

up. More decision-making power is delegated to or shared by lay believers or junior clergy.

Having said this, however, it is important to notice that large variations remain not only among religions but also among sects of a single religion. Sometimes the variations between sects can be larger than those between religions. This is the focus of the following chapters of this book.

CHAPTER 2

Taiwanese Buddhism

One night in the early February 1912, a senior monk surreptitiously led several dozens of muscular monks and monastery workmen carrying knives and clubs to launch a blitzkrieg on the headquarters of the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism located inside the monastery. About twenty staff members of the Association were seriously wounded and driven off of the property. The senior monk and five or six other attackers were later charged and imprisoned for their offenses.

One month earlier, the famous Chinese Buddhist leader Ven. Taixü had just won an election held in the monastery to establish the association for the purpose of turning the monastery into a Buddhist educational school. The two hundred plus resident monks were outnumbered by three to four hundred lay guests clandestinely mobilized by Ven. Taixü and lay leaders. Ven. Taixü had told the monastery's monks that these lay guests came only to attend an academic conference and mentioned nothing about his intention to turn the vast monastery into a school. The resident monks vehemently refused to let the laymen take over their property and staged the aforementioned assault.¹

This episode was later named in modern Chinese Buddhist history the Fracas of the Quinshan Temple (*Danao Qingshan*). In retrospect, this episode not only represented the modernization pains of Buddhism in China but also became the prologue to the establishment of various humanistic Buddhist (*Renjian Fojiao*) empires in Taiwan. Short-lived in China, the humanistic Buddhism pioneered by Ven. Taixü has flourished in Taiwan and provided a potentially fertile ground for democratic learning. This chapter elaborates this intriguing development.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Although Taiwanese Buddhism had its roots in the Qing dynasty or earlier, the most important Buddhist organizations existing in Taiwan originated from pre-1949 Chinese Buddhism.² Their Chinese heritage is reflected in four areas: leadership, theology, ecclesiology, and political connections. First, among the four largest sects of Taiwanese Buddhism—Buddha Light Mountain, Dharma Drum Mountain, Zhongtai Zen Monastery, and Buddhist Compassion Relief Ciji Foundation—the first three sects were created and are still led by monks born in China. Although the abbot of Ciji is Taiwanese, she is a disciple of the eminent Chinese monk Venerable Yinshun, who passed away in June 2005. Ven. Yinshun was the favorite disciple of Ven. Taixü.

Second, Taiwanese Buddhist theology and ecclesiology follow that of Chinese Buddhism, which belongs to the school of Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Buddhism and adopts an authoritarian ecclesiology. Within the Great Vehicle school, the theology of humanistic Buddhism is the most popular among Taiwanese Buddhists.³ Ven. Taixü and his disciple Ven. Yinshun were the major founders of this humanistic theology.⁴ The theology's departure point was to replace the individualistic view of salvation with a socially oriented view. Humanistic theology extensively discusses the application of Buddhist principles to family relationships, financial management, health, career development, environmental protection, office relationships, affection and love, and international relations. However, due to the sensitivity of politics in an authoritarian environment, humanistic theology has rarely touched on political issues (Laliberté 2001: 120).⁵ On the rare occasions where it did discuss politics, the discussion would be based on purely Buddhist theology rather than a combination of Buddhist theology with democratic ideas (Y. Chen 1990). Humanistic theology proposed that Buddhists "participate in politics, but not govern" (*wenzheng bu ganzhi*), meaning that the clergy should not take up administrative positions in the government, although representative and consultative positions were allowed. The laity could take up both types of positions.⁶

In 1954, Ven. Yinshun was almost arrested by the KMT government. Some Buddhists from opposing sects in the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC), reported to the state security agency that Yinshun had written an article promoting communism, in which, in fact, Yinshun talked about a utopian Buddhist community that existed in ancient India (H. Yang 1993: 19–29; Z. Song 1989: 52–54; Y. Ye 2000: 226–227). To avoid further persecution, Yinshun unwillingly wrote a confession letter to the BAROC and to the government about his religious "mistakes" (Hou 2003: 9–13). After the Yinshun incidence, supporters of the humanistic theological tradition imposed self-restraint, agreeing to discuss everything humanistic except for politics. They did not emphasize or reinterpret the

original meaning of "participating in politics, not governing" until after the lifting of martial law.

Why did humanistic Buddhism but not other Buddhist sects flourish in Taiwan? Most scholars correctly attributed the success of the sect to the very nature of this-worldliness of humanistic Buddhism that strengthened the theological and organizational links between temples and lay believers. The implementation of the Buddha way (*xingpusadao*) was no longer restricted to studying esoteric classics, chanting sutras, and performing meditation rituals at remote temples but included the application of Buddha's cosmic love in the believer's daily life such as charity works, maintaining good family relationships, and promoting work ethics. The rapid economic growth, social transformation, and technological progress of Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s helped fuel the expansion of humanistic Buddhism, which provided practical social, psychological, and spiritual services to the needy.⁷ Furthermore, a virtuous cycle was formed between the supply and demand of humanistic Buddhism: the more humanistic services it provided, the more resources (both in terms of knowledge, donation, and manpower) it could get, and the more humanistic services it could provide.

Third, in terms of ecclesiology, the first Buddhist group (*sangha*) established by Buddha 2,600 years ago adopted a very egalitarian decision structure. Decisions were made collectively and usually by consensus vote (Shengyan 1979: 71–88; Shengyan 1999: 119–124; N. Shi 2003: 42–44).⁸ However, this egalitarian governing structure gradually yielded to an authoritarian structure as the Buddhist group expanded. After Buddhism was introduced into China, it adapted completely to the authoritarian and class structure of the Chinese political and social environment (M. Zhang 1979; Song 1989: 30–58; Ministry of the Interior 2001: 3–4). During the early republican era in China, some Buddhist reformers such as Ven. Taixü made an alliance with lay believers in order to implement his reform programs. But the traditional clergy as well as many liberal clergy reacted strongly against sharing power with lay believers. As a result, Taixü's reform program in ecclesiology largely failed in China (Welch 1968: 28–34). Deriving from the Chinese Buddhist tradition, most Taiwanese Buddhist temples abandoned the more egalitarian structure of the native Zhaijiao tradition. Instead, they reconstructed the ecclesiology to govern their internal affairs according to three principles: supreme mastership, the superiority of the clergy over the laity, and centralization.

