

Shadow of the Colonial Power: Kominka and the Failure of the Temple Reorganization Campaign

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Introduction

The Japanese colonial state occupied Taiwan for fifty years (from 1895 to 1945). During the last decade of its ruling (1937 to 1945), in responding to the need of war-time mobilization against China in the Northeast East Asia and Manchuria, the Japanese initiated a series of political and cultural mobilization projects. Those projects are known as Kominka. Literally, Kominka means to transform the Taiwanese into “authentic Japanese”. Four major campaigns were launched during the Kominka movement. First, the state enforced a name-changing campaign which required Taiwanese to change their Chinese name to a Japanese name. Second, the national language movement banned the usage of Chinese or Taiwanese and promoted the use of the Japanese language. Third, a military-recruitment movement was instituted in which the colonial government tried to mobilize Taiwanese to fight for the empire at the front. The fourth effort, the temple reorganization campaign, aimed at the extinction of traditional folk religion¹.

The temple reorganization movement was conceived as the core of the Kominka movement. However, it lasted for only three years (from 1936 to 1939), and it was quickly suspended by the colonial central-government in 1939². The central government even

¹ In the English literature, the most detailed research is Wanyau Chou, *The Kominka' Movement: Taiwan under war time Japan, 1937-1945*, PhD Diss., (Dept. of History, Yale University 1991).

² This earlier failure was unusual in Japanese colonial history. The Japanese colonial state was viewed by many historians as the most successful example in

made a clear official recognition of the failure of this campaign and forbade similar action. The failure of the temple organization posed a serious question to scholars since they viewed the Japanese colonial state has the ability to implement this policy. Two factors made this common belief. First, the Japanese state had successfully colonized Taiwan for forty years. It gained huge success in economic and political fields³. The colonial elites were proud and confident of their achievements. The colonial ruling elites were also a highly integrated group. More than ninety percent of them were graduates of Tokyo Imperial University. Second, after two decades of the research and the government-directed surveys, the colonial state had already acquired a systematic knowledge of the folk religion. These conditions- a strong state with unified ruling elites, a highly-integrated economy and an advanced knowledge system seemed to pave the way for the success of the temple reorganization campaign, but the failure obscured this reasoning. Why was this campaign quickly abandoned and announced as a failure when the state was powerful?

In this paper, I will examine the reasons behind the failure of the temple reorganization campaign and offer a new theoretical perspective on Japanese colonial power. Scholars of Japanese colonialism have generally paid little attention to the religious aspect of Japanese colonial power, particularly the relationship of the state to religion. In addition to correct this insufficiency, this research challenges the current theories of colonialism based on three paradigms--Nationalist, Foucauldian and State-Corporatist. Because of their insufficiency in explaining the failure of the temple reorganization campaign, I offer a new theoretical angle for analyzing Japanese colonial power based on the evolution of the state-and-society relationship. I argue that we should distinguish two

colonial history. As the famous Minister/political leader Goto Simpei states the principle of colonial policy was guided by the “biological principle”, in which every policy should be based on the result of the scientific research.

³ In the economic field, the Japanese colonial state achieved a remarkable financial independence in 1908 and contributed significant revenue to the mother country. In the political field, the Han Chinese elites gave up military resistance after 1915 and sought to better integrate within the colonial system.

patterns of state-society relationship. One is what I call state-corporatism and the other is nation-corporatism. Following this distinction, I argued that we should view the colonial state as a contested political arena rather than assuming it as a coherent entity.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I examine Japanese colonialism in the context of 19th global colonialism in order to show how its peculiar nature affected its rule in the colony. Second, I examine the three paradigmatic theories in the study of state-and-society relationship under the colonialism. I intend to show that each of them cannot provide sufficient explanation for the failure of the temple reorganization campaign. I also want to point out some of the inherent weaknesses in each theory. Then, I examine the temple reorganization campaign and folk religion. This research is largely based on official reports of the Japanese governor-general bureau and newspapers published during the Japanese colonial period⁴.

Japanese colonialism in the context of 19th century colonialism

Japanese colonialism has been thought to be an anomaly in the history of modern colonialism which took place in the late 19th century in Western Europe⁵. It was an anomaly mainly because it was the only non-Western colonizer in modern history and because of the timing of this venture into colonialism. According to Bruce Cumings, Japan's imperialism was "late" into two dimensions. First, it was late in the building of the modern nation-state and industrialization. Second, the invasion of Western powers in the 1860s made the Japanese feel insecure. However, unlike China and Korea, Japan was able to consolidate political and military power

⁴ The major newspaper I relied on is the Taiwan Ri Ri Shin Bao (台灣日日新報) which is the oldest and most widely circulated Japanese newspaper published in Taiwan during the colonization period.

