a new land to Mazu's spiritual direction. The shrines these migrants built grew into larger temples that began functioning as community centers, and in that capacity amassed quite some political and economic power. The imperial court attempted to incorporate the Mazu cult into official ideology in order to prevent it from growing out of state control. This resulted in a system of officially sanctioned temples that stood opposed to popular shrines. The common people, however, frequented both, as they only cared about the rumored efficacy of icons. Even today, the difference between official and unofficial temples is of little interest to commoners – but it still features prominently in the claims to legitimacy of individual temples.

3.2. The Banka Xinxing-gong

Given the above, it should be clear why the Taipei Tianhou-gong has gone to great lengths to provide anyone interested in the history of the temple with detailed materials, including an elaborate website[5] and two books (discussed in more detail in section 5.2.).[6] In order not to miss their fair share of the *xinzhong* 信眾 (worshiping crowds), the management of the Taipei Tianhou-gong, too, is caught up in the need to legitimize their temple in accordance with the standards of the dominant

5 http://台北天后宮.tw/

6 These books are offered to visitors for free; see Wang, 2007 and Wang, S. Y. And Xu, J. W., 2011.

discourse. If we examine the *kind* of facts the Taipei Tianhou-gong attaches importance to, we find that the analysis offered by Sangren neatly predicts the contents of the material.

Although the Xinxing-gong is unrelated to Koxinga's conquest of Taiwan and was never an official temple during the Qing dynasty, great importance is attached to the origin of the Taipei Tianhou-gong's Mazu icon and its efficacy. Two theories are posed as to where the icon came from. According to the first, it is a double of an icon from a Tianhou temple in Xinzhuang (an area in Taipei that historically preceded the Banka district). The second has it that it was picked up in a river. Although the second theory leaves something open to people's imagination, the first theory is interesting because it relies on the ritual of *fenling* to be possible. Since the Xinzhuang temple precedes the Xinxing-gong, it is older, and since it is older, the icon at the Xinzhuang temple has a higher chance of itself having ties to the original Meizhou temple. What the Taiwanese reader is supposed to take away from all this is that the Mazu icon of the Tianhou-gong is older than the temple itself, potentially comes from a distant place, and may have collected a good three centuries worth of *ling*. Even though the Xinxing-gong was not located at the site of today's Taipei Tianhou-gong, it is still taken to be its spiritual predecessor because the Mazu image of the former now finds itself enshrined at the latter. Not place, but *ling* is decisive in determining efficacy.

This is something that is pivotal for any place-based approach to take into account, especially in the East Asian case. Spiritual power is not necessarily tied to any place, but can travel between places because it is contained in and manifested by certain (movable) objects. Apart from the kind of detailed account of the various cultural and discursive layers making up specific sites, it is therefore necessary to also consider these sites in the context of a broader economy of *transferable* spiritual power. It is precisely this feature of the spaces we study that make them meaningful constituents of pilgrimage – spiritual power is always on the move. Places are nothing but temporary containers for a kind of force that, at least in the minds of the people, is fundamentally non-spatial. It can be bought and given as a souvenir to a friend, after all.

4. The Japanese period

In this chapter, my aim is threefold. The next section presents an overview of the kind of policies the Japanese pursued when they arranged the religious landscape of Taiwan from 1895 onward. This allows me to show how Buddhism in general fared in colonial Taiwan, and why it was so easy to dispose of the Xinxing-gong in 1943. Then, in section 4.2., I look at Shingon Buddhism in particular, and consider the role it played in the cultural life of Taipei. It is in this section that the Kōbō-ji is studied in more detail, and emplaced in an environment consisting of multiple Shingon Buddhist sites. I here also discuss the Taipei *henro*. This copy of the Shikoku *henro* connected the various sites in Taipei related to Shingon Buddhism to each other in one single course that took about four days to complete. In section 4.3., I relate the first-hand account of a man who walked the Taipei *henro*, and conclude by offering an analysis of his experiences.

4.1. Colonial religious policy

In 1895, the Treaty of Shimonoseki cedes Taiwan from Qing China to Japan. If we understand movement as a pivotal element of spiritual economies, then the Japanese disrupted this flow and attempted to relay it into channels dug fresh. The Mazu temples in Taiwan that continued to have strong ties with the Chinese mainland (especially the coastal areas of Fujian province) throughout the Qing dynasty suddenly found themselves disallowed to any longer take their icons on *jinxiang* across to Strait of Taiwan in order to recharge *ling* at the mother temple. It is at this point that the spiritual economy of Taiwan took a mercantilist turn and *ling* began rotating between temples in Taiwan itself – a situation that has by and large remained unchanged ever since, although there have been successful attempts by various groups to get the governments of China and Taiwan to allow temples to perform *jinxiang* by boat (on which more in section 5.1.).

Colonial policy thus affects the status quo to this day. The Japanese initially did not concern themselves too much with religious affairs, but eventually began to discourage 'native religions' such as the Mazu cult and promoted Buddhism and later State Shinto in its place. It is against this background that we can understand events relevant to the site under scrutiny in this thesis, in particular the 1910 establishment of the Kōbō-ji and the 1943 removal of the Xinxing-gong. I therefore discuss the religious policies of the Japanese during the colonial period in this section in more detail. In this, I follow the division into three periods as laid out by Charles Jones in his 2003 article *Religion in Taiwan at the End of the Japanese Colonial Period*.

The first period lasts from 1895 to 1915, and is marked by a laissez-faire attitude towards the religious beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of Taiwan. Since the government had to build the island's infrastructure from scratch and put down insurgencies everywhere, it had little time to

deal with religious affairs. In fact, unofficially, religious festivals were encouraged with the idea that this would either make the locals trust the new rulers, or simply too exhausted to continue their resistance. The Japanese did not deem it necessary to enforce State Shinto at this moment in time as it thought that the shared tradition of Buddhism would form a much better bridge for future expansion to the Fujian and Guangdong provinces of the Chinese mainland. Because of this common tradition, it was much easier for Buddhists than it was for Shinto or Christian missionaries to find an audience among the Taiwanese. Conversely, prominent Taiwanese Buddhists subordinated some of their temples administratively under the newly introduced Japanese lineages in order to reap the benefits of mutual cooperation (Jones, 2003: 19-21).

The second period begins in 1915 with the Xilai Hermitage incident (*Xilia-an shijian* 西來庵事件) and ends with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese war in 1937. The Xilai Hermitage incident nearly triggered a large-scale anti-Japanese uprising, were it not that the central plotters were discovered and rounded up before any plans could be carried out. The uprising was led by a religious figure who thought he could rally the Daoist Celestial Generals (the *Tai Sui* 太歲) and their spirit armies to his cause. This incident made the Japanese colonial government aware that religious groups constituted a danger to continued political stability. It was for this reason that they began to more thoroughly map Taiwan's religious landscape. Taiwanese locals in turn founded new religious organizations that were meant to place them above government suspicion. These organizations screened their adherents and made sure they were not engaged in any anti-Japanese activities. The formation of such organizations and their willingness to cooperate with the colonial government made greater control over Taiwanese religious life possible. In 1922, the Japanese brought all of them together under the South Seas Buddhist Association (the *Nan'e bukkyōkai* 南涼仏教会; Ibid.: 21-24).

One of the more interesting products of the second period (as Jones, too, notes) is the investigation into the state of Taiwanese 'native' religions conducted by Marui Keijirō from 1916 onward and published as the *Taiwan shūkyō chōsa hōkokusho* 台湾宗教調査報告書 in 1919. In the report, we see how modern categories and sensibilities are projected unto the Taiwanese situation and normatively applied. In defining what *shūkyō* is, Marui distinguishes between *seishin* 正信 ('right belief') and *meishin*, the term we encountered in section 2.1 while discussing Thal's work and translated as 'superstition'. He goes on to list the dangers of *meishin* to both society and the individual. It is therefore from as early as 1919 onward that we see how the laissez-faire attitude of the first period is dropped and replaced with the explicit normative disapproval of any belief that could not be placed inside the boundaries of either Buddhism or State Shinto.

During the third period, which lasted from 1937 until the end of the war in 1945, the Japanese aggressively began pursuing a policy of *kōminka* 皇民化, or Japanization. The prospect of total war meant that all resources, including human, were needed for the war effort. However, the Japanese were uncertain how the Taiwanese, most of whom were ethnically Chinese, would react to being conscripted into the imperial army. There were no guarantees that Taiwanese troops would not defect as soon as they set foot on Chinese soil. The goal of the *kōminka*-movement was therefore to speed up the cultural assimilation of the emperor's Taiwanese subjects.

Many measures were thought up at the higher levels of government aimed at making the Taiwanese give up the Chinese customs of old and definitively turn to Japanese culture – to State Shinto, in particular. In the end, however, the execution of these measures was left to local governments. In most parts of the country, they had little or no practical effect; in other places, folk temples were razed and the icons of their deities destroyed. The latter outcome of the *kōminka*-movement caused public outrage. Journalists claimed it was in violation of the constitution, which promised freedom of religion to all. This made local officials even more reluctant to dismantle Chinese cultural assets. Large parts of the country were thus unaffected by *kōminka*-related policies. A climate of fear and uncertainty, however, sped up the process whereby local folk religious organizations willingly aligned themselves with associations sanctioned by the state. Probably only a few foresaw the impending collapse of the Japanese empire, and assumed life in the future would be lived as ethnic Japanese (Jones, 2003: 24-28).

Before going on to describe how Shingon Buddhism fared in Taiwan during the colonial period in the next section, let me first return to the fate of the Xinxing-gong. Since it was razed in 1943, its destruction cannot be said to have been a direct result of the *kōminka*-movement. The most destructive phase of the *kōminka*-movement was between 1938 and 1940, when the new governor-general ordered a stop to what were called 'temple-restructuring activities'. However, the destruction of the Xinxing-gong was indirectly related to the *kōminka*-movement as it, at least at the official level, made destroying temples much easier – especially if one had a good reason.