The principle of supreme mastership holds that the founder of the religious group is the supreme leader. Followers believe that the master can do or say nothing wrong in either spiritual or secular affairs. If there is a difference in opinion between the head master and other clergy, it must be the mistake of the other clergy whose thinking is tarnished by insufficient religious training or experience. In Taiwanese Buddhism, the supreme master is not just one of the three gems;⁹ she or he embodies the three gems as one, a Buddhist trinity (Zhong 2001).

The second governing principle is "the clergy decide clergy business" (*sengbi sengjue*), which means that the clergy lead the religious group with laity serving only as an auxiliary arm. The clergy may delegate some power to the laity to handle nonclergy-related business (such as temple cleaning, maintenance, accounting, and charity works), but the laity must obey the commands of the clergy. As for purely clerical matters (such as the recruitment and promotion of clergy, the hosting of religious ceremonies, and sermons), the laity is largely excluded from these functions.¹⁰ Ven. Taixü painstakingly elaborated this division of labor between clergy and laity in order to pave the institutional foundation for the implementation of humanistic Buddhism in republican China (J. Hong 1995: 250–254).

Chinese Buddhism holds that there are nine classes of Buddhists ranked by their spiritual status and training, despite the general claim that "all living beings are equal" (*zhongheng pingdeng*). The lowest class consists of men and women just admitted to Buddhism. Those with more commitment to Buddhist laws are ranked higher. Those with full commitment to Buddhist laws are the highest in the ranking, that is, the monks and the nuns (Shengyan 2001b: 40; Welch 1968: 206). Therefore, equality among Buddhists is a theological assumption that is diluted by the aforementioned class differentiation in practice.

The final governing principle is centralization in decision-making. Local temples or chapters of a Buddhist organization have very limited autonomy over religious matters, finances, and personnel management. The headquarters defines "correct" religious interpretations, collects and allocates financial resources, and makes important decisions concerning the promotion of the local clergy and laity.

Despite the traditional Chinese authoritarian structure, Taiwanese Buddhism contains a great deal of leeway in the learning of democratic values and allowing the practice of democratic behavior by both the clergy and the lay believer. This space is created by the theology of humanistic Buddhism. Although containing self-imposed political restrictions, humanistic Buddhism justifies the lay believer's participation in the religion's newly expanded activities on social issues. Not only do lay believers need to learn the democratic values of respect, compromise, and coordination in order to mobilize other believers for volunteer social work, the clergy also need to respect, coordinate, and make compromises with lay believers regarding those social works in which the clergy have no expertise. The more humanistic missions a Buddhist organization assigns to itself, the larger the relative space for democratic learning, and the more influential the lay believer is within the organization.

The enlarged space created by humanistic Buddhism does not necessarily imply a harmonious relationship between the clergy and the lay believer, or among lay believers. When Ven. Taixü promoted an enlarged role for the lay believer in temple management, he received violent protest from the

clergy, epitomized by the infamous Fracas of the Qingshan Temple (*Danao Qingshan*) in 1912 (Welch 1968: 29–33). However, one way or another, lay believers actively or passively participate in decision-making and implementation of temple activities connected with social issues, in which democratic values are learned and practiced.

The fourth connection between Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhism is political. Almost all of the major Buddhist organizations in Taiwan established friendly relationships with the KMT government during the period of martial rule. In fact, prominent Buddhist leaders such as Baisheng, Xingyun, Weijue, Wuming, and Dongchu were high-ranking KMT members (Y. Ye 2000: 219). On national holidays, they routinely criticized the Chinese communists for their atheism and eulogized the KMT government for its protection of principal Buddhist organizations.

In 1949, in fear of the communists' atheism, many Chinese Buddhist clergy fled with the KMT government to Taiwan. Unfortunately, the KMT government suspected they were communist agents disguised as monks and nuns. Many Chinese clergy were arrested by the KMT government in Taiwan for conspiracy or for being "unemployed street people" (*wuyeyoumin*). In order to protect these Buddhist clergy, Chinese monk Ven. Dongchu reconvened the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (BAROC) to represent the interests of Buddhists and to detect any possible communist elements in Buddhist disguise for the government (Jiang 1995b: 518; Jones 1999: 176; Hou 2003: 5–7).¹¹ The BAROC was organized according to the corporatist principle in the sense that it was the only national-level Buddhist association (Yang 1993: 35–36; Ministry of the Interior 2003: 12).¹² Under the BAROC were local chapters corresponding to the government's administrative hierarchy, and only one such chapter was allowed to be established at each level. All Buddhist temples and organizations had to be members of these local chapters. Lay believers could apply for individual membership in these chapters, but ordained monks and nuns had to join these chapters. In fact, before the lifting of martial law, the BAROC held the exclusive right to ordain monks and nuns under the government's order. It also held the exclusive right to rescind clergy status if serious violations of Buddhist regulations were found.

The BAROC was under the strict control of the KMT. The KMT set up a party caucus within the BAROC that was responsible for screening out any antigovernment Buddhists and for electing the director-generals of the BAROC (Jones 1999: 176–177). During martial law, the BAROC actively cooperated with the government in anti-communist policies as well as in domestic politics. For instance, it publicly condemned the opposition movement associated with the Formosa Island Incident of 1979 and later opposed the lifting of martial law (Hou 2003: 24–31, 36).

After 1987, the monopoly of the BAROC was shattered by the four largest Buddhist organizations, which established their own hierarchy from the local to the national level. The BAROC was also challenged by more

than a dozen new national Buddhist associations such as the Buddhist Youth Association of the Republic of China (*Zhongguominguo Fojiao Qingnianhui*, 1989), the Modern Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (*Zhongguominguo Xiandai Fojiao Xuehui*, 1990), and the Chinese Buddhist Temple Association (*Zhonghua Foji Xiehui*). These organizations share ordaining power with the BAROC, although the BAROC always sends representatives to attend the ceremony sponsored by these sects (Y. Ye 2000: 270–271; Jones 1999: chap. 6).

During the martial law period, Taiwanese Buddhists supported the KMT government with differing degrees of enthusiasm. Initially, some supported the government through harsh criticisms of the Chinese communists. When the democratic movement progressed rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, some Buddhists supported the government by criticizing the democratic movement (BAROC 1983: 1). Most Buddhists, however, chose to espouse humanistic Buddhism with an almost total exclusion of political concerns. They maintained a safe distance from the democratic movement or social protests.