⁵ Mark R. Peattie first used the term anomaly to describe Japanese colonialism. See the introduction in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-194*, ed. Ramon Meyers and Mark R. Peattie (N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984).

effectively after the Meiji restoration. When Japan began its imperialist expansion in 1870, its economic development was just at the initial stage of capitalist development. Thus, its imperialism, in contrast to that of other colonizers, involved “the location of industry and an infrastructure of communications and transportation in the colonies, bringing industry to the labor and raw materials rather than vice-versa.”⁶ In the case of Western colonialism, the rationale for acquiring colonies was to acquire new markets and raw materials for its homeland. This goal was captured in Lenin’s famous words that “imperialism is the highest stage of the capitalism.” Japan’s anomaly was clear in this regard since it had not reached industrialized capitalist status at the time it began its imperialist expansion. Consequently, the rationale for its acquisition of colonies has triggered scholars’ fierce debate. The most accepted view highlights the mentality of insecurity. Peattie argued that it was the sense of insecurity which kept Japan expanding outside its islands and finally led to WWII. However, Japan did not only expand its colonies but also constructed them. Japan invested huge amounts of capital in building infrastructure in the colonies. This feature made Japanese colonialism different from other modern colonial powers.

In comparison to Western colonialism, Japan resembled the French and German model rather than the British model. Modern colonialism was generally distinguished into two major models according to how it governed⁷. The continental model, in Hannah Arendt’s term, sought to assimilate the colonized people into its own culture. For example, no matter how struggling France did in Vietnam its ultimate goal was a *mission civilisatrice*. In contrast to this assimilation model, the British model (including in the American

⁶ Bruce Cumings, “The Legacy of Japanese Colonialism in Korea” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-194*, ed. Ramon Meyers and Mark R. Peattie (NJ.: Princeton, 1984).

⁷ For the classic historical study of imperialism, see D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, (Delacorte, 1971) and Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism* (Cambridge University Press, 1981); For a recent sociological study of colonialism, see George Steinmetz, “The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire Before 1914”, *American Sociological Review* 73, no.3 (2008).

colonies) sought to rule indirectly by introducing the colonized people into the political system without forcing them to accept the colonizer's culture. In this regard, scholars generally accepted the view that Japanese colonialism resembles the French/ German model more than the British model. But, it also differed from French and German colonialism in that the colonies of Japan were racially and culturally much more similar to it than the colonies French or German occupied in Africa and Asia. In this regard, since the very beginning of the Japanese colonialism, its proponents argued that it was only Japan which could help people in neighboring countries to survive under the invasion of Western powers. Thus, Japanese colonialism was also in part reactive nationalism to the Western invasion. It claimed that the goal of Japanese colonization was to help Asian brothers to defend the invasion of Western colonialism. This attitude later became the famous "Pan-Asia Prosperous Circle" agenda in WWII. Japanese colonialism differs from French/ German and British type of colonialism in that the state and nation building processes were inevitably intertwined with the development of its colonies. However, these two processes did not always proceed simultaneously.

The State and Society relationship under the Japanese Colonialism

The relationship between the state and the society under Japanese colonialism was shaped by the peculiar characteristic of Japanese colonialism mentioned above. The relationship changed in accordance with the two processes of Japanese state and nation building. The colonies were understood not only as markets for export goods but also as strategically integrated parts of the Japanese state. In this regard, the Japanese colonial state did not only exploit the resources of its colonies but also strove to develop their infrastructures. Although development was skewed to the interests of Japanese state as many scholars have mentioned⁸, this developmental

⁸ See Tadao Yanaihara, *Riben di guo zhuyi xia zhi* (日本帝國主義下之台灣), (Taipei : Taiwan yin hang, 1956) ; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War Vol.1* (N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1981).

mentality deeply influenced the state-society relationship in its colonies.

Three current understandings of the colonial state-society relationship under the Japanese colonialism can be identified⁹. The first is the so-called nationalistic understanding of the colonial state-society relationship. In both South Korea and Taiwan, these scholars have produced the majority of research on Japanese colonialism. However, the situation is slightly different between South Korea and Taiwan. In South Korea, nationalistic scholars of Japanese colonialism also advance claims for Korean nationalism. As Gi-wook Shin and the famous Harvard historical Carter Eckert pointed out, those Korean nationalistic scholars reject any positive aspect of Japanese colonialism. For example, they argue that Japanese colonization “distorted” Korean capitalism development and they say that without the help of Japanese colonialism Korea would still have developed capitalism. What Japan brought to Korea was the complete elimination of the nascent national capitalist industries¹⁰. The colonial state did nothing but exploit the society.

In contrast to South Korea, the nationalistic way of thinking about the colonial state-society relationship can be divided into two sub categories in Taiwan: Chinese nationalist and Taiwanese nationalist. The Chinese nationalist’s view is that Japanese colonialism was the complete exploitative machine. The Chinese fought against the Japanese colonial state until its defeat in 1945¹¹. In contrast to this Chinese nationalist view, the Taiwanese nationalists admire the achievements of Japanese colonialism in transforming the backward

⁹ This study is mainly concerned of the Japanese colonial state in Taiwan. However, I utilize many works by scholars of Japanese colonialism in Korea. Thus, Japanese colonialism in Korea serves as an implicit reference point for my examination of the situation in Taiwan.

