

Religious Attitudes and Beliefs of Members of New Religions in Taiwan

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Introduction

In 1999, the researchers of the project on new religions in Taiwan Academia Sinica drafted a questionnaire on religion for the Taiwan Social Change Survey Program. The questionnaire on religion in 1999 retained many questions from the previous survey in 1994. However, in the new questionnaire, the researchers devoted greater attention to the emergence of new religions and the similarities and differences among religions. Unfortunately, the sample size of members of new religions was extremely small in the survey. Since July 2000, the researchers

Religious Affiliations	Sample Size	Percentage	Religious Affiliations	Sample Size	Percentage
No religious affiliation	249	8.84	Hai Tze Tao	111	3.94
Folk Religion	574	20.37	Dari Chung	102	3.62
Chung Tai Shan	9	0.32	Wen Hua yuan	30	1.06
Dharma Drum Shan	20	0.71	Tao teh yuan	31	1.10
Fo Guang Shan	38	1.35	Chih-hui	53	1.88
Tzu Chi Merits Society	260	9.23	Soka Gakkai	138	4.90
Buddhism (unconverted))	257	9.12	Seicho-No-Ie	13	0.46
Buddhist(converted)	98	3.48	Seika Mahikari	24	1.21
Taoism	211	7.49	Reiyu-kai	14	0.50
Mixed Buddhist and Taoist	34	1.21	Rissho-Kose-Kai	27	0.96
Catholics	45	1.60	Unification Church	95	3.37
Protestantism	115	4.08	Ananda Marga	31	1.10
I-kuan Tao	34	1.21	Scientology	42	1.49
T'ienti	82	2.91	Total	2818	100.00
Yin-shin Zen	71	2.52			

got permission from new religious groups to invite their members to participate in the survey. As a result, 869 members of 16 new religious groups completed the questionnaire. In the meantime, the dataset of Taiwan Social Change Survey 1999 were re-examined to obtain data regarding 324 respondents affiliated with four new Buddhist groups. Other 1368 respondents of seven traditional religious groups also can be identified. In sum, 2569 respondents of 27 religious groups or categories and 249 non-religious believers can be analyzed for this study. Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents in the research sample who were involved in the different religions. By using survey data from the stratified systematic and quota samples, the main research purpose and strategy of analysis is to explore the differences of attitudes and behaviors of the different religious groups.

1. Research Method and Analysis

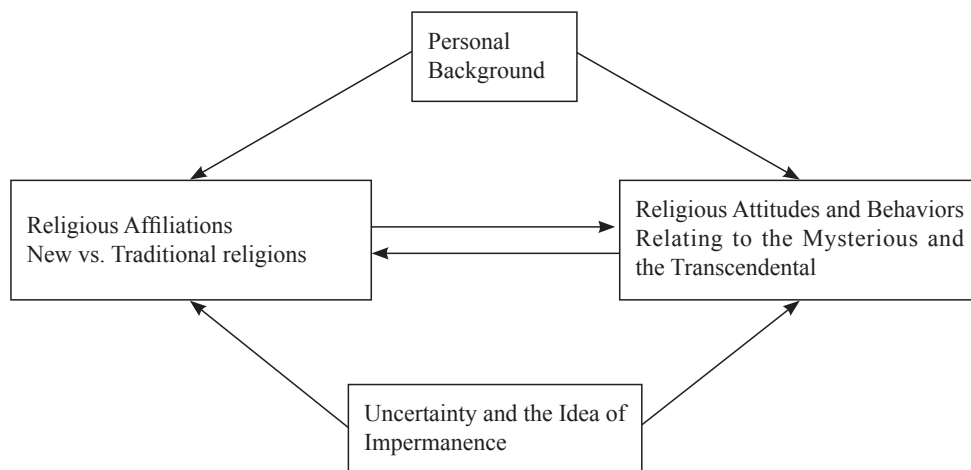
The focus of the present study is on how religious affiliations relate to religious attitudes and behaviors. On the one hand, this study examined whether different kinds of religious affiliations had a significant impact on the attitudes and behaviors of the members by comparing and contrasting the effects of new and traditional religions. On the other hand, this study looked at whether those who were converted to new religions were active seekers of religions or whether they were attracted by the mysterious aspects of religions. In other words, personal religious attitudes and behaviors are important factors to facilitate religious conversion. Taken together, religious affiliation and religious attitudes and behaviors interact in a cause and effect relationship; however, this research failed to verify this complete interactive model of cause and effect due to measurement problem, i.e., religious affiliation is a categorical variable.