After the lifting of martial law, Taiwanese Buddhists scrapped their anti-communist rhetoric in order to establish religious connections with Chinese Buddhists. On the domestic front, the adjustment process was protracted by a series of trials and errors. The Foguangshan actively supported an independent candidate in the 1996 presidential election. The Zhongtai Chansi bet its organizational reputation and resources on the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. Both organizations suffered a great deal in terms of membership and donation loss after their candidates lost. By contrast, the Dharma Drum Mountain and Ciji decided to keep communication channels open to both the KMT and opposition parties. But at the time of election, they refrained from endorsing any candidate and political party. In the 1997 legislative election, the BAROC director-general Ven. Jingxin openly endorsed KMT candidates by saying that “if other political parties are in power, I am not sure whether all the religions can keep what we have.”¹³ But after the 2000 election, he also toned down his support and kept his distance from the KMT.¹⁴ In sum, most Taiwanese Buddhist leaders are reducing their KMT affiliations and trying to keep a delicate balance among competing political forces.

Some radical Buddhists emerged after the lifting of martial law, but their influence has been limited (Jiang 1995b: 163–172; Song 1989; Song 1990). For instance, a couple hundred of progressive Buddhists organized a Buddhist Movement of Safeguarding the Nation and Constitution (*Fojiao Jiuguo Juxian Yundong*) in support of a student demonstration in 1990 (Chen, Li, and Lü 1990: 9–11). The organization did not receive much attention in the news media. In 1992, the Ten Thousand Buddha Association (*Wanfohui*) organized a political party and sent five lay believers to participate in the first democratic election of legislators on the island. They all lost the election (Jiang 1995a: 170). Ven. Zhaohui, Song Ze-lai, Jiang Can-teng, Chen

Yi-shen, and Yang Hui-nan were among the few Buddhists or Buddhist scholars to criticize the political and religious conservatism of principal Buddhist organizations. But few Buddhists in the four largest organizations would publicly echo their views.

THE BUDDHA LIGHT MOUNTAIN (FOGUANGSHAN; HEREAFTER, FGS)

Without the embarrassing short remark, the dinner hosted by Ven. Xingyun could have been perfect by all standards. The dinner was held on 4 October 2006 at the FGS's Taipei headquarters in honor of distinguished Chinese visitors, the chief and officials of the Religion Affairs Bureau of the Chinese government. The dinner guests also included the deputy chairman and officials of the Mainland Affairs Council of the Taiwanese government, plus a couple religious leaders and scholars, including me.

It was one of the best diplomatic dinners one can expect: the vegetarian dishes were luxuriously delicious, and everyone delightfully concurred on the necessity of expanding religious exchanges between China and Taiwan. Both the Chinese and Taiwanese officials echoed every comment made by Xingyun by saying, “Thank you for your wise revelation (*kaisi*).”

Toward the end of the dinner, however, suddenly coming from nowhere, Ven. Xingyun spoke gently to the guests: “The reason why I urged President Chen Shui-bian to resign from the presidency a few weeks ago was because I sympathized with the predicament he had gone through. It was not worthwhile for him to endure all the humiliation and accusation about his corruption.” Although our Chinese guests would probably like to see President Chen step down immediately, they made no comment, no “thank you for your wise revelation,” or any approving gesture. Neither did the officials from the Taiwanese government; they probably dared not do so. The dishes on the table seemed suddenly frozen by the extremely quiet and discomforting atmosphere in the room. After thirty seconds of embarrassing silence, Ven. Xingyun realized that he might have brought up something he shouldn't have and wisely changed the subject back to religious exchanges. Everyone felt great relief and pretended that Xingyun had never made the remark. A tropical breeze came back to the room to defrost the dishes. Yes, it was the flamboyant style of Ven. Xingyun, a well-respected Buddhist leader with a persistent interest in political affairs. Even America's major mass media learned about his political devotion when his Los Angeles branch made a controversial campaign contribution of US\$ 10,000 to Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore in 2000.¹⁵

Ven. Xingyun (or Hsing Yun) established the FGS in 1967 to promote humanistic Buddhism, which he had studied under the guidance of Ven. Taixu (Laliberté 1999: 83). He was one of the Chinese monks who fled to Taiwan in 1949. After building a religious base in a remote northeastern

county, he moved down to southern Taiwan to establish the FGS. With the help of local elites, the FGS soon developed into an international religious empire consisting of hundreds of temples, museums, libraries, publishers, hospitals, high schools, universities, and welfare organizations, with more than one thousand clergy and about one million registered believers across five major continents (Foguangshan 2002: 8).¹⁶

Ven. Xingyun's writings rarely touched upon political issues. Among the few comments on politics and politicians, his democratic jargon is often fused with authoritarian interpretations. In a book published in 1987, before the lifting of martial law, he said, "We are in the democratic era. We care about democratic politics, but we don't need opposition parties. Liberal democracy has moral standards. . . . How can a few [opposition] politicians serve us as well as the hundreds of thousands of KMT members can?" He equated the politics of Kharma Emperor with a liberal democracy (Z. Lu and Liu 1987: 282–283).

In a long essay expounding upon humanistic Buddhism, Xingyun included a section on the Buddhist political view. He proposed that "politics needs assistance and enlightenment from Buddhism, and Buddhism needs protection and assistance from politics." He cited the close relationship between Buddhism and the state in ancient India and China to support his argument. He argued that Buddhists have a responsibility to protect human rights and to promote social welfare. He further urged Buddhists in a democracy to abandon the old isolationist view and adopt a more assertive interpretation of "participating in politics, not governing" (Xingyun 2001). In another short pamphlet, he briefly criticized the corrupted public officials of the new democracy (Xingyun 2002: 250–252). Both statements, however, are derived more from Confucian or Buddhist standards of self-discipline in public officials than from democratic values or institutions.¹⁷ Except for these few works by Xingyun, none of his one thousand clergy teach or write anything about politics (Foguangshan 2002: 112–120).

In contrast to the slow development of a democratic theology, the FGS began to develop a nascent democratic ecclesiology in the early 1990's (Jones 1999: 191–197). The Organic Law of FGS (OLFGS, *foguangshansi zuzhi zhangcheng*) was promulgated five years after the FGS was established. Although more democratic and institutionalized than its counterparts in other major Buddhist organizations, the OLFGS and other practical norms specify a number of traditional organizational principles. First, the status of Xingyun is unique and supreme. He was the founder and abbot of the religious empire from 1967 to 1985. Even after he voluntarily resigned from the abbot position, he is still the de facto supreme commander in the FGS system. He appoints abbot successors and makes decisions on major organizational affairs, such as the hosting of ceremonies for ordaining clergy and admitting laity (Foguangshan 2002: 58–74). His published works are required reading for all clergy and believers. In the eyes of his followers,

Ven. Xingyun can say or do nothing wrong.¹⁸ Therefore, even though the "monastic order strives to function according to a set of fixed rules rather than following a charismatic style of leadership" (Laliberté 1999: 88), the practice has lagged far behind its ideals.