According to one of the books produced by the Taipei Tianhou-gong itself, titled *Yuedu Taipei Tianhou-gong* 閱讀臺北天后宮,[7] the Japanese razed the temple in order to broaden the road so as to make Taihoku (the Japanese name for Taipei) less vulnerable to American aerial bombardments (which became a serious problem from 1944 onward). The same book also has it that the Mazu icon that is now in the Taipei Tianhou-gong was moved from the Xinxing-gong to the nearby Longshan-si 龍山寺 for temporary safekeeping. How it ended up in the Taipei Tianhou-gong will be discussed in the next chapter. For now, let us examine the development of Shingon

7 See Wang, 2007.

Buddhism in Taiwan during the colonial period.

4.2. The dissemination of Shingon Buddhism

Little scholarly attention has been paid to Shingon Buddhism and its development in colonial Taiwan. Especially in the English language, material is scarce. The reason for this is most likely that Shingon Buddhism was one of many Japanese Buddhist sects active in Taiwan – and it was certainly not the biggest among them, as we shall see. Jones' 1999 *Buddhism in Taiwan: Religion and the State, 1660-1990* does devote some attention to the topic of Japanese Buddhism in general during the colonial period, but primarily focuses on Chinese Buddhist lineages and the way they coped with the new situation. In Chinese and Japanese, more material is available – but since data is rather scarce, from it only a partial picture can emerge. Given the current popularity of the Shikoku *henro* with the Taiwanese, cross-cultural exchange is intensifying, and more Taiwanese and Japanese scholars may feel inclined to study the Shingon Buddhism of the colonial period in the nearby future. A recent study useful to my purposes in this section is offered by Lin Cheng Wei in his 2012 *Zongjiao zaoxing yu minsu chuancheng: rizhiqi zaitai Riren shumin xinyang shijie* 宗教造型與民俗傳承：日治期在臺日人庶民信仰世界. He primarily departs from artifacts that can still be found scattered across the Taiwanese landscape, and makes use of newspapers and materials from the former colonial archives to reconstruct their past use and context. He pays special attention to the many *utsushi reijō* (copies of the Shikoku *henro* and Saikoku *junrei*) founded during the second half of Japanese rule. In this section, I reproduce the history of Shingon Buddhism in Taiwan by drawing on Lin's work, among others.

Japanese Buddhist priests accompanied Japanese soldiers in combat during the first Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895). When Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895, resistance among the inhabitants remained fierce and had to be put down. Jones mentions that the primary task of Japanese Buddhist priests stationed in Taiwan at first was to provide spiritual services (such as funerals) exclusively to Japanese troops stationed in, and the few civilians who had migrated to, Taiwan (1999: 34). Nakagawa Mirai reports that in the specific case of the Shingon sect it was decided even before arrival in Taiwan that priests should dedicate themselves to missionary activities (2016: 44). Since so few Japanese civilians lived in Taiwan during this early tumultuous period, the Chinese population became the object of most missionary activity. The language barrier, however, was too severe for missionary work to result in many new converts. For this reason, it was decided to first teach the locals Japanese by setting up language schools. This early period of missionary activity came to an end from 1899 onward, when the Japanese government withdrew their funding of Buddhism and invested it into the promotion of State Shinto (Jones, 1999: 34-35).

In order to obtain funds, Japanese Buddhist sects that had settled in Taiwan now began targeting Japanese migrants, who were on average much more well-off.

In the specific case of the Shingon sect, a missionary post had been set up as early as 1896 in the Banka district of Taipei (where the Xinxing-gong was also located). By 1899, the post had moved to nearby Shinkigai 新起街 (in today's Ximen-ding 西門町). Since the Shingon sect, too, was hit with financial difficulty following political changes back home, this move can explained by considering that Japanese natives preferred to live in Shinkigai – in fact, the area eventually came to be affectionately known as the Asakusa of Taihoku. It was there that money could be earned by catering to the rich. Following the construction of the Kōbō-ji in 1910, more serious attention could be paid to providing medical attention to the sick, educating the poor and helping the jobless find an occupation. In 1913, a place for people to stay the night was added to the temple grounds. Special effort was also made to educate Taiwan's aboriginal population – to them, Kōbō Daishi was presented as an ideal teacher and bringer of civilization. Finally, the Kōbō-ji also offered a place for the Japanese to turn to with their spiritual needs – that is to say, a place where one could obtain *genze riyaku* in, for example, times of sickness (Nakagawa, 2016: 45).

That missionary work had not yielded a great number of new devotees can be inferred from the fact that their number was reported to be at 752 in 1910, when the Kōbō-ji was constructed (Ibid.). By 1941, their number would have risen to 8,548, only 1,040 of who were ethnic Chinese (Jones, 2003: 36). Shingon Buddhism thus remained a marginal sect all throughout the colonial period, especially when compared with other sects, the Japanese population in general, and the total population of Taiwan. For example, the Jōdo Shin-shū 浄土真宗 – who finished construction on the Taihoku Nishihongan-ji 台北西本願寺 in 1912 (located in Shinkigai as well, just around the corner from the Kōbō-ji) – had grown to 26,410 devotees by 1941, of whom 5,184 were ethnic Chinese (Ibid.). To put these numbers into perspective: by 1900, an estimated 38,000 Japanese had settled in Taiwan. By 1915, this number had risen to 135,400. In 1941, around 365,000 Japanese were living in Taiwan. The total population of Taiwan increased from 2,546,000 in 1895 to 4,733,300 in 1935 (Watt, 2009: 21-23). The Shingon sect was composed of a marginal group of people, indeed.

It has to be mentioned here, though, that the number of registered devotees does not reflect the actual number of people who in some way or another engaged with Shingon Buddhism. Although I am speaking here of 'missionary' activity, it has been noted in section 2.3. that we should not assume the Japanese to subscribe to a single religious creed. The great majority of the Japanese living in Taihoku most likely visited temples belonging to different denominations, curious to see what kind of ritual services each had on offer. Many Japanese people who were never registered must have frequented the Kōbō-ji. In competition with the other temples, the priests of the Kōbō-ji

probably did their best to offer ritual services corresponding to the spiritual needs of the local elite. It would therefore be wrong to assume that the adherents of Shingon Buddhism in Taiwan primarily concerned themselves with obtaining new converts – rather, what they were actually looking for was a market, or clientele, for the ritual solutions to life's problems they had on offer.

In 1912, an image of Kōbō Daishi was placed on a hilltop (Matsubayama 松葉山, today's Danfengshan 丹鳳山) near Beitou 北投, which had by then grown into an area full of hot springs and was therefore teeming with business opportunities. Beitou forms yet another example of a place where Japanese Buddhist sects eagerly constructed temples in order to cater to the many Japanese present there – in the case of Beitou, tourists. The Kōbō Daishi-iwa 弘法大師岩, as it came to be called, was sponsored by a woodworking company called Sawatoku Matsu 沢徳松. It became customary for their *kō* 講 to perform *sankei* to the site every year on the 21st of the third month of the *kyūreki* 旧暦 (the old calendar), the day of the *nyūjō* 入定 of Kōbō Daishi (his entry into eternal meditation until the arrival of the buddha Miroku 弥勒). In 1924, a monument commemorating Kōbō Daishi was added, and in 1926 an image of Namikiri Fudō Myōō 波切不動明王 installed.

The Kōbō Daishi-iwa became known among tourists as a *reijō* 霊場, and many who paid a visit to the hot springs of Beitou went up to enjoy the view and pay their respects to Kōbō Daishi (Nakagawa, 2016: 45). Not mentioned by Nakagawa (perhaps as it has no direct connection to Kōbō Daishi) is another site at the other end of Beitou today known as the Budong Mingwang Shiku 不動明王石窟. Inside the grotto, a certain Sano Sōtarō – who operated a hot spring resort called *Hoshi no yu* 星乃湯 nearby – installed an image of Fudō Myōō in 1925.

Again, we should not forget that the number of devotees mentioned above registered with the Shingon sect in Taiwan does not reflect the amount of people, such as tourists, who frequented sites related to Shingon Buddhism such as the Kōbō-ji, the Kōbō Daishi-iwa and the Budong Mingwang Shiku. Given the popularity of Beitou among Japanese living in Taiwan, it can be imagined that tens of thousands of them went up to the Kōbō Daishi-iwa as part of a stay at one of the hot spring resorts.

The year 1925 also saw the birth of the *Taihoku Shin Shikoku Hachijūhakkasho Reijō* 台北新四国八十八所霊場, or Taipei *henro* in short. The course was thought up by five Japanese living in Taipei, and planning on it took roughly a year. Permission to put it into place was granted by the *sōtokufu* 総督府 (the colonial government office) on April 10, 1925. On April 14 of the same year (the 21st of the third month of the *kyūreki* – again, the day of Kōbō Daishi's *nyūjō*), representatives of the sects involved in maintaining the Taipei *henro* – Jōdo-shū, Rinzai-shū, Sōtō-shū and naturally

Shingon-shū – met at the Kōbō-ji for a *kaigen kuyō* 開眼供養, a type of Buddhist service held upon the installation of Buddhist images. Stone statues representing the *honzon* 本尊 (a Buddhist temple's main image) of the eighty-eight temples of the Shikoku *henro* were placed at different locations between Taipei and Beitou, including on the temple grounds of the four sects involved. Similar to the actual Shikoku *henro*, the Taipei *henro* brought these different sects together as the course transcended the sectarian boundaries between them (Lin, 2012: 54).

Lin has managed to reconstruct the route using contemporary newspaper articles and the personal account that features in the next section. Pilgrims could find the first and second *honzon* (Shaka 釈迦 and Amida 阿弥陀) representing temple one, Ryōzen-ji 霊山寺, and two, Gokuraku-ji 極楽寺, placed immediately to the right of the entrance upon entering the Kōbō-ji. The third stone statue could be found at a shrine dedicated to the Shinto deity Inari 稲荷 in Banka. Pilgrims did not have to leave the city until the eleventh statue, which was located, together with statues twelve to eighteen, at the Rinzai-ji 臨済寺 on the outskirts. From there on, pilgrims would have to go into the wilderness of the mountains. Statues number nineteen to thirty-five were encountered traversing Shizangan 芝山巖; number thirty-six to forty-four while walking the mountain trail from Shirin 士林 to Kusayama 草山 (today's Yangmingshan 陽明山); and up to seventy-nine on the way from Kusayama into Beitou. Eighty could be found close to Sano's *Hoshi no yu*. From there to the Kōbō Daishi-iwa, numbers eighty-one to eighty-seven were located. The final statue was located at the Tesshin-in 鐵真院, a temple belonging to the Rinzai sect built at the foot of the Matsubayama. From here, the center of Beitou could be reached in five minutes. Pilgrims needed an average of three to four days to complete the circuit.