¹⁰ Carter Eckert, *The Offspring of Empire- the Origin of Korean Capitalism*, (Univ. of Washington Press, 1991).

¹¹ See Xiaobo Wang’s works, a historian well-known in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China for his uncompromising stand against Japanese colonialism. Xiaobo Wang, *Taiwan kang ri wu shi nia*.(台灣抗日五十年) (Taipei Shi: Zheng zhong shu ju, 1998).

Taiwanese into a modern society by the end of WWII. For adherents of this position, it was the KMT (Kouming Tang; Chinese Nationalist Party) rather than the Japanese colonial state that distorted the development of Taiwanese history¹².

The Taiwanese nationalistic way of thinking about the colonial state-society relationship breaks with the long-dominant Chinese nationalistic scholarship by arguing that Japanese colonialism modernized the island. The modern and efficient Japanese state replaced the corrupt and backward Chinese government.

Although Chinese nationalists and Taiwanese nationalists differ in their interpretation of the colonial effect, their explanation of the failure of the temple reorganization campaign is similar. They regard failure as inevitable due to the resistance of Chinese or Taiwanese nationalism¹³.

The nationalistic view of the state-society relationship was challenged recently by a younger generation of scholars. One significant characteristic of those scholars is that almost all of them explicitly or implicitly accept the Foucauldian paradigm to investigate the colonial state. Ranging from cultural studies, history, political science and sociology, they use Foucault's popular ideas-- like "governmentality", "discipline" and "power/ knowledge"-- to frame their research. Thus, they distinguish Japanese colonial "power" from traditional Chinese state power. Japanese colonial state power, according to them, was a "new" and "modern" type of power. As Foucault vividly described the disciplining dimension of modern state power, those scholars used various methods to demonstrate that at the core of Japanese colonial power was rational calculation

¹² The complete explanation of the difference between Taiwanese nationalism and Chinese nationalism is impossible to undertake here. Hence, the goal is to lay out the basic argument of how they view the colonial state- society relationship.

¹³ The nationalist view is easily challenged by several facts. First, unlike the Chinese nationalist expectation, the level of cooperation between Taiwanese and Japanese was very high. I will show later that many Taiwanese elites were highly Japanized. Second, if the failure of the temple reorganization campaign was caused by the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism, why did only this campaign fail not the other three?

and policy design¹⁴. For example, Su used the case of civil engineering in Taihoku (Taipei city) to demonstrate that until Japanese colonization there was no scientific measurement of maps and no rational design of public space. He argued that the first thing the Japanese colonial state did was to “scientifically” understand colonial subjects. Thus, the colonial state started many government-sponsored surveys including customs, ethnicity, economy, religion and geography etc. Those kinds of knowledge were the fundamental element of the colonial power. In comparison to the power of the Qing government, the Japanese colonial state was a much more efficient and powerful political machine. Another scholar--Jen-to Yao argued that the colonial state penetrated society by its efficient police system in combination with the traditional Chinese communal system-- “pao-chia”¹⁵. This system proved to be very efficient in controlling Taiwanese society and disciplining the colonial subject when the colonial state combined the household registered system (ho-ko) with this police- pao-chia system. Every social activity had to be reported. The police had the responsibility and power to discipline and punish Taiwanese. Philip Gorski made a similar argument in explaining the power of the Dutch and Prussians in early modern state-formation in Europe. Gorski was more explicit in combining the classic Weberian idea of state with the Foucauldian approach. State power was both shaped by its physical strength and its power to impose either social or physical discipline¹⁶.

¹⁴ Shuobin Su, *Kan bu jian yu kan de jian de Taipei: Qing mo zhi Ri zhi shi qi Taipei kong jian yu quan li mo shi de zhuan bian.* (看得見與看不見的台北) (Taipei: Zuo an wen hua, 2005)

¹⁵ Pao-Chia is a traditional Chinese communal system which widely used by government to control and monitor the common people. Usually, ten people are organized into a pao and ten pao into a chia. Thus, all people in the village are organized into a hierarchical system in which everyone’s behavior is continuously monitored by its neighboring. Edward I-te Chen, “Japanese Colonialism in Korea and Formosa: A Comparison of The Systems of Political Control.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 30 (January 1, 1970).

¹⁶ Sociologist Philip Gorski provides an excellent account of the relationship between state power and social discipline. Introduction to *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago

The Foucauldian way of conceptualizing the state-society relationship offers a much better angle than the nationalistic unilateral view. It does not assume the relationship between state and society was always in conflict. Instead, the modern state gained its power over society through its accumulation of knowledge about the subject and its scientific categorization projects. The colonial state was powerful not because of its military excellence but because of its modern scientific rationale. Traditional societies could hardly resist the penetration of modern state power. Thus, the Japanese colonial-state deeply penetrated the everyday life of common people¹⁷. Foucauldian scholars argued that the Japanese colonial state had achieved this status of state penetration of the society as early as 1910 when its police system had been established and its knowledge about the colony had been built upon numerous surveys.