The OLFGS established a nine-member Religious Affairs Committee (*Zongwu Weiyuanhui*) as the governing body of the FGS.¹⁹ The abbot is elected from the nine members of this committee, who in turn are elected by all clergy with at least ten years of residency. Although this is a more democratic structure than that of other Buddhist organizations in Taiwan, the actual operation of the procedure is not as democratic as one might expect. Xingyun was the abbot for three consecutive terms, facing no competitors in the elections. In 1985, after serving three terms as abbot, Xingyun appointed Ven. Xiping as his successor. Since the nine committee members were the same until the election of 1990, and Xingyun was still the real decision maker, there was no competitor during Xiping's election.

Democratic elements were introduced in the elections of committee members in 1990, 1994, and 1997. Not only were the elections held more frequently, but younger clergy were also elected. Although the election of the abbot was still influenced by Xingyun, the general clergy possessed more autonomy than before. When Ven. Xiping died unexpectedly in 1995, Xingyun appointed Ven. Xinding as his successor through a hastily convened committee meeting. The appointment of Ven. Xinding aroused some controversy among the clergy. Before the appointment, reelection of the committee members and the abbot was conducted in 1997 before their terms expired. In this election, five of the nine senior members withdrew and were replaced by younger clergy. Ven. Xinding received the largest number of votes (332) in the election of nine committee members but was closely trailed by Ven. Huikai (319 votes), a nun who, among other outstanding religious records, held a Temple University PhD in religion. The nine committee members then elected among themselves the abbot. When asked about the election of the abbot, one senior nun voiced her reservation by saying that "nuns in our organization are very competent, but some senior clergy still prefer to have a monk to head the organization."²⁰ In fact, the FGS "comprise 1,000 nuns and only 300 monks, and all five heads of departments within the order are women" (Laliberté 1999: 106).

In 2004, a replay of the 1997 abbot election was carefully orchestrated when the forty-year-old (or young?) monk, Ven. Xinpei, was elected to succeed Ven. Xinding. For unknown reasons, Ven. Xinding stepped down before his second six-year term expires in 2009. The second runner in the 1997 election, Ven. Huikai, was not even elected to the nine-member committee. The nine members, then, elected Ven. Xinpei as the new abbot. In his inauguration ceremony, most of the guests never heard of him before. His short credentials included "knowledgeable in rules and rituals" and experience as a superintendent within the system but not as an abbot of a local

branch, which the previous abbots had included in their resumes. When asked by a news reporter about his opinion on the credentials of the new abbot, one guest replied: "I heard that he was an excellent hymn singer."²¹ It seems that the FGS's formal democratic structure is still held at bay by undemocratic practices.

In terms of the power relationship between the clergy and the laity, FGS made some progress after the lifting of martial law. According to the OLFGS, the FGS local temples follow the principle of "clergy decide clergy business." The first article of the first chapter of the OLFGS prescribes that FGS "be led by the clergy and assisted by the laity." The laity assume only an auxiliary and subordinate role and do not share decision-making power with the clergy.

In the early 1990s, limited democratic reforms were introduced into the FGS system. First, after the reform in 1992, a female lay believer was elected to the Religious Affairs Committee in 1997, although only as an alternate member. More important was the establishment of the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) in 1991. The BLIA gave the laity a more active role in managing association affairs, including delivering sermons, which traditionally was regarded as an exclusive privilege of the clergy. But the clergy still hold key positions in the BLIA (Laliberté 1999: 103), thus limiting the spread of democratic norms and practices within the organization. In 1993, the BLIA passed a constitutional law to establish the Lay Dharma Teacher/Lecturer system (*Tanjiaoshi/Jiangshi*). By 2002, the system had generated 7 teachers and 133 lecturers (BLIA 2001: 55). Lay Dharma Teachers and Lecturers may deliver sermons in BLIA member temples. However, one Dharma Teacher, a professor at a major university in Taiwan, told me that he does not know much about what goes on in the BLIA. He only gives lectures when he is occasionally invited to do so. As far as he knows, Lay Dharma Teachers have little influence in the BLIA. At the local FGS temples, the clergy maintain prime leadership roles, with the laity serving only as auxiliary arms. The clergy, not the laity, conduct all important religious ceremonies.²²

Closely related to the supreme mastership and the dominance of the clergy over the laity is the centralization of decision-making in the FGS system. The FGS headquarters provides a standardized minimum wage of no more than NT\$ 500 a month, to all clergy (D. Zheng 2002: 77). Except to cover routine maintenance work at local temples, all donations are to be submitted to the headquarters. Properties under the care of local temples and chapters all belong to the headquarters, despite the fact that some of the larger temples have registered separately with the Ministry of the Interior. Local abbots are rotated between different temples to prevent the emergence of warlordism. A strict hierarchy has been established for the clergy, with grades and ranks based on seniority and performance. It "operates more like a military review board than a monastic system of the past," Charles B. Jones perceptively comments (1999: 193). Personal interpretations of Buddhism are

to be based on that of Ven. Xingyun, and are not allowed to differ from those of the headquarters.

In terms of the interaction between state and religion, FGS played a submissive and supportive role in relation to the KMT government prior to 1987. Ven. Xingyun was arrested by the KMT government in China once and was arrested again in 1949 on an espionage charge after the KMT government moved to Taiwan. He took the advice of other prominent clergy to join and support the KMT in order to avoid any future suspicion and harassment from the government (Hou 2003: 33–35; Laliberté 1999: 101). Afterwards, KMT candidates were able to deliver political speeches and distribute campaign fliers via the FGS system. Ven. Xingyun was elected director or executive director of the state-sponsored BAROC from 1952 to 1993.²³ Furthermore, he was a KMT member and elected to an important advisory position in the party in 1988 (Jiang 1997: 23). After the lifting of martial law, FGS began to take a more autonomous role in political affairs. Within the FGS system, free discussion about politics was allowed. Any FGS laity who was a candidate for public office or supporter of other candidates was permitted to conduct limited political advertisements at religious gatherings. In 1995, Ven. Xingyun publicly endorsed independent presidential candidate Chen Lü-an, who was a former minister of defense, a devoted Buddhist, and a disciple of Ven. Xingyun.²⁴ Chen did not get the expected support from the rank and file of the FGS system nor from other major Buddhist organizations, and performed poorly in the election, receiving only 8% of the total votes (Laliberté 1999: 94–96). This electoral loss led to a sharp drop in the FGS's membership and financial support, which prompted Ven. Xingyun to "seal the mountain" (*fengshan*) in May 1997 to consolidate its financial structure and to reformulate development strategies (Jiang 1997: 15–17). Adding insult to injury, the local government began to harass the FGS over zoning violations of its buildings (Laliberté 1999: 97). The FGS did not reopen until 2001.