In the next section, I hope to make the Kōbō-ji and the Taipei *henro* come to life by translating and commenting on passages from the dairy of a person who walked it. Since I will not return to these sites (except for the Kōbō-ji) again, let me here conclude this section by briefly mentioning their present-day status. Following the end of the war and the sudden expatriation of all Japanese nationals back to Japan, the sites fell into disrepair. The Kōbō Daishi-iwa is still accessible by those who know of its location, but there is no actual (paved) path leading to it. The structures that once stood at the site are now in ruins (see figure 1 on the next page). What remains are two altars carved out of rock – one for Dainichi 大日, a buddha of central importance to the Shingon school of Japanese Buddhism, and one for Namikiri Fudō Myōō (see figure 2 on page 31). It seems that people who know of its history still visit it regularly to make offerings, such as water and incense. The Budong Mingwang Shiku is accessible quite easily by car, and even today attracts people who seek some peace and quiet. Statue number eighty-one of the former Taipei *henro* can be

Figure 1: The remains of the Kōbō Daishi-iwa. The path to the right leads to the altar of Dainichi. The path on the left leads to the altar of Namikiri Fudō Myōō.

found at a temple, the Longyun-si 龍雲寺, close-by. The Tesshin-in that formerly housed statue number eighty-eight is still standing and is today called the Puji-si 普濟寺.[8]

As for the Taipei *henro* itself, many statues were destroyed or went missing. Some are still standing on their original locations; others have been moved. Lin conjectures that, following the war, many statues were removed and found their way to the antiques market. It is for this reason that we now find some of them part of museum collections, while others have been moved to different temple grounds, where they are either serve decorative purposes, are actively used (Ibid.: 67). The former kind can be found at the Zhengyuan-si 正願寺 near Taipei's Jiannan Road subway station. The temple has in its possession seven of the Taipei *henro*'s statues, while none were ever located here. It furthermore owns two statues depicting Kōbō Daishi, and one of Monju Bosatsu 文殊菩薩. At the former Rinzai-ji (now know by its Mandarin name, Linji-si), some statues went missing, while a few new ones were moved here. For example, number eighty – formerly located at Sano's *Hoshi no yu* – is now located there. These are of the latter kind; temple staff offer incense to them on a daily basis. The first and second statue can still be found to the right of the entrance of

8 A sign at the entrance of the temple erroneously mentions that the Puji-si started in 1905 as a temple belonging to the Shingon sect. This would mean that the Tesshin-in predated the Kōbō-ji by five years, which is highly unlikely. Lin Fen Yu reports that the Tesshin-in started 1905 as a simple dwelling for priests belonging to the Rinzai sect to spend the night. Its *hondō* 本堂 is constructed in 1915; by then the Tesshin-in had become an active *fukyōjo* for Rinzai missionary activity in Beitou. In 1934, the whole temple was renovated. The temple is presently affiliated with Chinese Pure Land Buddhism (Lin, 2009: 177-180).

Figure 2: Current status of the altar for Namikiri Fudō Myōō at the Kōbō Daishi-iwa.

what today is no longer the Kōbō-ji, but the Taipei Tianhou-gong. They find themselves surrounded by other statues depicting popular Japanese deities, all most likely made during the colonial period. I return to these statues in chapter six.

4.3. An account of the Taipei *henro*

We can learn more about the way in which ordinary people experienced the Kōbō-ji and the Taipei *henro* by studying the personal writings of those who walked it. Unfortunately, there is little material to work with. The Taipei *henro* was but one of many copies spread all over Japan, and only few would have felt motivated to publish any kind of personal reflection on it in any journal or newspaper. Luckily, a person writing under the name of Sankurō 三九郎 did publish a series of articles on his four-day tour of the Taipei *henro* in the *Taiwan Tsūshin Kyōkai Zasshi* 臺灣通信協会雑誌. His account, titled *Taihoku shin Shikoku hachijūhakkasho junrei no ki* 臺北新四国八十八箇所巡礼の記, is spread out over three issues; two of them published in 1934, the third in 1935. In this section, I start by summing up the contents of the first two issues, covering the first two days of Sankurō's four day trip. Unfortunately, there only seem to be three issues – a fourth issue detailing Sankurō's final day was, as far as I can tell, never published. I conclude with a brief analysis of some of the account's central themes.

From the opening, it is immediately clear that Sankurō writes in a different day and age. He

begins:

> When you say the word *junrei*, then anyone will immediately think of O-tsuru お鶴 of *Awa no Naruto* 阿波の鳴戸.
> 'Well then, your father's name would be...' (Sankurō, 1934 [no. 153]: 97)

In writing this, Sankurō believes to prompt a picture familiar to everyone. Today, however, few (except for the elderly) will associate the term *junrei* with any person named O-tsuru. People might be confused as to exactly where Awa lies, but then certainly associate it with Tokushima prefecture upon hearing of Naruto, a place today known for its whirlpools. Quite a few modern-day pilgrims will pass by Naruto on their way to the first temple of the Shikoku *henro*, the Ryōzen-ji, which lies just a few kilometers away from there. At any rate, the O-tsuru Sankurō refers to here is the main character of a *bunraku*-play 文楽 (a kind of theater with puppets) titled *Awa no Naruto*. To keep a long story short: O-tsuru is a girl who leaves Naruto on a *junrei* in order to find the parents she never knew. Her father has been sent to Osaka on a mission to retrieve stolen treasure belonging to the Awa-clan. This required him to change his name and go undercover with the robbers. Exactly at the moment a messenger warns his wife that they have been exposed and should leave immediately, their daughter turns up at their doorstep. O-tsuru's mother recognizes her daughter's accent, and asks her where she is from and who her mother and father are. Upon answering, O-tsuru's mother knows without doubt that the pilgrim at her door is in fact her own daughter. Tragically, however, she cannot reveal her true identity as this risks putting her daughter in harms' way.

Sankurō immediately distances himself from the tragic figure of O-tsuru and identifies himself as just an average Joe – somewhat chubby, and therefore not physically fit for going on something as grave as a *junrei*. When one goes on a *henro*, however, it is not at all necessary to have a lofty purpose or to be physically fit; in that case, wearing the right kind of equipment is enough. Sankurō has obtained gear such as a sedge-woven hat (*sugegasa* 菅笠) with *dōgyō ninin* written on it, a *kongōzue* 金剛杖 (a walking staff representing Kōbō Daishi), and an easy shoulder bag called a *sanyabukuro* 山野袋.

The bus he rides to get to the Kōbō-ji goes down the same route he has to take every day to get to work. On this particular day, however, the whole world appears to him in a different light. In all the four years he has lived in Taipei, never did the town appear as beautiful as today. Not only does the world appear different to Sankurō – he also appears different to the world. People treat him in an entirely different – more positive – manner. Sankurō attributes this to the virtue (*gotoku* 御徳)

of Kōbō Daishi. He is full of gratitude to Kōbō Daishi for receiving the kind service he does now that he is embarking on a *henro*. At the bus stop in front of the *tokkantei* 督官邸 (the former headquarters of the colonial government that today serves as the presidential palace), three more people dressed in a similar manner as Sankurō get on the bus. Even though they are strangers, he greets them as though they are familiar friends – they are all going to trod down the same path and are by that fact alone intimately connected.

Upon entering the Kōbō-ji, the garden of which reminds him of *Gokuraku Jōdo* 極楽浄土 (the Pure Land), Sankurō finds many people already gathered there. He is not walking alone. At the temple, he meets with other *henro* who will accompany him on the journey. Some of them have already walked the course multiple times. One person relates to Sankurō that he finds himself wanting to go on the Taipei *henro* every time he has a couple of days off. Knowing that he will embark on the *henro* together with these people, hearing the sound of bells (*suzu* 鈴) and the chanting of *eika* 詠歌 (songs calling to mind the landscape of each of the eighty-eight temples) along the way, Sankurō feels as if he is about to depart for the Pure Land itself.

After performing the necessary rites at statues number one and two, the group makes its way to the Inari shrine in Banka. It is here that Sankurō receives his first *o-settai* お接待 (gifts offered to journeying pilgrims), namely a cup of tea. On the way to the fourth statue, the group enters the Longshan-si and chant sutra's. Sankurō mentions that the 'islanders' (本島人達) see them off. The fourth and fifth statues are found opposite the temple, at a shrine dedicated to Fudō Myōō. The group takes a break, receives another cup of tea, and have a morning snack in the form of an *o-nigiri*. Sankurō had prepared some *o-nigiri* himself before leaving his house in the morning, but *o-settai* cannot be refused.

The next stop is a branch office of the Sōtō-shū Tōmon Betsuin 曹洞宗東門別院, where statue number sixteen had been moved (it today indeed cannot be found at the Linji-si). At the Betsuin itself, after chanting *eika*, Sankurō sits down to have his own *o-nigiri* and yet more tea. He talks with an elderly women who came over from Keelung in order to walk the Taipei *henro* for the first time. Her son had objected to her going alone, but she assured him by saying she would certainly be accompanied by Kōbō Daishi and therefore perfectly safe. After having heard the elderly lady's story, Sankurō muses that she may be an incarnation (*keshin* 化身) of Kōbō Daishi himself. That day, he would walk up to number eighteen – to the Rinzai-ji.