Personal background is an important factor that accounts for a person's religious affiliation, especially with respect to people who convert to a new religion or those who are newly converted to a religion. Members of different religious groups tend to have significant differences in terms of occupation, education, age and place of residence. Members of new and traditional religions also tend to have different backgrounds. Many new religious groups adopt a strategy to recruit well-educated people or target urban dwellers. Furthermore,

personal factors play an important role in the emergence and development of new religions. Not only religious leaders, but also religious members have special backgrounds, which are important contributory factors to the formation of the new religious groups. Personal backgrounds also shape people’s understanding and experiences, which account for different religious attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, with respect to customary, mysterious beliefs, the influence of personal background is comparably limited. The present study focuses on beliefs in the mysterious. Because many mysterious beliefs have a long tradition in Chinese society and because many people – regardless of their backgrounds – share these beliefs, personal background is not the most determining factor to account for why people hold mysterious beliefs that are rooted in Chinese culture.

Even though member recruitment is necessary to new religions, psychological factors are important factors to activate personal conversion especially to convert to a new religion. The present study hypothesized that the sense of uncertainty is a motivational factor for religious conversion. In Taiwan, the rapid changes that the society underwent resulted in a general sense of uncertainty. After martial law was lifted in 1987, the degree of unpredictability in the social, political, and economic arenas increased. The unpredictability inherent in the social structure led to an increase in the sense of uncertainty at an individual level. It was difficult to resolve

Figure 1 Causal model for analyzing religious experiences of new religious group members in Taiwan



this sense of uncertainty – both in the social and individual levels – in a customary or rational manner, albeit people's efforts to do so. On the other hand, new religions offered promising paths to alleviate uncertainty; hence, religious conversion. Besides, many people searched for religions and occultism to resolve other kinds of uncertainties in their lives such as relating to career, marriage and familial relations, which were not often easily resolved by traditional methods.

For a long time, religious conversion or, as the Chinese say, 'retreating from the material world' has often been related to perceived human suffering and the idea of impermanence. The Chinese phrase, 'seeing through the emptiness of the mundane world,' describes people who sense the emptiness of life and incessant suffering and, subsequently, seek religious methods to resolve these feelings. When people sense the temporality of all things in life and impermanence of happiness, they may need a great deal of support in order to alleviate or inhibit their pessimism towards and contempt life. For these reasons, the awareness of temporality and the instability of happiness can facilitate religious conversion and, this is the primary reason why people believe in occultism. In other words, the sense of temporality and impermanence of happiness lead people to feel unsettled. Religious conversion allows people to feel more stable and settled. While birth, age, illness and death from cradle to grave have been important factors that gave rise to religions for a long time, distress and emptiness in the modern time can further intensify the sense of impermanence and incessant suffering.

People with higher status positions in society may experience these difficulties to a greater degree. For these reasons, this study hypothesized that the impermanence of happiness and the idea of temporality are important factors that lead to religious conversion. We further hypothesized that the attempt to resolve, dispel or, at least, alleviate the feeling of impermanence caused some people to seek religion and occultism. Because traditional religions failed to help some people resolve their difficulties, new religions and occultisms became more appealing to them. Through pain and suffering, people gained an understanding of impermanence and, thus, were more likely to exhibit religious attitudes and behaviours. Sometimes, the perceived endless suffering encouraged personal religious attitudes and behaviors. In particular, people became interested in the unexplainable and the mysterious and, subsequently, sought guidance from religion and occultism.

An important characteristic of the present explanation model lies in the cycles of cause and effect. While the variables a) religious conversion and b) religious attitudes and behaviors interact with each other, c) personal background and d) uncertainty and the sense of impermanence affected the former variables (a and b), forming two cycles. (See Figure 1) If we hypothesized that the variables caused and affected one another the way it was depicted in the above diagram, the complicated interactive process still remained unexplained in this paper. For example, the uncertainty and the sense of temporality of happiness are factors that facilitate personal religious conversion and reliance on occultism. However, after religious conversion, the sense of uncertainty and impermanence is alleviated. This relationship is difficult to be identified in a research study because we cannot follow the entire development process of this interaction.

This study examined the differences in terms of attitudes and behaviors between members of new religions and members of traditional religions as well as people who had no religion. The contrasts highlighted the characteristics of new religious members. The questionnaires consisted of many questions concerning attitudes and behaviours and we used factor analysis method to extract variables. We combined the two surveys before we carried out the necessary factor analyses. Some of the questions – particularly those that were concerned with behaviors, while others were concerned with attitudes – were in multiple choice forms. It created some difficulties for research analysis. We attempted to use factor analyses to solve the problems and they helped to identify some meaningful factors.