However, it is difficult to explain the failure of the temple reorganization campaign from the Foucauldian angle. If the colonial state was such an omnipresent entity why did it fail in mobilizing support for the campaign? If its knowledge about folk religion or even the colonial subject was as comprehensive and advanced as they argue, why was there no consensus among the officials? In short, these scholars not only exaggerate the power of the modern state over society but also the coherence of the production of the colonial knowledge system.

The state-corporatism perspective offers a third way of understanding the colonial state society relationship. Sociologist Gi-wook Shin might be the first scholar to use the concept of corporatism to describe Japanese colonialism. In his study of the Korean peasant movement, Shin found that the rural revitalization campaign initiated by the colonial state in the 1930s served an

Press, 2003)

¹⁷ Steinmetz made this point clear in the introduction to *State/ Culture: State formation after the cultural turn* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), by introducing Pierre Bourdieu's idea of Habitus into the analysis of state. See also Bourdieu's article in the same book.

important role in transforming the state-society relationship¹⁸. There were two major goals of the rural revitalization campaign: the economic integration of the rural area to the Japanese colonial economic system, and “spiritual” mobilization. However, the real effect of this campaign was that through the integration of the rural economy into the core area a more comprehensive incorporation was attained. The success of the rural revitalization campaign, according to Shin, challenges the Nationalistic view that the colonial government was incapable of gaining support from the Korean people.

Although the usage of state-corporatism in the colonial situation might be new, the idea of state-corporatism is an old concept. It was made famous by political sociologist Philippe Schmitter in his study of Western countries during the economic crisis. In responding to the crisis, the state built up various intermediate organizations to coordinate economic issues and distribute resources. The intermediate organizations were hierarchically arranged and approved by the state¹⁹. Through this means, the state gains control over society in contrast to the plural interest group model in the democracy. The term state-corporatism captures an important dimension of the relationship between the state and the society in the colonial situation. The colonial state was eager to co-opt social groups and made use of those groups for their own purpose. Social groups were often organized centrally and hierarchically through state-designated legal representative institutions.

Scholars of the state-corporatism approach will generally expect the successful incorporation of economy and politics will

¹⁸ For the village reorganization campaign in Korea see Gi-wook Shin and Do-Hyun Han, “Colonial Corporatism: The Rural Revitalization Campaign, 1932-1940” in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Shin et. al. (Cambridge: Harvard East Asia Center, 2001)

¹⁹ For a general understanding of corporatism, see Philippe Schmitter, *Trends toward corporatist intermediation* (London: Sage Publication, 1979) and Peter J. Williamson, *Corporatism in Perspective: An introductory guide to Corporatist Theory* (London: Sage Publication, 1989).

guarantee the success of the incorporation in other fields like culture and religion. However, this rational does not explain the situation of the temple reorganization campaign well since the successful incorporation of the economy and politics did not make the temple reorganization campaign persist.

Before the Kominka movement, the colonial state had tried several times to incorporate religion. During the 1920s, one official tried to set up a central organization called--South Sea Buddhist Association but this fell part quickly due to lack of support from Buddhist groups²⁰. Buddhism and Christianity were two world religions under surveillance by the colonial state. The state encouraged Japanese religious groups to undertake missionary and religious activities and expect them to help the state to do the social discipline job via missionary works or religious education. The state also manipulated the tension between Buddhists and Christians to create conflicts in order to “divide and rule”²¹.

The situation of folk religion was different from those world religions because its organizational structure was not as large and well-organized. There was also no Japanese counterpart whereby Japan could use the Japanese Buddhist groups or Christian groups to co-opt the Taiwanese counterpart. The state thought that people believing in folk religion were mobilized by purely superstitious ideas. Therefore, the colonial state could manipulate them to increase its legitimacy. Thus, before the temple reorganization effort, there was no effort to incorporate them. Instead, the state frequently donated money or participated in their activities.

None of the above mentioned approaches can appropriately explain why the Japanese colonial state failed early and quickly in the temple reorganization campaign during the Kominka movement. The

²⁰ This policy was carried out by the high official in the governor- bureau Kenjiro Marui. Marui also directed a journal which aimed at investigating Taiwanese traditional customs.

²¹ For example, in 1925, there was a famous public debates between Buddhist and Christian. Buddhist was encouraged by the official to initiate several days public lecture in Taihoku (Taipei) critics toward Christian. Christian was forced to response to those critics publicly.

nationalists attributed the failure to the split and conflict of national identity between Japanese and Chinese /Taiwanese. However, national identity did not play an important role in the persistence of the campaign.. The Foucauldian scholars had a hard time explaining the failure since they portrayed the colonial state as such a powerful machine with a coherent knowledge about its subjects. Finally, the state-corporatism approach explains the success of the other three campaigns as due to the high level of incorporation of the economy and politics into the colonial system. The failure of the temple reorganization attests to this argument. The misunderstanding comes from the fact that in order to use state-corporatism to analyze the colonial situation, we need to first assume the existence of a nation-state. However, this nation-stateness was never achieved during the colonial period. The Japanese ruling elites were not able to find a consensus concerning the position of folk religion in the Japanese nation. In contrast to this split, the elite attitudes toward the other three campaigns were much more coherent and determined.