He would spend the night back home, and return early the next morning to continue onward. Since the next section of the Taipei *henro* would take him out of the city and into the mountains, he and his fellow *henro* were to stay at a *yado* 宿 (a guesthouse) that night. Similar to certain parts of

the Shikoku *henro* even today, the section from Shirin to Kusayama was rough and required people to not only use their *kongōzue* for support, but also for clearing away the tall grass. Parts of the path had overgrown and people had to stick close to their *sendatsu* 先達 (guide) in order not to lose the way. The skies were grey, but it had not yet started raining or the path would have turned slippery. Many statues were placed on the way; between number thirty-five and thirty-six the group finally had a chance to take a break at the Shizan-jinja 芝山神社. The rain started falling by the time they reached number forty-one. Upon arriving at the *yado* near number forty-five, Sankurō and the others could finally have the bath they had been looking forward to all day, and the prospect of which had indeed made the whole endeavor bearable. Before he goes to sleep, Sankurō cleans the tip of the *kongōzue*, which symbolizes the feet of Kōbō Daishi. As he gets comfortable in his futon, his body all tired, he describes how a he reaches a state of *muga* 無我, or egolessness, and falls into a deep sleep.

An interesting picture emerges from Sankurō's writings. His experience of the Taipei *henro* does not differ much from the way in which the average Japanese person today would experience the actual Shikoku *henro*. Naturally, we have every reason to assume Sankurō's experience to have been shaped by culturally determined patterns. In fact, his articles have been written in a generic style that one would also encounter when reading accounts written for other Japanese newspapers on the Shikoku *henro* or any of its copies.

We encountered the most important of the culturally determined patterns of the way in which the Japanese experience pilgrimage in section 2.4. The first I take up here is the collection of *kudoku* in order to obtain *genze riyaku*. Sankurō's constant small-talk concerning age with his fellow *henro* appears trivial, but it gives away important cultural information. The reason for this is that it are mostly the sick – and therefore the old – that have any need for *genze riyaku*, that is to say, a way to cure sickness and common ailments that accompany old-age. Sankurō defies this cultural pattern in that he is only thirty-nine years old. The common perception is that people who embark on any pilgrimage in Japan have a clear reason or motivation for doing so, rooted in an episode of personal crisis. For example, the common perception of a young woman walking the *henro* is that she must have recently been through a breakup, or worse, divorce. Sankurō is somewhat special in that he seems to be walking the *henro* for nothing other than his personal enjoyment.

However, it is highly likely for him to have ulterior motives for walking the Taipei *henro* that he does not explicitly write about. He might collecting *kudoku* for someone else – someone unable to do it him or herself. It is in fact revealed that Sankurō grew up at the foot of the mountain where temple twenty-seven of the Shikoku *henro*, the Konomine-ji 神峯寺, is situated. His mother

had always wanted to walk the Shikoku *henro*, but now that she has reached old age, this is a dream that is unlikely to be fulfilled. Sankurō therefore may walk this particular copy of the *henro* in her stead, assuming the *kudoku* obtained to be transferable.

The second cultural pattern that stands out in Sankurō's account is the projection of other-worlds. Temples are perceived to be heterotopia, that is to say, places that have actually been realized as utopia. Sankurō mentions *Gokuraku Jōdo* multiple times in the text, and each time it is to stress the heterotopic character of his experience. Upon entering the temple grounds of the Kōbō-ji, Sankurō remarks it is as if he has reached *Gokuraku Jōdo*. The excitement of embarking on a journey with other people while hearing the sound of *suzu* ringing and *eika* being chanted makes Sankurō feel as if he is departing for *Gokuraku Jōdo* itself. When he is inside the *Daishidō* 大師堂 (hall of Kōbō Daishi) of the Kōbō-ji, listening to the chanting of sutra's and the ringing of bells, he feels as if the connection with the evil of the *zokuse* 俗世 (ordinary world) is temporarily broken, so that the purity of the human soul (*tamashii* 魂) can break through in what amounts to a momentary realization of the Pure Land (*genze no gokuraku* 現世の極楽). These and other examples make it clear Sankurō actively seeks out places where the ordinary and ideal worlds meet. His attitude reflects that Max Moerman's pilgrims to Kumano, who themselves are seeking contact with one of many possible ideal worlds and intend to reap the positive effects such contact is believed to entail.

5. The post-war period

The next section first considers political changes that occurred after the Japanese left Taiwan in 1945. What kind of new policies were put into place by the government of the Republic of China to manage the religious landscape left behind by the Japanese? By answering this question, a backdrop is obtained against which I can subsequently consider the Kōbō-ji's transformation into the Taipei Tianhou-gong in section 5.2. This discussion sets up the sixth chapter, in which I show how the Shingon Buddhist heritage of the Taipei Tianhou-gong is currently being reactivated by enthusiasts of Japanese culture and the Shikoku *henro*.

5.1. Post-colonial political developments

By the time they left the island, half a century of Japanese rule had left its mark on the religious landscape of Taiwan. During the Qing dynasty, temples and shrines had not only been places of worship, but also communal centers. In that capacity, they were important markers of social identity – and therefore powerful political and economic entities. The Japanese stripped these centers of their power and used modern categories such as *shūkyo* and *meishin* to promote Buddhism and State Shinto. As Jones further mentions, the construction of railway network enabled certain places to gain prominence nation-wide. Among the Japanese, Beitou was one such a place. This network could also be used by Chinese temples to draw costumers, thereby allowing certain sites to rise to a level of prominence unheard of before the country's modernization. If anything, the Japanese showed how tourism and temple visits go hand in hand (Jones, 2003: 32).

The *kōminka*-movement turned out to be only a prelude to disaster to come. The Japanese were expatriated home as the Kuomintang 國民黨 (the Chinese Nationalist Party) assumed control over the island. Hopes of the Taiwanese that they would be allowed a certain degree of self-governance were quickly shattered as important posts were given away to Mainlanders. Tensions mounted and came to an explosive climax on February 28, 1947, when rioting erupted in the streets of Taipei. Two months later, troops from the Mainland arrived and indiscriminately massacred anywhere between 2,000 and 10,000 people (Lai, Myers and Wou, 1991).

When the Kuomintang was subsequently defeated on the Mainland by the Communist Party of China in 1949 it was forced to relocate to Taiwan and set up a provisional government there. Since many religious institutions feared the atheist attitude of the Communist Party, they moved to the island as well. The Kuomingtang used this as a proof that they respected the freedom of religion. In reality, however, it was deeply suspicious of religious societies and monks that came over from the Mainland, as these might harbor Communist sympathies. It is for this reason that the Kuomintang required all religious organizations to register themselves; those who refused to do so

were harassed. Temples had to register as being either Buddhist or Daoist, a system that exists to this day. The Kuomintang was furthermore suspicious of religious associations from the Japanese period, such as Tenrikyō 天理教 and the Sōka Gakkai 創価学会. Of these associations it was thought that they worked with Japanese extremists who never accepted the loss of the Empire of Japan (Laliberté, 2009: 61-63).

The religious and cultural policy of Kuomintang-led Taiwan from 1949 onward was three-pronged. First, rigorous attempts were made to eradicate Japanese elements in society. Whereas the final decade of Japanese rule saw Japanese raised to the status of national language, the Kuomintang decided that all public discourse should be in *guoyu* 國語, or Mandarin (Rubinstein, 2003: 217). Second, Taiwanese identity had to be downplayed. The use of local dialects, for example *taiwanhua* 台灣話, was discouraged. The nationalist government tried to prevent the expression of Taiwanese identity in the local religions. We here see how the modern normative opposition of religion versus superstition was once more put into play. The Kuomintang's attitude towards religion in many ways resembled that of the Japanese during the second and third periods distinguished in section 4.1.: there were good religions, such as Catholicism, which had a clear organizational structure; and bad religions, such as the folk religious practices of the Taiwanese. In the end, however – and again similar to the Japanese – the Kuomintang did not actively restrain the local religions, since it wanted to place itself into a favorable light next to Chinese Communist Party. Third, Chinese identity was actively promoted. When the Communist Party unchained the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which sought to dispose the Mainland of 'backward' Chinese cultural heritage, the Kuomintang launched the *Zhonghua wenhua fuxing weiyuanhui* 中華文化復興委員會 (Commission for the Chinese Cultural Renaissance) in 1967, which instead sought to affirm Chinese cultural identity (Laliberté, 2009: 63).

However, attempts to prevent the development of Taiwanese political self-awareness were doomed to fail when the country began to prosper economically during the the 1970s. More and more people began to see Taiwan as a society distinct from China – a society that would have to start walking its own path (Ibid.: 64). Increased wealth and education did not turn the Taiwanese away from the popular religions, but rather drove them right to it. One example of this is Weller's case of the Eighteen Kings temple, which benefited from the nation-wide lottery craze (see section 2.1.). Increasing democratization of the country's political structure additionally meant a lot of new organizations could flourish. In the case of Buddhism, the state-sponsored *Zhongguo fojiaohui* (Buddhist Association of the Republic of China) lost its monopoly, and philanthropic organizations such as the Buddhist Compassionate Relief Association could begin to thrive (see section 2.4.). By the 1990s the policy of discouraging the expression of Taiwanese identity in religious culture had

become untenable; it is today no longer pursued.

The Mazu cult was able to flourish in the new political climate, and in fact managed to press a stamp on some of the country's elections. In the 2000 presidential elections, for example, several candidates attempted to gain the support of certain communities by campaigning at local Mazu temples. Some went as far as to hold divination rituals to demonstrate that Mazu herself supported them. The influence of the more powerful temples has extended beyond elections, and some of have even meddled with foreign policy. When the Mainland and Taiwan established informal contact in 1987, the first people to go back were Taiwanese searching for their religious roots. The Zhenlan-gong 鎮瀾宮 in Dajia 大甲, one of the temples involved in the battle for legitimacy outlined in section 3.1., made use of the opportunity to organize *jinxiang* to Meizhou in order to recharge the *ling* of their Mazu icon. There was no way for them, however, to go to Meizhou directly by boat; instead, they had to take the indirect route by airplane via Hong Kong. The temple's chairman tried to leverage the temple's political influence to get the Taiwanese government to allow direct *jinxiang* to Meizhou. He eventually succeeded – in 2002, a group of Taiwanese pilgrims traveled by boat to nearby Xiamen (Katz, 2003: 406-408).