However, the "sealing of the mountain" did not spell the end to the FGS's contact with politics. After a few months of recuperation, Ven. Xingyun rebuilt his relationship with the KMT by incorporating important KMT politicians into the BLIA. A KMT vice chairman (Wu Boxion) was BLIA's president for two terms, and another vice chairman of the KMT (Wang Jin-ping) was a member of the board of directors for two terms. Many other important KMT politicians were members of the governing board of the BLIA (BLIA 2001: 98–103).²⁵ With a successful coalition strategy that crossed party lines, the FGS pushed a petition through the legislature to make the birthday of Buddha a national holiday (Y. Ye 2000: 268). In 1998 and 2002, the FGS also hosted two extravagant Buddhist ceremonies to welcome Buddha's relics to Taiwan. Distinguished politicians from all major parties attended the ceremonies. When the FGS reopened its mountain in 2001 it warmly welcomed the Democratic Progressive Party president in order to

reconcile with the new government. In the 2004 election, the FGS continued to favor the KMT/People First Party slate, but did not do so publicly.²⁶

BUDDHIST COMPASSION RELIEF CIIJI FOUNDATION (HEREAFTER, CIIJI)

The founder and current leader of Ciji is Ven. Zhengyan (or Cheng Yen). Born in 1937 to a movie theater owner in central Taiwan, she learned the skills of business management before Ven. Yinshun ordained her in 1963. In 1966, she established the Buddhist Hardworking Ciji Gongdehui (*Fojiao Kenan Ciji Gongdehui*) and started her systematic efforts in charity works. Ciji membership did not grow rapidly until after the Ciji hospital was completed in 1986. Over the next twelve years, Ciji developed into a giant Buddhist philanthropic corporation with more than 2.6 million members (D. Zheng 2002: 53). Unlike other Buddhist groups, these members do not need to perform the three-gem ceremony of monastic vows. They become members after making continual donations to Ciji or after passing a home interview by a commissioner (*weiyuan*). Most Ciji members are relatives or friends of commissioners (D. Zheng 2002: 58; Huang and Weller 1998: 386).

Ciji differs from other major Buddhist groups in one major aspect, which also affects the composition of its theology and ecclesiology. The organization started not as a religious organization but a charity, and was registered with the government as such. However, this does not mean that religious activities, such as prayer, reading Buddhist texts, chanting Buddhist hymns, and Buddhist rituals, are absent from the organization's routine works. It is the overwhelming emphasis on nonreligious activities that makes Ciji different from other major Buddhist organizations from the beginning. Hence, the organization's activities place more emphasis on charity works than on the study of Buddhist theology (Laliberté 1999: 122–124; Weller 2000: 491–493). Ven. Zhengyan's favorite Buddhist text is *Fabaojing*, but Ciji members are encouraged to read her *Still Thoughts* (*Jingsi Yulu*). As a result, the number and the roles of the clergy are reduced to a minimum, leaving the laity to take full control of the organization. There are only about 110 nuns and a handful of monks living at Ven. Zhenyan's residence, performing maintenance and making souvenir candles.

As a disciple of Ven. Yinshun, Ven. Zhengyan follows the theology of humanistic Buddhism, but adopts a more restrictive version than her master did. Since the majority of Ciji members are women, Ven. Zhengyan upholds traditional values of submission, caring, and endurance. (H. Lu 1997: 106; Huang and Weller 1998: 380–381; Weller 2000: 493). These values are applicable to all aspects of social life, including politics. She disapproves of social activism, because "a sense of responsibility is more important than a sense of justice. If everyone acts this way . . . then there is a possibility that society will become even more fair and just."²⁷ This submissive style will

partially explain, as discussed in chapter 5, that even though Ven. Zhengyan insists on political neutrality, her followers prefer the KMT to the more flamboyant DPP.

In contrast to other followers of Taixü or Yinshun, who proposed the principle of "participating in politics, not governing," Ven. Zhengyan formulated the "Three-No Rules" to discourage her members from participating in politics; these are "not running as a candidate, not assisting election campaigns, and not recommending any candidates."²⁸ One of the Ten Precepts prescribed for male members is "no participation in demonstrations or political campaigns" (H. Lu 1997: 103).²⁹ Instead, she proposed the principle "care about but do not get involved in politics (*guanxin dan bu jieru*)" (Laliberté 1999: 124–125). Other than an occasional reminder of voting at election times, she has never openly commented on political matters or politicians, nor has she lobbied on behalf of those who receive her help (Laliberté 1999: 118).

Like other Buddhist groups, the ecclesiology of Ciji is based on the supreme mastership of Ven. Zhengyan (Laliberté 1999: 114–115). Ciji members address her as "Shangren" (the supreme person) and treat her as such by kneeling down before her or even when receiving phone calls from her.³⁰ The uncommonly thin Buddha statue at the Ciji headquarters looks very much like Ven. Zhenyan. English translations of Ciji publications often address her as "him" to imply that she is no longer carrying the inferior female body but is a superior male Buddha with the appearance of a woman. Her lectures and writings guide all Ciji members, particularly her collected works, *Still Thoughts* (Huang and Weller 1998: 380–381; Weller 2000: 383). The motto of Zhengyan's disciples is: "The Master's resolve is my resolve, the Buddha's mind is my mind" (Jones 1999: 206). Ciji has successfully persuaded many primary schools to adopt *Still Thoughts* as a textbook through Ciji teachers and parents at these schools. Her biography, of which more than three hundred thousand copies have been published, describes her as a living Buddha with magical powers (H. Chen 2000: 59–62; Jones 1999: 211). The supremacy of Ven. Zhengyan is elevated to such a high place that no potential successor has been named, nor have the rules of succession been published to lead the huge religious empire, despite her occasional hospitalization caused by severe problems with her angina pectoris.