Taiwanese Folk Religion and the Temple reorganization campaign

The temple reorganization campaign was one of the four most important political campaigns during the Kominka movement. Proposed in early 1936, implemented soon thereafter the same year, unlike the other three major campaigns it suffered unexpected failure in 1939. Then, in 1940, it was abandoned by the governor-general bureau and disappeared from public discussions. The spiritual and religious aspects of the movement were seldom discussed. in the most comprehensive study currently in English literature of the Kominka, the historian Wan-Yau Chou, listed the temple reorganization campaign along with the other three campaigns as the four major policies of the Kominka but devoted only a few pages to a summary of the temple reorganization campaign²². Chou like many other scholars took the failure for granted and did not pay enough attention to the reason behind it. As Foucauldian and some Taiwanese Nationalist scholars like to emphasize, in the middle of the

²² See Chou, *The 'Kominka' Movement*, p.42-43.

1930s the Japanese colonial state reached its peak of rule in Taiwan. In 1935, a fifty day exhibition was held in Taiwan which attracted thousands of people from around the world to celebrate the amazing achievement by Japan over forty years of colonial rule. The modern, scientific and highly efficient bureaucratic state seemed able to do anything without committing mistakes. The success of the exhibition also implied that the further incorporation of Taiwanese into the Japanese nation was ready to take place. It was just at this time and in this optimistic environment that the failure of the temple reorganization occurred.

It was well known that the temple reorganization policy was aimed mainly at the Taiwanese folk religion. It was commonly assumed that the colonial state desired to take the opportunity to eliminate it. On the other hand, the society stood in opposition to the state and defended folk religion. It is easy to imagine that the society's opposition to the policy was the reason why it suffered the early failure. This view was shared by nationalistic scholars. However, it is untenable if we carefully analyze public opinion. At least in the early 1920s, there were many critics of the practice of the traditional folk religion among Taiwanese elites. One of the most important young intellectuals--Cheng-Cong Huang²³ wrote an Op-Ed on the Newspaper of Taiwanese People (台灣民報):

From the angle of natural scenes, Taiwan is a beautiful island (Formosa) but from the customs, it is a place full with superstition. In Taipei, we almost witness those so-called piety-men-and-women, some holding incense, some taking red lights, some bearing sacred-cabinet walking around the street. In front of them, there are bands which played music...We hope the government (Japanese colonial government) puts more efforts on extinguishing those folk

²³ Cheng-Cong Huang graduated from Waseda University in Tokyo in 1922. He was highly active in the organization of Taiwanese students in Japan. He is the co-founder of the most important student and later political rights organization Taiwan Youth in 1920. When he returned to Taiwan, he co-founded the Newspaper of Taiwanese People which was the first Taiwanese newspaper during the colonial period.

religion rather than spending money on other cultural-movement²⁴.

Cheng-Cong Huang's relentless attack toon folk religion tells us two things. First, the colonial state was not alone in wanting to eliminate the folk religion for political purposes. Thus, this goes against the Nationalistic position which views the temple reorganization campaign solely from the angle of opposition between Japanese and Taiwanese. Second, Huang's opinion was not only his personal opinion but could represent the opinion of many young intellectuals who shared his background²⁵. He was the chief-editor of the most respected Taiwanese newspaper and the commentary appeared in the editor- column which suggests that it was not simply a personal opinion but represented a general consensus among intellectuals. Those young intellectuals who usually went to Japan for higher education witnessed the progress of the modern Japanese state. When they came back to Taiwan, they were shocked by the backwardness of certain aspects of social life. They viewed folk religion as the symbol of backwardness and superstition. If the Taiwanese society wanted progress, it needed to reform folk religion. those young intellectuals undoubtedly accepted those modern ideas which the colonial state wanted to inculcate. They even asked the government voluntarily to help extinguish superstitious practices of folk religions.

However, the colonial state's attitude toward folk religion was always ambivalent and instrumental. the appearance of an explicit attack toward the folk religion was a very late phenomenon. The government was even criticized by the Taiwanese elites for

²⁴ “小言—迷信島” (Comment—A Superstitious Island) , *台灣民報 (Taiwan Ming Bao)* 82 (Taipei: 1925)

²⁵ Huang was not the only known intellectual who criticized the superstitious customs. Weishui Jiang (蔣渭水) a medical doctor who is considered one of the most important leader in the cultural-nationalist movement was also known for his criticism of the backward customs and superstitious belief. The association he established- Taiwan Culture Association (台灣文化協會)- promoted the distribution of modern ideas and civilized manners.

promoting superstitions. Only after the mid 1930s did attack on folk religion appear in the official media like the Taiwan Ri Ri Shin Bao (台灣日日新報). In a news article entitled 'Bad Religion and Good Religion' in April 30 1937, the writer began with a discussion on the distinction between good religion and bad religion and argued that a good religion should be able to contribute to the cultivation of patriotism. A good religion should teach people to love their country and nation. Similar news articles frequently appeared throughout 1936 and 1937. Taiwanese folk religion was fiercely attacked for its lack of religiousness and for being purely superstitious. This was considered to be the reason why Taiwanese cannot achieve higher level of identification with the Japanese culture and the spirit of nation.