During my fieldwork, I have found that Mazu is today inextricably linked to Taiwanese national identity. Early Kuomintang efforts to discourage the local religions out of fear of a strong Taiwanese identity have thus ultimately failed. Mazu has grown from a local goddess of the sea to the Empress of Heaven, and from an all-powerful protective deity to the patron goddess of the whole of Taiwan itself. I want to stress once more that not all people who are fond of Mazu thereby automatically belong to a 'religious cult'. Her popularity is rather the result of her accessibility: anyone can step into one of her temples. Just as it is common for people in the West to celebrate Christmas without any feelings of religiosity involved, people in Taiwan feel attracted to Mazu and go to consult her whenever life's problems become overwhelming. They may go on the popular, yearly *jinxiang* from the Zhenlan-gong to the Fengtian-gong 奉天宮 in Chiayi 嘉義 because they enjoy the communal feeling of being among jubilant crowds.

5.2. From Kōbō-ji to Taipei Tianhou-gong

In 1945, the Japanese lose Second World War, and temples such as the Kōbō-ji face an uncertain future. After the Japanese are expatriated home in 1946, many sites related to Japanese Buddhism and State Shinto are left abandoned. In the case of our site, the wooden buildings making up the Kōbō-ji burned down in 1953. A new temple is built in its stead in 1959. The name 'Taipei Tianhou-gong', however, has only been in official use since 1967. This leaves a period of roughly two decades in which the temple is known respectively as the Xinxing-gong and the Taiwan-sheng

Tianhou-gong 台灣省天后宮. The reader will recall that the original Xinxing-gong was destroyed in 1943. Following the conclusion of the war, the Kōbō-ji is handed over to the followers of the Xinxing-gong. This particular handover, however, occurs in 1948 – precisely in the tumultuous period when the Nationalists from the Mainland attempt to secure control over the island. It is perhaps for this reason that the history of the changeover from Kōbō-ji to Xinxing-gong is somewhat unclear.

The book *Yuedu Taipei Tianhougong* (self-published by the Taipei Tianhou-gong in 2005) makes mention of two theories as to how the Kōbō-ji was ceded to people of the Xinxing-gong. The first theory holds that the believers of the Xinxing-gong simply remodeled the main hall of the Kōbō-ji (presumably the *Daishidō*) to fit their purposes. This theory has it that the Department of Education of Taipei municipality handed over the Kōbō-ji to them in 1950, when the Japanese priests running the temple returned to Japan. The second theory is more detailed than the first, and offers different dates. This version has it that the secretary of the Department of Education, Huang Qi Rui 黃啟瑞, assigned the Hokke-ji 法華寺 (or Fahua-si in Mandarin, situated in today's Ximending as well) to serve as the new Xinxing-gong in 1948. The Hokke-ji, however, was built oriented towards the east; the original Xinxing-gong had been built facing the south, something the temple's followers were peculiar about. The followers therefore proposed the Kōbō-ji as a suitable replacement for the Xinxing-gong, and held a moving-in ceremony that same year. The Buddhist priests still present in the temple protested against this with the central government (at the time still situated in Nanjing), accusing Huang of giving illegal approvals. The central government, however, ruled in favor of Huang and the followers of the Xinxing-gong.

Both theories are most likely inaccurate. The first theory assumes Japanese priests to still have been present in the Kōbō-ji by 1950, but this cannot be true, as all Japanese had been repatriated back to Japan in 1946. The second theory has been contested by Kan Cheng Tseng in a 2006 article of the *Taipei Wenxian* 臺北文獻. According to him, even before the Kōbō-ji had been handed over to the followers of the Xinxing-gong, it had been placed under the care of Chen Zong Tan 陳宗坦 by the last *jūshoku* 住職 (head priest) of the Kōbō-ji, Kichikawa Hōjō 吉川法城. The latter also returned to Japan in 1946. This transfer was recognized by the secretary of the Department of Education at the time, and the temple was renamed Ciguangchan-si 慈光禪寺. When Huang assumed the position of secretary, he repealed the decision, and gave the Kōbō-ji to the followers of the Xinxing-gong. The *Zhongguo fojiaohui* protested against the decision by sending letters to multiple government departments, complaining that the Kōbō-ji, a Buddhist temple, had been ceded to a non-Buddhist organization (the followers of the Xinxing-gong). Their primary

argument was that many of the Kōbō-ji's structures had been erected using donations of followers, and as such should belong to the *Zhongguo fojiaohui*, instead of being treated as the private property of the expatriated Japanese. Their complaints, however, ultimately amounted to nothing, and the handover went through. In 1952, a few months before the Kōbō-ji were to burn down, the temple was once again renamed, this time from Xinxing-gong to Taiwan-sheng Tianhou-gong.

The 2011 book *Taipei Tianhougong de lishi* 台北天后宮的歷史 (self-published by the Taipei Tianhou-gong as well) amends some of the inaccuracies from the 2007 book. A division into two different theories is now no longer made. The section on the history of the temple between 1945 and 1949 reads as a reply to Kan's objections to the content of *Yuedu Taipei Tianhougong*, even though no explicit reference is made to him. Mention is now made of the Ciguangchan-si, and the reason for Chen's removal as the head of the temple is stated to have been mismanagement. In his article, Kan implies that the removal of Chen on the grounds of mismanagement was nothing but an excuse used to appropriate the temple. The 2011 book, however, mentions that the objections of the *Zhongguo fojiaohui* were judged to be without sufficient ground; after Huang won the lawsuit, the affair was settled. The moving-in ceremony of the Mazu icon temporarily kept at the Longshan-si is dated in the book to July 7, 1948.

What are we to make of these differing accounts? The point of bringing up the legal battle concerning the legitimate ownership of what remained of the Kōbō-ji is not to argue in anyone's favor, but to show how the history of the temple is contested, and that, as shown in section 3.1., any historical narrative provided by temples themselves cannot be taken at face value. It is clear that the feud that took place between different parties during the first post-war years is still with us today. Kan explicitly argues that a Buddhist temple should serve only the goals of Buddhism, not of folk religion (2006: 52). Whether his argument has made an impression or not, the Taipei Tianhou-gong does allow Shingon Buddhist services to take place and has done so since at least 1975.

This leads me to another question that is key to understanding the current situation: why did the followers of the Xinxing-gong decide to make Kōbō Daishi an integral part of their new temple? Especially after the old Kōbō-ji burned down, there was plenty of opportunity to do away with any and all elements reminiscent of Shingon Buddhism in the new 1959 temple. *Yuedu Taipei Tianhougong* devotes a few pages to Kōbō Daishi, mostly providing biographical information. It is here that we also find a brief remark about a dream one of the *xinzhong* had in which Kōbō Daishi appeared to him. This apparently happened around the time when the Kōbō-ji was refitted to serve as the renewed Xinxing-gong. More informative in this regard is the front page of an issue of the *Kōyasan jihō* 高野山時報 dated to October 11, 1975,[9] in which Kondō Honshō 近藤本昇 (then one

9 第2089号.

Kōyasan's highest ranking priests) expresses his gratitude to the Taipei Tianhou-gong for preserving artifacts from the former Kōbō-ji, including the statue of Kōbō Daishi undergoing ascetic training (*shūgyō daishi* 修行大師) that today can still be found inside the Taipei Tianhou-gong's courtyard. Kondō makes mention of a certain Huang Qing Yu 黄慶余, identified as a manager of the Taipei Tianhou-gong, who had a dream in which Kōbō Daishi appeared to him – twice. This prompted Huang to work for the preservation of the Kōbō-ji's artifacts. Not only did he work to preserve the statues that were a part of the Kōbō-ji, but he also appears to have been involved in the restoration of the damage the fire of 1953 had caused them. Looking at the contents of the rest of the issue of the *Kōyasan jihou*, it becomes clear that a group of priests from Kōyasan had just returned from a trip to Taiwan in order to hold a *kaigen kuyō* (see also section 4.2.) for the restored statue of Kōbō Daishi. Since this is about the same time that the relationship between Japan and Taiwan normalized, the priests appear to have been among the first wave of *wansei* 湾性 (Japanese born and raised in Taiwan) who went back to visit their birth ground for the first time in thirty years.

6. The Present

This chapter begins with a survey of the many deities that can be found at the Taipei Tianhou-gong today. Discussing the temple's Chinese deities in more detail puts me in a better position to consider the role Kōbō Daishi plays at the site. His role is ambiguous, as many visitors do not know who he is. In practice, Kōbō Daishi is more often than not assumed to be yet another Chinese deity that needs to be respectfully greeted when one is doing *baibai*. The temple itself is putting effort into making clear that Kōbō Daishi is a historical figure of importance to the history of the site and its former Japanese occupants, and should be respected as such. With the recent popularity of the Shikoku *henro*, the number of Taiwanese who do know about Kōbō Daishi and visit the Taipei Tianhou-gong specifically for him are on the rise. In the last section of this chapter, I relate how representatives of the Taiwanese *henro* community recently invited Japanese Shingon priests over to Taiwan in order to have them perform a Buddhist service at the Taipei Tianhou-gong.

6.1. A survey of the site's deities

If one enters the courtyard of the Taipei Tianhou-gong and goes to the right, one immediately runs into statue number one and two of the former Taipei *henro* (see figure 3 on the next page; the statue to the far right is number one, and the statue to the left number two). We have learned from Sankurō's account that these used to be located to the right of the entrance of the Kōbō-ji as well, so nothing has changed in this regard. No information is provided to the visitors regarding the role or function of these two statues (neither at the site itself, nor in the books or on the website), so only the informed visitor will know anything about them. Statue number one depicts Shaka (the historical buddha); its caption reads 一番・アワ・灵山寺,[10] or 'number one, Awa, Ryōzen-ji'. As mentioned before, Awa was the former name of today's Tokushima prefecture. Statue number two depicts Amida (the buddha who has his paradise, *Gokuraku Jōdo*, to the West); its caption reads 二番・アワ・極楽寺, or 'number two, Awa, Gokuraku-ji'.