Unlike other Buddhist groups, the ecclesiology of Ciji does not place the clergy above the laity. Since Ciji is basically a charity organization rather than a clergy-training facility, there is no need to emphasize the superiority of the clergy over the laity. The only clergy superior to all Ciji members is Ven. Zhengyan. She performs the three-gem ceremony only for those who are to become Ciji staff.³¹

Ciji is a highly centralized corporation. At the center is the general management center (*gongguanli zhongxin*, established in 1990), which issues orders to all local chapters and controls the finances and personnel of Ciji

through a structure resembling a modern business organization (D. Zheng 2002: 56–60).³² Ven. Zhengyan is the chief executive officer, and is assisted by three vice executive officers (all lay believers). One of the three vice executive officers, also the second man in Ciji, Wang Duan-zheng, is a brother of Ven. Zhengyan's (Huang and Weller, 1998: 388). Local chapters have no autonomy in matters of finance, personnel management, and public relations. Many outside researchers and media representatives have shared the same experience, if not frustration, that interviews with a local Ciji chapter require prior approval from the headquarters.

Compared to the BLIA of Fuguangshan, Ciji provides more opportunity for the laity to make important decisions in a religious organization, due to the lack of clergy influence at every level of this global organization. But due to the centralized structure and the emphasis on seniority, the opportunity to learn democratic values and to practice democratic behavior is still limited.

In terms of the interaction between the state and religion, Ven. Zhengyan holds a more isolationist view than other Buddhist leaders do. Unlike Ven. Xingyun of FGS and Ven. Weijue of Zhongtai Chansi, Ven. Zhengyan has never been a member of the board of directors for the state-sponsored BAROC. In fact, since by law Ciji is not a religious organization but a charity organization, it is outside the jurisdiction of BAROC (Laliberté 1999: 114). Before the 2000 presidential turnover, Ven. Zhengyan received as few KMT politicians as possible at Ciji headquarters. Opposition politicians had a hard time trying to take a picture with her.³³ After 2000, she quickly adapted to the new political reality and has maintained a delicate balance among political parties. Although occasionally reminding followers to go to the voting booth at election times, Ciji never endorses any political candidates, even those who are important members of the organization. If a member of Ciji becomes a political candidate, she or he must resign from all Ciji posts and is not allowed to mention his or her affiliation with Ciji in campaign flyers (Jiang 1995a: 171).³⁴ Ciji routinely issues public warnings and complaints if these rules are violated. No candidate can politically afford to ignore Ciji's warning. A public apology and revision of the campaign flyer always follows. In sum, Ven. Zhengyan and Ciji have done more than any other religious groups in Taiwan to maintain the image of political neutrality.

THE DHARMA DRUM MOUNTAIN (FAGUSHAN: HEREAFTER, DDM)

The predecessor of DDM was Nongchan Monastery, established in 1975 by the Chinese monk Ven. Dongchu. Two years after Dongchu's death in 1977, Ven. Shengyan (or Sheng Yen), a Chinese monk who received his PhD in religious studies in Japan, became the abbot of Nongchan Monastery. The religious empire began to grow rapidly. In 1989, the headquarters of DDM was established in Taipei County. The DDM system consists of dozens of

temples, cultural enterprises, academic institutions, and social welfare foundations, with more than one hundred clergy and about one million members spread over Asia, America, Europe, Africa, and Australia.

The theology of DDM belongs to the school of humanistic Buddhism, which includes Buddhist values regarding social welfare, family relationships, financial management, love and friendship, environmental protection, and office relationships—everything except for politics (Shengyan 2001a, 2001b). Ven. Shengyan holds a very strict, isolationist view regarding the relationship between religion and the state. He rarely comments on political issues or figures. In his early writings, Ven. Shengyan, like Ven. Xingyun of FGS, basically followed the position of Ven. Taixu, who proposed the principle of “participating in politics, not governing.” The clergy's duties are self-cultivation and preaching and should not include direct involvement with the government's administrative works. However, the clergymen are allowed to vote and even become representatives in order to protect and promote Buddhist interests. As for the laity, they can become administrative officials and representatives without the clergymen's restrictions (Shengyan 2001b: 131–132).

The ecclesiology of DDM follows that of traditional Chinese Buddhism in terms of the supreme mastership and dominance of the clergy over the laity. Ven. Shengyan is both the *de jure* and *de facto* leader of the DDM system. His followers intensively study his publications. In their mind, he can do or say nothing wrong. “It is not the question of right or wrong,” a lay leader defensively explained, “it varies according to people, work, timing, and place. Ven. Shengyan would sometimes scold me in public, which I did not think was justified. But he did so nevertheless in order to be considerate to the feelings of bystanders.”³⁵

The DDM system places the clergy above the laity. Although Ven. Shengyan has admitted that a layperson can sometimes become as good a Buddhist as a member of the clergy, he believes that on average the clergy is superior to the laity in terms of Buddhist theology, wisdom, character, and spiritual status. Only on rare occasions should the laity become the center of Buddhism (Shengyan 2001b: 241–243). This principle seems awkward in light of the fact that most organizational works of the DDM are performed by the laity, not by the clergy. Although it has a similar number of believers, DDM recruits only about one hundred clergy members, while the FGS system has more than one thousand. What the DDM system does is to place the clergy at the decision-making center of organizational works, while letting the laity implement the clergy's decisions. But in practice, due to the complexity of modern nonclerical organizations and the relatively small number of the clergy, lay believers with different professional backgrounds are in control of DDM's huge and multiple nonclerical organizations, through which they are able to learn and practice democratic values and behavior. When there are important differences in opinion between the lay leader and the clergy leader in a nonclerical organization, Ven. Shengyan

makes the final decision, often in favor of the professional lay leader. Senior laity can also deliver sermons at routine DDM religious gatherings, although not in important ceremonies.³⁶ Similar to FGS, DDM has adopted a centralized decision-making structure. All the properties of local temples and chapters of DDM belong to the headquarters. Local abbots are assigned and rotated by the DDM headquarters.³⁷

In terms of the interaction between the state and religion, Ven. Shengyan has formulated a two-track principle. He actively solicits support from politicians to expand his religious empire, but he strictly forbids his clergy and laity to bring partisan activities into the empire.³⁸ Unlike Ven. Xingyun of FGS and Ven. Weijue of the Zhongtai Chansi, Ven. Shengyan has never been a member of the board of directors in the state-sponsored BAROC. He encourages his followers to vote for their ideal candidates or political parties (Shengyan 1995: 123–126; 1999: 175–179), but he never reveals his political preference. Additionally, political candidates are not allowed to speak or distribute campaign flyers at DDM gatherings. If a member of the clergy or laity becomes a political candidate, he or she must resign from all official positions in the DDM.³⁹ The DDM never publicly endorses any particular political party or candidate. Since the turnover of the government in 2000, Ven. Shengyan has not changed his centrist position between the two political parties. In October 2005, when the compound of the headquarters was completed, Ven. Shengyan held the hands of both Chairman Ma Ying-jiu and President Chen Shui-bian in the celebration ceremony, while he stood in the middle.