Nationalist scholars used this kind of attack to justify their assumption of the hostility of the colonial state toward folk religion. However, before the 1930s, the colonial state's stance was very ambivalent. Several governor-generals regularly attended the annual Mazu festival in Taipei city. They prayed to Mazu to bring peace to the country and joyful life to Taiwanese people. The local government maintained a close relationship with the big temples and regularly made gifts to temples. It was quite common to see many government-sent steles (a horizontal inscribed board hanging on the roof) in the big temples. Therefore, to assume that the Japanese government held a consistently hostile attitude toward folk religion is untenable. It is more accurate to assert that the colonial state wanted to control folk religion effectively and efficiently by co-opting them. In some situations, the state promoted activities such as communal mutual-help activities. But, the colonial state forbade certain activities like the traditional incense-offering cross counties pilgrimages among several famous Mazu temples. The state was worried that this kind of activity might create the chance for political dissidents to mobilize believers across the administration boundary.

In order to better control and co-opt folk religion, the colonial state put a lot of energy into government-sponsored large scale religious surveys and researches. Kenjiro Marui, an official in the governor-bureau, directed a comprehensive survey on folk religion from 1915 to 1920. Marui wrote up *The Report of the Taiwanese*

Religions. The focus of this book was folk religion. It paid specific attention to the organization and composition of members of each religion and tried to categorize them as Foucauldian scholars would expect. In order to control folk religion, the colonial state first needs to produce knowledge. However, this knowledge system categorized the folk religion based on the concept of religions derived from Buddhism or Christianity. Thus, they tried to understand them by the same criterion as membership, church leaders and activities. They soon encountered some difficulties in defining the boundary between religious activities and everyday life. For example, many Taiwanese used an informal worshipping organization among several households or within a village without having a real temple. The leadership rotated periodically among those households. This kind of activity was associated with ancestor worshipping and was therefore difficult to categorize.. Thus, in the report, Marui created a new category called miscellaneous for those social activities with religious characteristics which could not be classified into the categories derived from other world religions. The report says that “Taiwanese deeply believed in the folk religion and are very superstitious” but “the overall goal of the folk religion was to teach some moral principle like how to be a pious son or daughter”. The second major government sponsored research was conducted by the famous religious scholar Fukutaro Wasuda in 1929. Compared to Marui’s report, Masuda’s work was considered the most comprehensive and a true academic research on the issue of Taiwanese religions. Later on, he published his famous book *Taiwanese Islander’s Religion* (台灣本島人の宗教)²⁶. In this book, Wasuda took a sympathetic stance to folk religion. Although he was a Japanese nationalist and a promoter of Kominka he also thought that folk religion could be transformed into love toward the emperor and the nation. Thus,in Masuda’s view it is possible to integrate folk religion in to the pre-existing Shinto-Tennō belief system. The Japanese ruling elites were therefore divided in their opinion as to whether folk religion could be incorporated into the Japanese nation.

²⁶ Masuda Fukutaro, *Taiwan hontojin no shukyo*, (Tainan: Zaidan Hojin Meiji Shotoku Kinen Gakkai, 1937).

The split between the Japanese ruling elites contrasts with the Foucauldian scholars' view that the colonial state produced coherent and systematic knowledge about the colonial subject. For example, they emphasized in the hygienic and medical field that modern knowledge completely transforms its subjects. However, in the realm of religion, government research produced inconsistent understandings. The understanding was highly contingent upon who led the survey. Surprisingly, the strongest attack on folk religion was not made by Japanese but by a young Taiwanese whose name is Jing-Lai Tseng. As a Buddhist trained in a Buddhist university in Japan, Tseng wrote a book called *Taiwanese Religion and Superstitious Customs* (台灣宗教と迷信陋習). He criticized relentlessly those traditional practices which he considered to be ugly, superstitious and backward. He urged that the traditional folk religion needed to be reformed comprehensively otherwise it would prevent progress. Therefore, we can see, before the Kominka took place, there was no consensus among ruling elites toward the folk religion²⁷.

The temple reorganization campaign took place within this social context. It followed the decision in the conference called "Conference for Reforming the Customs" held by the governor-bureau in 1936. The conference passed the decision to eliminate those superstitious folk religious practices including the practice of the traditional Chinese fortune teller etc. in order to transform Taiwanese into Japanese. Since the local temples played the central role in the practice of folk religion, to comprehensively reform folk religion meant to reorganize the temples totally. Accordingly, the Chungli gun (中壢郡) governor Naokatsu Miyazaki said that there are five reasons why the temple reorganization is necessary.