The two statues of the former Taipei *henro* are today surrounded by eight other statues (see figure 3). At least two of these depict Kōbō Daishi: one of him performing *shūgyō* 修行 (ascetic training) while holding a small child (third from the right); another of him standing while holding a *vajra*, or *kongōsho* 金剛杵 (in the middle, down). I take at least three others to be of the bodhisattva Jizō 地蔵 (the three statues standing behind Kōbō Daishi holding a *vajra*). In Japanese religious art, Jizō can be recognized by a set of formal features, which include wearing a priestly garb and a necklace known in Japanese as a *yōraku* 瓔珞, while holding a *shakujō* 錫杖 (a staff with six rings,

10 The character 灵 is the simplified version of the character 霊.

Figure 3: Statues from the Japanese period.

each representing one of the *rikidō* 六道, or six worlds, in which Jizō performs his salvational activity) in the one hand and a wish-granting jewel in the other (Ten Grotenhuis, 1999: 148-149). A sixth statue appears to depict Kannon (second from the right). The third statue from the left, down, may represent the bodhisattva Kokūzō 虚空蔵, since he appears to hold the stem of a lotus flower topped with a jewel in his right hand. At present, I do not know who the final statue (second statue from the left, down) depicts.

Going up the stairs from here and to the right up another level leads one to the abode of the Jade Emperor, Yuhuang Dadi 玉皇大帝. The Jade Emperor is the only deity found at the Taipei Tianhou-gong that is situated at a higher level, possibly to signify his high status within the imperial bureaucracy. His aloof nature makes him somewhat difficult to approach – in fact, most of the people who come to do *baibai* at the Taipei Tianhou-gong probably visit to make a request to one of the lower deities. People come up the stairs with all incense sticks freshly lit, as the Jade Emperor is the first deity of the temple's suggested *baibai* course. People make a respectful obeisance to the Emperor, before they turn around to the do the same to the sky – only then do they put one stick of incense into the incense holder.

For a long time, the prevalent perception of the Chinese pantheon of deities was that it reflects the imperial bureaucratic apparatus. The Jade Emperor occupies the top position of a divine managerial pyramid, and there is a hierarchy of gods that delegate tasks (such as the requests of

worshipers) to one another. Power thus seems to be held by the top and is exercised on those below. There is no denying that this particular way of imagining the world of the gods served the interest of those in power. As we have seen in section 3.1., the imperial court at times needed to draw powerful local deities into official ideology in order to be able to exercise a certain degree of control over them. We have also seen that such deities exchanged efficacy based on *ling* with efficacy based on rank, the latter of which could be altered by the living emperor.

The perception that the Chinese pantheon of deities is a well-oiled bureaucratic machine was challenged by Meir Shahar and Robert P. Weller in their 1996 book *Unruly Gods: Divinity and Society in China*. They grant the argument that the representation of the world of the gods as bureaucratic served to promote the existing social order at the expense of another. However, power was not the monopoly of those at the top. At the end of section 5.1., we have seen how politicians have not only made use of the Mazu cult in order to achieve certain political goals, but that the reverse has also been the case. It can be imagined that in imperial times as well, there were cults that were inventive enough to make imperial power productive for their own purposes. The imperial court thus managed to draw certain folk deities within a measure of official control, but always at a price. That they did not manage to fully assimilate every deity in this way is apparent from the fact that most deities have retained a non-bureaucratic iconography. The most obvious example are Buddhist deities. Shahar and Weller note that in the *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (translated as *Journey to the West*), the Jade Emperor ultimately has to call on the Buddha to trap Sun Wu Kong 孫悟空, or the Monkey King. This is a prominent case of a deity that transcends the power of the Jade Emperor and has not been transformed into a bureaucrat in the latter's managerial system.

Most of the Taipei Tianhou-gong's deities do not answer to the bureaucratic ideal. Going back down the stairs and making a right corner leads one to the stove where paper offerings are burned, and to the small room holding where one can find Dicang 地藏 (see figure 4 on the next page). His Japanese counterpart Jizō is often depicted as a wandering monk – the Dicang found in Chinese temples is generally depicted as a king, in which case he is called Dicang Wang Pusa 地藏王菩薩. Besides the fact that the main image of Dicang of the Taipei Tianhou-gong wears a crown and is decorated in gold, the attributes he holds are the same as his Japanese counterpart: a staff with six rings and a wish-granting jewel. In Japan, since he is popularly believed to watch over travelers, statues of Jizō can be found beside the road and at intersections everywhere. In Taiwan, Dicang's role is primarily confined to saving the dead, and as such isolated from daily life. Zhiru Ng writes that in Chinese monasteries, Dicang is frequently enshrined separately (that is to say, away from the main hall) in a *gongde-yuan* 功德院, or merit cloister, which additionally houses the

Figure 4: Dicang.

memorial tablets of the dead ancestors (2007: 3). This is the case at the Taipei Tianhou-gong as well. The image of Dicang is here flanked by two memorial tablets, one for the ancestors of the Xinxing-gong, and one for those of the Taipei Tianhou-gong.[11]

Turning back and going to the right, one finds yet another small room, this time containing a seated image of Kōbō Daishi holding a *vajra*. Since he forms a special case, I will discuss him separately in the next section. Entering into the main hall, one finds images of, from left to right, Guansheng Dijun 關聖帝君 (or Guanyu 關羽), Tianshang Shengmu 天上聖母 (or Mazu), and Guanshiyin Pusa 觀世音菩薩 (or Guanyin). It is not uncommon for these three deities to share the same ritual space. The exact relationship of Guanyin to Mazu is difficult to determine, and is thought of differently by devotees. The conception of Mazu is commonly believed to have been made possible by Guanyin. It is moreover said that Mazu studied Buddhist scriptures from an early age and that she received her supernatural talents from Guanyin. There are also quite some believers who unwittingly confuse Guanyin and Mazu, which is no surprise at all since the two share a similar iconography, namely that of a woman riding a cloud while saving people at sea (Tan, 2004: 18).

The Mazu icon of the Taipei Tianhou-gong is dressed as an empress donning a crown of nine

11 The memorial tablets read 艋舺新興宮歷代功德先賢之神位 and 天后宮歷代功德先賢之神位, respectively.

strings of pearls (see figure 5). The number of strings represents the rank of the temple, and can vary from seven to thirteen (Ibid.). She is flanked by her two guardians, Qianliyan 千里眼 ('a thousand *li* eyes') and Shunfeng'er 順風耳 ('favorable wind ears'); the former can spot seafarers in need of help from a thousand *li*[12] away, while the latter can hear cries for help as fast as the wind (Ibid.: 16). It should be recalled here that Mazu used to be a goddess of the sea, but that she is now considered to be all-powerful and thus capable of granting a wide variety of wishes. Even though she is outranked by the Jade Emperor, we should, again, not assume that her power depends on those higher than her in the imperial bureaucratic order. Rather, Mazu's power seems operate autonomously, sometimes making it seem as though the girl from Meizhou has usurped the throne. She attracts far more worshipers than the Jade Emperor, and is probably considered by many a devotee to be much more powerful than him.

It is at the central altar in front of Mazu that most visitors of the temple clutter together. I want to here stress once more that visiting a temple in order to consult a deity is not by the Taiwanese themselves necessarily considered to be a form of religious behavior. Many simply flock to Mazu temples in order to gain some peace of mind. Providing some psychological and spiritual relief in times of need, Mazu has integrated into the daily life of many a Taiwanese person. It is not uncommon to see people – young and old alike – share their problems with Mazu out loud. She is thought of as able to assist with all of life's problems, whether it concerns passing an important exam, professional success, or marriage. When approaching Mazu for help, people begin by stating

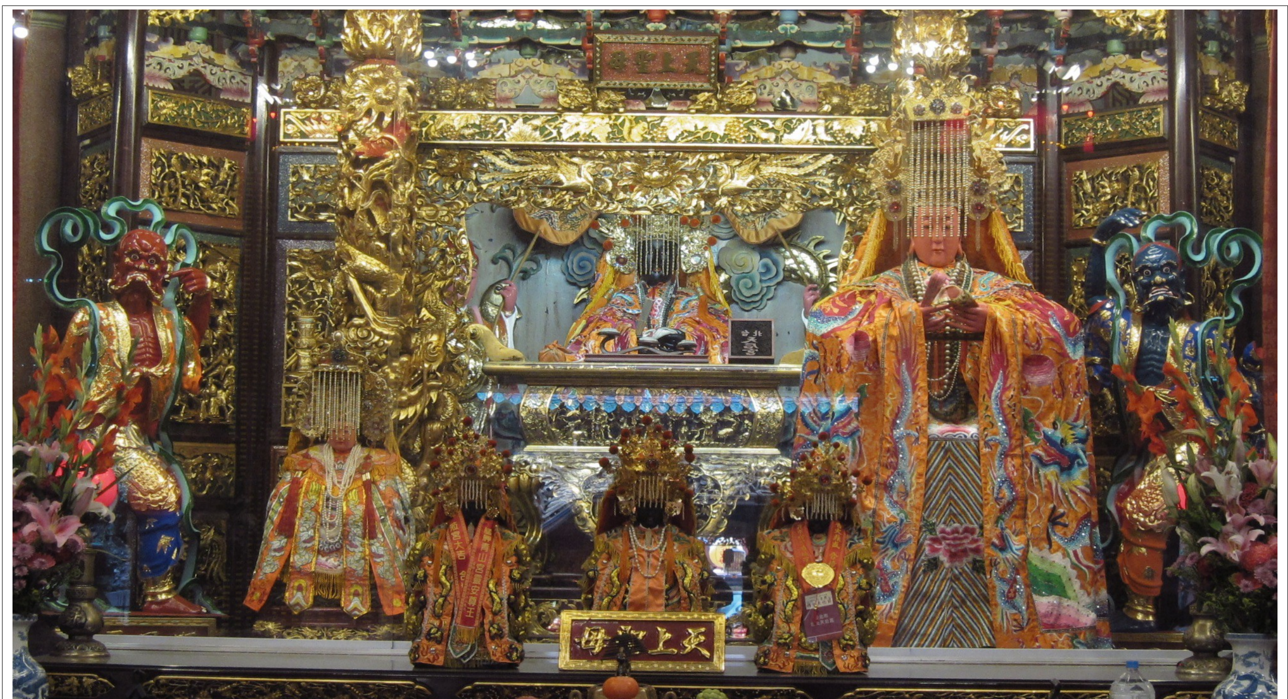

Figure 5: Mazu, with Qianliyan on the right and Shunfeng'er on the left.