THE ZHONGTAI ZEN MONASTERY (ZHONGTAI CHANSI; HEREAFTER, ZHONGTAI)

I did not anticipate such a fervent response from a monk after I sent him the first draft of this chapter for verification and clarification. "Take out the whole section on Zhongtai in your chapter, or we will file a libel lawsuit against you," he angrily warned me over the phone. I patiently replied: "Please tell me where the mistakes are, and I'll be willing to correct them to your satisfaction. If you file the lawsuit, I am afraid that both of us will end up in the popular gossip magazines." He unwillingly retracted his threat but could not persuade me to cross out all the hard evidence that made his organization controversial. One week later, a political science professor of the National Taiwan University and a deputy minister of the Finance Ministry, both of them senior lay believers of the organization, came to my office to make the same request of correction. I agreed to replace some of the expressive adjectives in the sentences with milder ones but insisted on keeping the evidence intact. In the end, they concurred with my explanation. Indeed, Zhongtai Zen Monastery is unique in many interesting ways among the major Buddhist organizations in Taiwan.

Ven. Weijue (or Wei Chueh), a Chinese monk, was ordained in Taiwan in 1964. Over the next ten years, he isolated himself from the world in a small temple in Taipei County to study Buddhism. Starting in 1987, the year the martial law was lifted, he transformed his isolationist strategy into one of active expansion, with a specialty in holding short-term Zen (Ch'an) training courses for urban professionals. Over the next fifteen years, he built up a religious kingdom, boasting more than seventy temples, one thousand four hundred clergy members, one million plus believers, and several educational institutions (Zhongtai fojiao xueyuan 2001: preface).⁴⁰

Although not a disciple of Taixü or Yinshun, Ven. Weijue's theology is much like humanistic Buddhism. Weijue has proposed to transform Buddhism into an academic, educational, scientific, artistic, and humanistic discipline (Zhongtai fojiao xueyuan 2001: 66–68). His theology teaches people how to live a peaceful Buddhist life within the network of family, the workplace, and social groups. Absent from his lectures and writings is the subject of politics (Weijue 1994). The only place where he briefly mentions politics is in his advice to believers to respect political authority (Caituanfaren Zhongtaishan fojiao jijinhui bianjizu 1998: 38).

As with other major Buddhist groups, the ecclesiology of Zhongtai emphasizes supreme mastership and the clergy's superiority over the laity. Ven. Weijue claims himself to be the authentic successor to the great Chinese Zen Buddhist Huineng. A Zhongtai slogan says, "Authentic Buddha lives in Zhongtai" (*zhenfo zhu zhongtai*), which attempts to elevate Weijue to the highest religious status not only within the Zhongtai system but also in Taiwan's Buddhist community (Caituanfaren Zhongtaishan fojiao jijinhui bianjizu 1998: 1–26).⁴¹ His believers carefully read his writings. He can say or do nothing wrong. If a member of the clergy or laity disagrees with the lecture or writing of Ven. Weijue, it must be due to the inferior wisdom of the junior believer.⁴²

In local temples, the clergy take up all the important leadership roles, with the laity serving only as consultants and lower-level administrators (Zhongtai fojiao xueyuan 2001: 28).⁴³ Ven. Weijue provides four explanations for the superiority of the clergy over the laity. First, the lay believers are immersed in secular desires and are thus unclean. Second, because the clergy give up secular enjoyment, they are "moral" persons. Third, the clergy have devoted their full careers to caring for society. Finally, the clergy preach without receiving a salary (Caituanfaren zhongtaishan fojiao jijinhui bianjizu, 1998: 43–44).

The superiority of the clergy over the laity can be illustrated by an intrusion during my interview with a young abbot of a local Zhongtai temple. We sat across from each other at a table with my back facing the door of the reception room. While he was patiently explaining to me how compatible Buddhism is with democratic ideas, a female believer about fifty years old entered. She stood quietly behind my back for a while before the abbot

turned his eyes to her and asked about her intention. She humbly asked the abbot whether she could pay respect to him. He gladly said yes. I thought it would not take more than two seconds to say hello and shake hands. But I was terribly wrong. She prostrated herself on the floor to pay her respect, with her feet, hands, and forehead touching the ground. The abbot said Buddhist greetings to her in return without even standing up. I was extremely puzzled by the democratic ideas he had mentioned just a few minutes ago and the humble ritual I observed thereafter. So, I posed the question to him. He replied with a very assertive smile: "This is a custom in our system. That is how we pay respect to the spiritual elders and educate the believers to be obedient." Thirty minutes later, when the female believer was leaving the premise, she performed the same ritual to him again. I asked him whether a member of the clergy would pay such respect to a lay believer. He said, "Never. It is because Buddhism focuses on what's inside, not what's outside." Other senior Zhongtai lay believers confirmed his statement and added, "The ritual is beneficial for the lay believers to learn about humility and wisdom." Apparently, the ritual implies a very asymmetrical ethics and power relationship in the Zhongtai system.

Similar to other Buddhist groups, Zhongtai has adopted a highly centralized governing structure. Ven. Weijue labels this system as "one unified by five methods" (*wutong chengfa*): unification in finance, construction, education, evangelism, and spiritual training (Caituanfaren zhongtaishan fojiao jijinhui bianjuzi 1998: 75–84). The brain of the Zhongtai system is the Religious Affairs Committee, headed by Ven. Weijue. The clergy receives no salary, yet the headquarters covers all their personal expenses. All the properties and donations collected from local temples and chapters belong to the headquarters. The headquarters, moreover, initiates all religious activities for the entire Zhongtai system.