First, the temple belief (folk religious belief) prevented the cultural progress of the island. Because the folk religion is a

²⁷ In Contrast to the ambivalent attitude toward folk religion, the attitude toward the use of Japanese language was more unified. The Japanese language was considered the necessary instrument for ruling effectively and efficiently before the 1930s. On other words, the language was seen as an effective instrument in building the state..

primitive religion which bases on the efficaciousness and rewarding of the god without theology it was hard to be distinguished from superstitious practices. It will be unfortunate if this type of religions became the center of spiritual life on the island...Second, it violates “the spirit of nation” since the origin of the folk religion is from China. Parts of its belief view China as their mother land. If we allow it, the Kominka will not be comprehensive... Third, it prevents the development of healthy ideas in the society... Fourth, the administration of the temple is corrupted so that a lot of conflicts happened due to the corruption... Fifth, the donation should benefit the whole society not only the temple²⁸.

Naokatsu was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the temple reorganization campaign. He later wrote a book called *The Ascendance of the Temple Gods*(寺廟神の昇天)²⁹. He wrote “with the ascendance of the old gods the new spirit (Japanese gods) will descend from the air to the body.” In Naokatsu’s eyes, the main reason why the government needed to promote the temple reorganization was that the folk religion forbids the forming of a Japanese spirit and therefore is not suitable for nation-building during the Kominka period. Thus, the reorganization of the temple is what the government had to do. One reporter observed:

The Taiwanese way of worshipping god and ancestor is only associated with the existence of gods and ghosts. It usually does not relate to [the] state. But the Japanese worship of Amaterasu Omikami is deeply linked to the state. State, National God, and the spirit of ancestors were inseparable entity. This is the foundation for fulfilling the obligation of being a member of the empire and the ideal of devotion to the country...Only by doing so (temple reorganization), we can help them (common

²⁸ From the Worshipping alliance of Chungli gun *Document about the Temple Reorganization in the County*, p. 7-9, Dec 1936

²⁹ Naokatsu Miyazaki. *Jibyoshin no shoten : Taiwan jibyo seiri oboegaki* (Tokyo: Toto Shoseki Kabushiki Kaisha, 1942).

people) build the consciousness of being a member of the empire and achieve the goal of assimilation³⁰.

The implementation of the temple reorganization campaign was in fact carried out by the local government. Although there seemed to have been a consensus in the 1936 conference to extinguish folk religion the central government did not take a direct role in the campaign. The Shu and its lower level government Gun were the main agencies in implementing the campaign³¹. According to their reaction to the campaign, we can distinguish three main types of local government action. First, those who refused to do anything radical or reacted passively like Taihouku Shu. Second, those who had a clear guiding principle and required lower bureaucrats to implement the campaign. Third, those who allowed the lower governments to implement policies freely. Figure 2 shows that Shinchiku shu had the highest rate of reorganizing the temples. In contrast, Taihoku shu did almost nothing to promote the campaign. The extremely low implementation rate of the Taihoku shu posed a serious question to the state-corporatist model. The Taihoku shu is where the capital was located and the integration of economy and politics was greatest. Thus, from the prediction of the state-corporatist model, the implementation rate should also be highest. However, the evidence showed the opposite. The high integration of economy and politics did not guarantee the success of the temple reorganization campaign.

³⁰ Asakichi Shirai and Ema Tsunekichi. *Kominika undo* (Taihoku: Takahara Hiroshi, 1939), 453.

³¹ Shu is the highest level of local government which was directly commanded by the governor-bureau. It is equal to province in English. After 1926, there were five Shu and three Ting (the same administrative level with Shu) under the government bureau. There were eleven cities and fifty-one guns and one sub-ting under the five Shu and three tings. Gun is equal to county in English. City, Gun and Sub-ting were the lowest level of local governments.

Name	Temples in 1936	Actual Execution toward the temple		
		Destruction	Other*	Proportion
Taihoku shu	520	1	3	0.7%
Shinchiku shu	387	45	198	62.7%
Taichu shu	786	41	28	8.7%
Tainan shu	1,088	196	426	57.1%
Takao shu	447	76	184	58.1%

Figure 2. Data: Jiasong Li, p.773. Number and Proportion of Temples reorganized during the campaign. *it means that the buildings of the temples were forced to give up religious functions and to be used for other purposes.

Unlike other three major policies, it was quite surprisingly to find that there was no unified or central- coordination behind the temple reorganization campaign. The local governments thus played a critical role in interpreting what the governor-bureau said in the 1936 conference and then implemented the policy quite differently as shown in Figure 2. Some like local bureaucrat Naokatsu went so far as to radically reform e folk religion in a very short period. He required the establishment of the central-coordinated organization on the county level in order to execute the task of reorganization. The organization drew a plan which specified which temple can be preserved. The guiding principle was that only one temple was allowed for one village, and the old gods should be replaced by the Japanese gods. People were asked to destroy the figures of gods or submit them to the government.