12 One *li* 里 equals half a kilometer.

their name and where they are from, and then share their wish, or discuss their problem. Mazu is not only a passive listener, but also an active giver of advice. People can throw *jiaobei* 筊杯 (moon blocks) in order to divine Mazu's will, and draw *qiuqian* 求籤, bamboo sticks with a number written on them. This number can be taken to one of the temple's fortune tellers, who then provide an interpretation of the deity's will, often for free.

On the way back down to the courtyard from the opposite side of the temple, one runs into a small room for Fude Zhengshen 福德正神, better know as Tudigong 土地公, or the lord of the earth. He is considered a deity who watches over the local community, and is the most ubiquities of all deities worshipped in Taiwan. Not only can he be found in almost any temple, but also in countless smaller shrines scattered all over the cityscape. In contrast with deities such as Guanyin and Mazu, he does have a well-defined role in the heavenly imperial hierarchy. Since he occupies the lowest position, he is easily accessible; people believe that Tudigong will take one's wishes to the higher gods. Tudigong is not an anonymous deity; in each community, there is a person who, while still alive, did good deeds, and whose spirit has become the Tudigong of that locale (Hall, 2009: 97-98). Tudigong is often accompanied by a tiger, Huye 虎爺; at the Taipei Tianhou-gong, incense is offered to both at the same time. The altar of the tiger is generally located close to the ground. According to Alessandro Dell'Orto, this animal is taken to represent Tudigong (2002: 207).

Finally, on the way back to the entrance, one passes by a statue of Kōbō Daishi. This is the bronze statue of *shūgyō daishi* that was mentioned by Kondō in the *Kōyasan jihō*. Now that we have mapped the Taipei Tianhou-gong's Chinese deities – which pose no problem to the average Taiwanese visitor as they are thoroughly familiar with them –, it is time to turn to Kōbō Daishi, whose role is much more complicated.

6.2. Two images of Kōbō Daishi

What makes the case of Kōbō Daishi at the Taipei Tianhou-gong so interesting is that he is an integral part of the temple's *baibai* course. In *Yuedu Taipei Tianhou-gong*, the suggested *baibai* course is the following: 1) the Jade Emperor, 2) Mazu, 3) Guanyin, 4) Guanyu, 5) Dicang, 6) Kōbō Daishi (sitting, holding a *vajra*), 7) Tudigong, 8) Huye, 9) Kōbō Daishi (*shūgyō daishi*), 10) the ten Japanese statues to the right of the entrance.[13] Today, for reasons unknown to me, the suggested course has changed to: 1) the Jade Emperor, 2) Mazu, 3) Guanyin, 4) Guanyu, 5) Kōbō Daishi (sitting, holding a *vajra*) and Dicang, 6) Tudigong and Huye. The statue of *shūgyō daishi* is now no longer part of the *baibai* course, and, similar to Tudigong and Huye, one stick of incense is offered to both Kōbō Daishi and Dicang.

13 The last are erroneously labeled 菩薩石像 in the book, but not all statues are of bodhisattva's.

The average visitor of the Taipei Tianhou-gong is unlikely to know anything about Kōbō Daishi. Perhaps for this reason, a plaque hangs on the wall next the room containing the image of the sitting Kōbō Daishi holding a *vajra*. It contains some biographical information, and briefly explains why he is enshrined at the Taipei Tianhou-gong. What makes Kōbō Daishi different from the other deities making up the *baibai* course is that he is not presented as a *shen* (god). He is meant to be treated as a historical figure. The fifth stick of incense goes into a holder that is not in front of Kōbō Daishi, but Dicang. There are also no tools for divination (moon blocks) in Kōbō Daishi's immediate vicinity. That he is simply a historical figure was stressed as well by the temple management in my correspondence with them. From their perspective, Kōbō Daishi is a famous monk who people pay respect and look up to rather than worship as a god.

That is not to say that Kōbō Daishi is nothing more than a historical figure to all who visit, and this is precisely because visitors do not know about him in the first place. One can attempt to educate the *xinzhong*, but observing them going past Kōbō Daishi makes it clear that only few read the informational plaque. The line between *shen* and historical figure additionally is nearly impossible to draw – consider the fact that nearly all of the sites' deities at some point were historical figures. When I explained the practice of *baibai* in section 2.2., I wrote that most people visit a temple to consult one particular deity. The rest are offered incense to as well, but mostly out of respect. To many visitors, Kōbō Daishi is yet another deity that needs to be greeted in order to perform *baibai* in a respectful manner. Other visitors are confused about the setup in which Dicang and Kōbō Daishi share an incense holder; I have observed many skip Kōbō Daishi altogether in order to go straight to Dicang, who is familiar to anyone. Those who do take their time to pay their respects to Kōbō Daishi keep it brief, as they would when going up to the Jade Emperor. This in contrast to Mazu, the temple's main deity, in front of who some people spend as much as an hour in order to tell their story.

The above applies mostly to tourists – and since it the Taipei Tianhou-gong is situated in the popular district of Ximen-ding, it draws many. There are also those who know something about Kōbō Daishi, and they treat him differently. I think we can roughly divide this group of people into three kinds. The first group consists of frequent visitors to the Taipei Tianhou-gong. Those who live in the neighborhood and come by often to, for example, receive alms, may know about its history and treat Kōbō Daishi as a historical figure, looking up to him as an exemplary person. The second group consists of enthusiasts of the Shikoku *henro*. Over the course of their *henro*, they have undoubtedly experienced first-hand the way in which the Shikoku regard Kōbō Daishi. Moreover, they are likely to themselves have developed a relationship to Kōbō Daishi. Let me take up in this group in more detail in the next section. The third group of people is composed of people who take

Kōbō Daishi to be representative of Japanese culture. Since Ximen-ding used to be the Asakusa of Taihoku, some Taiwanese living there may have had a father or mother who grew up among the Japanese and their customs. One should also not forget that between 1937 and 1945, there were Taiwanese families who were fully Japanized as a part of the *kōminka*-movement. The Taipei Tianhou-gong is one of few places left in all of Taiwan where there is a continuity with the colonial past – a past that has been idealized by some.

6.3. The Taipei Tianhou-gong and the Shikoku *henro*

The Kōbō-ji used to be the starting point of the Taipei *henro*, and was presumably also its ending point. The Taipei Tianhou-gong is slowly but surely reprising the Kōbō-ji's former role. Although the Taipei *henro* is no longer in existence, Taiwanese have, in recent years, discovered the Shikoku *henro*. The popularity of the *henro* with the Taiwanese is part of a global trend in which an ever-growing amount of aspiring non-Japanese pilgrims travel to Shikoku in order to walk (a part of) the pilgrimage. Linked to the popularity of the *henro* is the rediscovery of their own heritage by the Taiwanese. The Taipei Tianhou-gong is now also frequented by Taiwanese *henro* who yet have to depart for, or have already returned from, Shikoku. Among the Taiwanese *henro* that visit the Taipei Tianhou-gong, there are also a fair share of sufferers from *Shikokubyō*, or the irresistible urge to return to the island to walk its pilgrimage circuit one more time.

In the previous chapter, we have seen that Japanese Shingon Buddhist priests have been going to the Taipei Tianhou-gong to hold ceremonies since at least 1975, and possibly a few years earlier. Their visit became standardized, and the temple now expects a group of priests from either Kōyasan's Kongōbu-ji or Tōkyō Betsuin 東京別院 to perform a ceremony in honor of Kōbō Daishi somewhere between October and December every year. Their yearly return is described in *Yuedu Taipei Tianhou-gong* as a *chaosheng*, or pilgrimage. From the point of view of a folk religious temple such as the Taipei Tianhou-gong, it can be imagined that the management must have been relieved to host the Japanese priests. Kōbō Daishi appeared in the dream of one of the managers, after all. Considered from the Taiwanese perspective, I assume that the reason why they enshrined Kōbō Daishi at the Taipei Tianhou-gong partly had to do with appeasing his spirit. Especially when the freshly appropriated Kōbō-ji burned down in 1953, many must have thought that the disaster was no coincidence. Having Japanese priests come over to perform a Buddhist ceremony might have been considered a good way to keep the deities originally enshrined at the site at peace.

On November 21, 2016, a group of priests not related to Kongōbu-ji or Tōkyō Betsuin performed a Buddhist service at the Taipei Tianhou-gong at the invitation of representatives of the Taiwanese *henro* community. They originated from Shikoku itself, namely temple twenty-two,

Byōdō-ji 平等寺, and temple seventy-nine, Tennō-ji 天皇寺. That the *henro* community of Taiwan was able to organize the event shows not only their growing influence, but also that one of the original functions of the Kōbō-ji – as the starting and ending point of the *henro* – is slowly but surely being restored. The management of the Taipei Tianhou-gong has shown itself willing to host such events, and cater to a new set of spiritual needs.

One of the people forming the driving force behind the Taiwanese *henro* community is the author of the 2013 book *bianlu: 1200 gongli Siguo tubu ji* 遍路：1200公里四國徒步記,[14] Odili Lee. She walked the complete Shikoku *henro* in 2009. At the time, Lee could not find complete information in Chinese on the Shikoku *henro*, so she decided to record her experience and publish a book in order to enable more Taiwanese to make the trip. The book became a success, and the Taiwanese *henro* community is now thriving. It has organized itself primarily on Facebook – Lee runs a community page called *Siguo bianlu tonghaohui* 四國遍路同好會[15] that has 7,343 followers as of May 22, 2017. There is also a Facebook group dedicated to exchanging information on the Shikoku *henro* called *Siguo bianlu fenxiangchu* 四國遍路分享處[16] and that as of the same date has 1,339 members. The pages are used to spread announcements on events such as the ceremony held at the Taipei Tianhou-gong.

Lee was involved in the organization of the Buddhist service at the Taipei Tianhou-gong. According to her, the original reason for the group of Japanese Shingon priests to visit Taiwan was in order to perform a *goma* 護摩 (fire ritual) at the Qingxiu-yuan in Hualien (mentioned in section 2.2.), which celebrated its centennial on November 18, 2016. After some deliberation, it was decided that holding a service at the Taipei Tianhou-gong on the 21st of the same month would also be among the possibilities. Permission would still have to be obtained, however, from the temple's management, which initially responded by stating the group should get permission from Kōyasan. As going through the required paperwork would take too much time, a new request was submitted, this time in the name of the *Shikoku Hachijūhakkasho Reijōkai* 四国八十八ヶ所霊場会, the organization that oversees the pilgrimage route. The latter request succeeded. This way, the Buddhist service was organized autonomously from Kōyasan; the group of priests invited by the Taiwanese *henro* community thus has no direct relation to the group of priests who pay a yearly visit to the temple in the autumn months.