In terms of the interaction between state and religion, Ven. Weijue has been more expressive in supporting the KMT than Ven. Xingyun has, although both of them were elected as the central advisors of the KMT in 1988. He was also elected as executive director of the state-sponsored BAROC from 1993 to 1997.⁴⁵ Before the presidential turnover of 2000, Ven. Weijue maintained a close relationship with KMT politicians by supporting their electoral campaigns. During the 2000 presidential election, Ven. Weijue held a clergy parade and mobilized its members to support the KMT candidate. Unfortunately, the KMT candidate lost this important election.⁴⁶ To amend its relationship with the new DPP government, Zhongtai invited important DPP politicians, including the president, to attend a ceremony marking the completion of a gigantic Zhongtai temple in 2002.⁴⁷ Some attributed this change in party lines to the fact that one third of the new multibillion-NT-dollar Zhongtai temple structure violated construction codes and faced potential demolition.⁴⁸ In fact, among Taiwan's four largest Buddhist groups, Zhongtai has generated more legal and social controversies than

the others, reflecting some systemic problems within the Zhongtai governing style.⁴⁹ In 2004, Ven. Weijue broke with the DPP again by openly supporting the KMT presidential candidate in front of dozens of news reporters. He criticized the Chen administration for ethnic antagonism, deteriorating law and order, economic stagnation, and illegal plebiscites. But his critics pointed out that the lack of settlement of Zhongtai buildings' construction code violations might be one of his reasons for supporting the KMT candidate.⁵⁰

OTHER BUDDHISTS

In addition to the four major Buddhist organizations, I conducted interviews with more than a dozen independent, liberal Buddhist scholars and abbots of smaller temples. These are liberal Buddhists in the sense that they oppose certain elements of traditional Buddhism, such as supreme mastership, Buddhist affinity with the KMT government, and gender discrimination against female clergy. Most of these liberal Buddhists agree that Buddhism and democracy are compatible, that as democratic citizens Buddhists should be more active in politics, and that there should be more equality between religious leaders and the clergy as well as between the clergy and the laity. However, they also agree that there is a lack of democratic theology and ecclesiology in Taiwanese Buddhism. They had not heard of any Taiwanese Buddhist scholar or clergy, including themselves, publishing a substantial essay on these topics or engaging in democratic reforms within the Buddhist community. The only exception is Ven. Zhaohui's feminist movement. The mainstream Buddhist groups, however, maintain a careful distance from them, leaving these liberal Buddhists with very little influence outside the academic circle or their small temples.

Although an exception to Taiwanese Buddhism, Ven. Zhaohui has set a historical precedence for other Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhists in supporting the idea that Buddhism can be compatible with democracy in theology, ecclesiology, and interaction with the state. Ven. Zhaohui was a disciple of Ven. Yinshun but has outgrown her master in enriching the democratic aspects of humanistic Buddhism. With a solid academic background in Buddhism, comparative religious studies, and legal studies, she provides a creative theological foundation to engage in direct dialogue on various modern issues, such as organ transplants, surrogate mothers, stem cell research, the death penalty, adultery, environmental protection, animal rights, and particularly gender equality both in society and within Buddhism (Z. Shi 1995). Her critical and sometimes theatrical comments on Buddhist chauvinism have enraged many Buddhist monks.⁵¹ In 2002, she publicly challenged the discriminatory Buddhist law, the Eight-Respect Law (*Bajingfa*), by tearing apart these eight laws written on a poster in front of a large group of news reporters. Several BAROC monks immediately motioned to rescind her status as a member of the clergy. But she did not violate any Buddhist laws, nor

did she directly receive ordination from the BAROC. The BAROC had no choice but to drop the motion.⁵²

In terms of the interaction with the state, she has been actively involved in social movements of antiabortion, animal rights, antigambling, environmental conservation, and gender equality, among others. She does so by participating in demonstrations, lobbying the legislature, and convening press conferences. She does not avoid endorsing particular candidates, regardless of their party or religious affiliation, as long as they agree with her social agenda and meet her minimum ethical standards. She appreciates the "give and take" logic of Taiwanese democracy in order to advance her social agenda.⁵³

Other potentially democratic Buddhist groups have emerged for brief periods of time throughout Taiwan's Buddhist history, but none have lasted very long. During the period of Japanese rule in Taiwan (1895–1945), there was a popular sect of the Vegetarian Religion (*Zhaijiao*), in which the laity held leadership roles in these independent Buddhist organizations. However, after Chinese Buddhists brought powerful organization and leadership to Taiwan, the Vegetarian Religion declined rapidly (J. Wang 1996; Z. Zheng 1991; Jiang 1995a: chap. 5). In 1971, a small group of activist Buddhists (numbering around three hundred) organized the pro-Taiwan independence Ten Thousand Buddha Association (*Wanfobhui*, TTBA) to engage in social protests. In the early 1990s, it established the Truth Party (*Zhenlidang*) to participate in various elections, and the association's social protest strategies became more confrontational (Z. Zheng 1994). In 1995, the government sentenced the president of TTBA, Ven. Zongsheng, to eight months in jail for his alleged instigation of a riot. Ven. Zongsheng fled to the United States, not returning to Taiwan until April 2002 when the statute of limitations on his charge expired. The TTBA adopted a very low profile after their 1995 legal trouble.⁵⁴

CHAPTER 3

Christianity

From 1971 to 1977, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT) boldly challenged the KMT martial law regime by issuing three political statements to promote electoral reforms, religious freedom, ethnic harmony, human rights, and Taiwan independence. Except for the last goal, the great majority of Taiwanese Christians nowadays would wholeheartedly support these "Christian" values. However, thirty years ago, most of the Christian brothers and sisters in other denominations, including the Catholic Church, did not rally behind the PCT's causes and decided to stay out of the dangerous controversy.

Furthermore, some chose to cast the "first stones" at the PCT by publicly accusing it and its statements as "childish and contradictory," "self-destructive," "not speaking the truth in love," "being possessed by demons," "committing indecent acts," "interfering with politics," "self-appointed prophets," and "sidetracking the church's evangelical mission."¹ The root of mutual distrust between the PCT and other Christian denominations was planted then and continues to divide the Taiwanese Christian community both politically and spiritually. Nevertheless, the close relationships between Christianity and democracy in Taiwan bear ample resemblance to that of early America as described by Alexis de Tocqueville. This is the subject this chapter turns to.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Taiwanese Christianity is different from Buddhism in terms of leadership, theology, ecclesiology, and political relations with the KMT government. First of all, the leaders of various denominations are composed of different mixes of both Chinese and Taiwanese. Ever since Canadian and Scottish Presbyterian evangelists came to Taiwan before the period of Japanese rule,