There were several ways in which leaders of the folk religions could resist when facing this devastating campaign. First, they could rely on the relationship between them and the local officials. For example, in the case of Tainan Da Tian Hou Gong (大天后宮)-the oldest Mazu temple in Taiwan- a local official Miyamoto

helped them to avoid devastating damage to the valuable cultural items. Second, they worked with the local headman to accuse the local officials of misconduct, sending this information to the Japanese elites or public media in Japan. Third, they try to show affinity with legitimate religions like Buddhism in order to avoid being labeled as superstition. In particular, they sought help from Japanese Buddhist organizations. By joining them during the period, they claimed that they were one branch of the organization. As in one case in the Chungli gun, one school of Japanese Buddhism fought for the temple with the local government and used their influence in domestic politics to criticize the colonial local government for not respecting that “people have the religious rights to freely believe” and stating “to the misconduct of the local officials we have the responsibility to tell the governor- bureau, or we call tell the Diet to investigate”³².

However, the governor-bureau’s role in this campaign was ambivalent. As my previous discussion shows, attitudes toward folk religion were much more diffused and multi-vocal among high officials. Some officials embraced a very negative view toward the folk religion like Naokatsu. Others believed that the folk religion could co-exist with the belief system of the Japanese nation like Masuda. Although the 17th governor- general Kobayashi Seizo initiated the Kominka campaign the actual implementation was carried out by the bureaucrats. The governor- general, as a former military leader who was not familiar with the issue of colonies, did not have enough knowledge. He had to rely on his officials. However, those officials were split on the merits of folk religion. Wasuda, a religious scholar and at that time the director of the so-called “Institute of Forging the Imperial Subject”, was known for his true devotion to the Japanese Shinto-Tenno belief but at the same time argued that folk religion could not be demolished since it played such a central role in Taiwanese people’s life. He thought that the best way was to assimilate those folk religions into the Shinto system. Therefore, he criticized the radical extinction of folk religion. In 1939, the governor- bureau made an announcement which denounced the

³² Naokatsu Miyazaki, *Jibyoshin no shoten*, 40.

too radical action toward the folk religion on the Taiwan Ri Ri Shin Bao. In this announcement, the governor-bureau said “We cannot extinguish certain religion just because it is the old religion (Chinese)”, but “if the campaign is made voluntarily by the islanders (Taiwanese) we should encourage.” Overall, the goal was to “gradually achieve the ideal of Kominka.” In order to achieve this goal, we should “prevent any radical change in case it may stimulate people’s resistance.” Then, in 1940 the new governor-general Kiyoshi Hasegawa announced the suspension of the temple reorganization campaign.

Conclusion

The failure of the temple reorganization campaign was due largely to the split within the Japanese colonial state bureaucracy and the incoherent view toward the role of Taiwanese folk religion in Japanese nation-building. The different response of the local to the central policy suggests that the colonial state should not be viewed as a monolithic entity. This finding suggests that the current understanding of Japanese colonialism needs modification. The knowledge produced by the colonial state was not actually as scientifically coherent and systematic as Foucauldian scholars believe. In fact, knowledge about the folk religion was highly contingent upon who conducted the researches and directed the survey. Therefore, we should view the colonial state as a contested arena. Furthermore, the Taiwanese young intellectuals also produced their own knowledge about folk religion. The colonial state did not produce a coherent understanding on how to deal with folk religion; the policy kept shifting between co-optation and coercion. Before the 1930s, the colonial state relied more on the co-optation strategy but after the 1930s, with the rising rightist movement in Japan, the thought of using coercion began to dominate policy making and the public media. However, for two reasons, the militant faction were unable to push the governor-bureau to adopt a radical policy from the top. Instead, the campaign was carried on sporadically and not in all places. First, those who supported the radical method were generally young officials and Taiwanese young intellectuals who obtained degrees in Japan. However, those who were more conservative like Masuda were generally more familiar with the local situation. Thus, it

was difficult to implement a radical policy at the central level. Second, the pattern of the integration between state and society influenced the implementation of the policy. There was almost nothing happening in Taihoku—the most well developed area where the level of state cooperation was highest.

My study of this period's history also suggests that the state-corporatism approach in the study of colonialism needs modification. I suggest that we should distinguish two types of state-corporatism in Japanese colonialism. First, the classic state-organizational corporatism which focused on the integration of economy and politics by creating intermediate organizations was the major state-society relationship before 1930s. Second, the state-nation corporatism which focused on how to transform the society and incorporate the colonial subject into the nation took place after the 1930s. The national-dimension should not merely be viewed in a spiritual aspect in the state mobilized campaigns. Almost every political movement contained moral dimensions but not all of them engaged in coopting foreigners into its own nation. The failure of incorporation in modern times often results in race-cleansing. From my study, we may gain more understanding about nation-construction and the complicated interplay between nation, religion and politics.

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