The service held at the Taipei Tianhou-gong was promoted as a *mieiku* 御影供. We already encountered this kind of ceremony in the earlier chapters; the purpose of a *mieiku* is to make an

14 Authored under the pen name Xiao Ou 小歐
15 https://www.facebook.com/gohenro/
16 https://www.facebook.com/groups/88shikokuhenro/

offering to Kōbō Daishi, and these are normally held in Japan on the 21st of the third month every year, or the day of Kōbō Daishi's *nyūjō*. Some temples hold such services on the 21st of every month – in which case they are referred to as *tsukinami mieiku* 月並御影供. Since the *mieiku* at the Taipei Tianhou-gong was not held on the 21st of March but on the 21st of November, it may be better to refer to it as a *tsukinami mieiku*. The service was led by the *fukujūshoku* 副住職 of temple twenty-two of the Shikoku *henro*. In order to be able to hold the service, an image of Kōbō Daishi was temporarily placed on the central altar, right in front of the temple's Mazu icon (see figure 6). The service was open to the public – I estimate the number of *henro*-related attendants, including those participating in the service, to have been at around fifty people.

Since the temple was open to the public during the service, regular visitors were also able to witness the proceedings of the Buddhist service. Many, of course, did not know what they were watching, nor realized the uniqueness of the situation. Those present from the *henro* community did explain to interested onlookers what was going on. For the most part, however, people who came to consult Mazu went about their business as if it was any other ordinary day. This lead to the remarkable juxtaposition of traditions that I would typify as a parallelism of discourses. While the Japanese Buddhist priests were chanting their sutra's, the sound of moonblocks being thrown on the floor could constantly be heard. During the hour the service lasted, the various layers I have discussed in the previous chapters interpenetrated to bring to the surface the glimpse of a fourth

Figure 6: The tsukinami mieiku at the Taipei Tianhou-gong.

layer that I take to currently be under formation. Whether this layer will continue to develop itself in the nearby future depends on the extent of the cooperation between the management of the temple and Taiwan's *henro* community.

7. Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to, first, untangle and specify the two discourses that, in the past, have informed the Taipei Tianhou-gong in turn, and second, show how these discourses today do so simultaneously. In order to reach this aim, I applied the place-based approach to the study of pilgrimage. I analyzed the site in terms of historical layers that presently interlock to produce the condition of possibility for the revival of the Kōbō-ji's original function. The Taipei Tianhou-gong has thus become a place that is not only important to those of the Mazu cult, but also to those of the Taiwanese *henro* community, the latter of which attach special importance to Kōbō Daishi.

The chapter on methodology first considered past approaches to the study of pilgrimage. I here concluded that the Turnerian approach to pilgrimage implies a universality that is blind to the particularities of pilgrimage across cultures. Although Eade and Sallnow's model manages to make up for this deficiency, their focus on the contested character of pilgrimage sites does not take into account that any given site can also be characterized by an apparent harmony of discourses. The Taipei Tianhou-gong forms one such example. I proposed the place-based approach as a way of remedying the theoretical shortcomings of the contestation model, since the former assumes that pilgrimage sites can accommodate multiple meanings. We have seen in the concrete case of the Taipei Tianhou-gong that its management currently allows the practice of Shingon Buddhist services on its temple grounds, which means they do not insist that the site be informed solely by the beliefs and rituals of the Mazu cult. The two discourses identified in this thesis, respectively a Shingon Buddhist and a Chinese folk religious one, can therefore be said to harmoniously coincide at the Taipei Tianhou-gong.

The second part of the chapter on methodology considered the problem with the uncritical application of two terms to East Asian cultural phenomena, namely 'pilgrimage' and 'religion'. I have shown that the term 'pilgrimage' cannot be applied to Japanese and Taiwanese forms of sacred travel, as the term is laden with connotations specific to its Western experience. In order to adequately discuss the East Asian experience of sacred travel, I introduced and resorted to words from the Japanese and Chinese languages. In the case of religion, I argued that we should not uncritically assume the term to be a neutral analytical category. In fact, if we investigate its use since its transmission to Japan, we see how the term has become normatively charged. This lead to the birth of a specifically arranged religious landscape of desirable and undesirable practices. I moreover argued that we should not assume Taiwanese and Japanese people to subscribe to a single religious creed at the expense of another. Rather, their worldviews are essentially combinatory. This is reflected at the Taipei Tianhou-gong, where multiple traditions seamlessly coincide.

In chapter three, I took up the analysis of the first historical layer: the development of the

Mazu cult during the Ming and Qing dynasties. I paid attention in particular to the Xinxing-gong and the way in which this temple has narratively been construed by the Taipei Tianhou-gong as its spiritual predecessor. I showed how temples in Taiwan are locked in battles for legitimacy. Positing the Xinxing-gong as a spiritual predecessor is necessary in order to make clear to prospective visitors that the Taipei Tianhou-gong's Mazu icon is both old and of distant origin.

The analysis of the second historical layer in chapter four took us into the Japanese period. I here showed that the Japanese initially adopted a laissez-faire attitude towards Taiwanese religious practices. This changed, however, when revolts against Japanese rule were connected to certain religious groups. Moreover, with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, it became necessary to rapidly assimilate the Taiwanese into Japanese culture. Colonial religious policy became more repressive as time went on. Against this background, I sketched the dissemination of Shingon Buddhism in Taiwan, focusing on a few specific sites in the immediate vicinity of Taipei. The Kōbō-ji was built in 1910 in order to offer spiritual services to the ever-increasing amount of Japanese inhabitants in Taiwan. The temple focused on charity and social work, as well. It moreover formed the point of departure for the Taipei *henro*, a copy in Taiwan of the Shikoku pilgrimage. In order to show how this particular *henro* was experienced by Japanese inhabitants of the island, I related the account of Sankurō. I argued that his account is not different from the way in which a Japanese person today experiences the Shikoku *henro*. Such experience is informed by cultural patterns – in the Japanese case the expectation to be able to collect *kudoku* at heterotopia such as temples.

In chapter five, I showed how the third historical layer heralded when the Kōbō-ji was handed over to the followers of the Xinxing-gong, who saw their original temple destroyed in 1943 as a part of Japanese war efforts. I considered the religious policies of the Kuomintang-led government, and showed how increasing democratization lead to the abandonment of policies meant to encourage Chinese identity. Against the background of the tumultuous change in governments in the post-war period, I discussed the controversy surrounding the Taipei Tianhou-gong and the way in which the handover to the followers of the Xinxing-gong proceeded. In the end, the *Zhongguo fojiaohui* was not able to prevent the change in management from a Buddhist to a folk religious one. When the wooden structures of the original Kōbō-ji burned down in 1953, a new temple was built in its stead. This temple, finished in 1959, is the Taipei Tianhou-gong as it stands today. Although the site was primarily informed by the Mazu cult for decades, from 1975 onward, Shingon Buddhist priests begin frequenting the site on a yearly basis in order to hold Buddhist services. It is here that we already begin to catch a glimpse of the formation of the fourth layer.

The comparison of the site's Chinese deities with the figure of Kōbō Daishi worked out in chapter six has shown that to most, Kōbō Daishi remains an unknown figure. It is for this reason that many a visitor of the Taipei Tianhou-gong will mistake him for a Chinese deity. This is changing now that Taiwanese are traveling to Shikoku and experiencing first-hand the way in which the Japanese regard Kōbō Daishi. With the Shikoku *henro* gaining popularity among Taiwanese, we see how the Shingon Buddhist heritage preserved at the Taipei Tianhou-gong is currently in the process of being reactivated. The three layers discussed thus coincide in a fourth one, producing a parallelism of discourses.

Directions for future research are aplenty. In this thesis, I focused mainly on the Taipei Tianhou-gong. The Qingxiu-yuan in Hualien is a similar site with an equally complex history. I did not have the space to report more on the Qingxiu-yuan, but comparing this particular site with the Taipei Tianhou-gong is bound to yield interesting results. At the Qingxiu-yuan, too, a statue of Kōbō Daishi can be found; since the site, however, is preserved as a Shingon Buddhist temple, it does not have a course for doing *baibai*. This means that the interaction of visitors to the Qingxiu-yuan with Kōbō Daishi is very different from what we find at the Taipei Tianhou-gong, where Kōbō Daishi has become an integral part of *baibai* practice. In fact, when I observed the *goma* ritual held at the site on November 18, 2016, I could not help but notice that the statue of Kōbō Daishi there was practically being ignored by almost all in attendance. Instead, visitors felt themselves drawn to the statues making up the miniature copy of the Shikoku *henro*. This is most likely because these statues represent Buddhist deities that are well-known in both Japan and Taiwan.

Additionally, it would be interesting to map sites in Japan related to Mazu, and the way in which her role there is different from the one she plays in Taiwan. As I mentioned in one of the footnotes, Mazu spread to Okinawa, Nagasaki, and as far as Mito city in Ibaraki prefecture. In the Japanese case, she was never bestowed any imperial titles, nor did she grow to become an all-powerful deity. My hypothesis is that she became part of the scattered, local religious cults we would today collectively typify as 'Shinto'. We have every reason to assume Mazu's presence in Japan to be as thinly spread as Kōbō Daishi's in Taiwan. However, with increasing cultural exchange between Taiwan and Japan, it is possible that she, too, will become subject of increased (academic) attention. In the spring months of 2017, a young Taiwanese woman took a Mazu icon to the island of Shikoku in order to walk the *henro* while carrying it. This form of *jinxiang* is unique – it did not carry an image of Mazu to any ancestral temple, and yet we can understand this particular instance of sacred travel as an attempt to charge *ling*. It has moreover only been made possible because of the increased popularity of the Shikoko *henro* in Taiwan. Mapping the meanings projected onto sacred landscapes such as Shikoku's will remain an on-going project.

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