After computing the factor scores, researchers conducted multiple regression analyses. We used logistic regression analyses for categorical, in particular, the variables of behaviors. The independent variables of our analysis included sex, age, education, and religious affiliation. By statistically controlling sex, age, and education, we attempted to examine the effects of different religious affiliations; so that the differences between members of new and traditional religions could be highlighted. Furthermore, this study analysis examined whether sex, age and education had a significant influence on religious members. In particular, we looked at the influence of education. Modern education places a strong emphasis on secular humanism, which can weaken religious attitudes and behaviors. It is a valuable to examine the similarities and differences of religions members

through the influence of their education. Particularly, we could address a peculiar and unexplained phenomenon of why new religions have appealed to many well-educated people. In terms of the categorical of different religions, we combined the data of the two surveys and differentiated between respondents who identified themselves as members of the new Buddhist groups – Fo Guang Shan, Dharma Drum, Chung Tai Shan and Tzu Chi Merits Society. The variables of different types of religious beliefs included – nonreligious believers, folk religion, Fo Guang Shan, Dharma Drum, Chung Tai Shan, Tzu Chi Merits Society, ordinary Buddhism (which included self-claimed Buddhists who were not the members of the four new Buddhist groups and not converted), converted Buddhists not belong to the four new Buddhist groups, Taoism, Catholics, Protestants, I-kuan Tao, T'ienti Chiao, , Hai Tze Tao, Yin-xin Zen Buddhist Association, Soka Association, Reiyu-kai, Rissho-Kose-kai, Sekai Mahikari, Seicho-No-Ie, Dari Zong, Wen Hua Yuan, Tao teh yuan, Chih-hui, Unification Church, Ananda Marga, and Scientology. The nonreligious believers group was taken as a contrast group in the regression analysis. Therefore, there were 27 religious affiliation variables in total.

2. Religious Attitudes of Members of New Religions

This study examined the characteristics of the attitudes and behaviors of members of new religions. A comparison between new and traditional religious members highlighted the unique characteristics of members of new religions. Many religions were not completely uninfluenced by traditional religions and, in fact, the formers' beliefs were often related or even rooted in the latter's. However, the beliefs of new religions, indeed, had some characteristics that were distinct from traditional ones. Thus, the comparison between new and traditional religions was particularly of interest. For these reasons, we hypothesized that religious affiliations – in particular, whether a person was affiliated with a new religion or with traditional religion – have a significant influence on religious attitudes and behaviors of the believers. In fact, the differences between religious affiliations are often revealing about the differences among the attitudes and behaviors of the believers. For instance, Christianity forbids the worship of 'idols' and Christians are discouraged from worshipping their ancestors. In addition, although differences

also exist among traditional religions, i.e., folk religion, Taoism and Buddhism were different from one another; we believed that their differences were less salient than the differences between new and traditional religions.

The questionnaire consisted of groups of questions about – a) gods, ghosts, and death; b) souls, ancestors, karma, ‘yuan’,¹ debts, ‘chi’ (a form of energy) and c) the Yin-yang and five elements. Researchers conducted a factor analysis, which identified the following four factors– ‘god and souls’, ‘chi’, ‘yuan’, and ‘ancestor worship’. These four factors accounted for the above mentioned question groups and the variance explained was between 10% to 14%. The total variance explained was 50%. The question groups were also analyzed in the research from 1994 and the results were comparably stable. Overall, these factors represented deep-seated religious thoughts and attitudes in Taiwanese society. This point was illustrated by the four identified factors. The factor analyses helped to extract important elements of religious attitudes.

A closer examination revealed that the factors of religious attitudes have independently represented the various constructs of the basic concepts of religious beliefs in Taiwan. Furthermore, the statistics showed that the correlation coefficient of these four factors was around 0.29 to 0.58, which indicated that these factors highly correlated with one another. A second order factor analysis is needed to identify common factors of the five factors.

The second factor related to “Chi”, which was a common belief and practice in Taiwanese society. The Taiwan Social Change Survey in 1994 showed that most people believed in various explanations of ‘chi’. The two surveys in 1999 and 2000 had questions concerning five different ideas about ‘chi’ and the findings indicated that most respondents held these ideas. For instance, more than half of the respondents believed in the common Taiwanese saying, ‘A strong chi can protect a person from all evils.’ The results showed that around 60% to 80% of the respondents believed in various explanations of ‘chi’. In the survey on new religions, 63% of the respondents believed that a strong ‘chi’ could guard against evils; 80% of people believed that, when the earth ground’s ‘chi’ was strong

¹ Yuan is a kind of fated relationship that is dependent upon past events, which sometimes include the events that happened in a person’s past life.

grass and trees above would grow healthily. In addition, more than 90% of the respondents believed that the practice of 'Chi Gong' had healing effects and that a person's 'chi' could be strengthened. This showed that the belief in 'chi' was common in people affiliated with new religions.

Table 2 Results of factor Analysis of Religious Attitudes

Variables	Soul	Chi	Yuan	Ancestor Worship
A supreme divine being	0.850	-0.084	-0.095	-0.076
Elevated status of divinities	0.508	-0.004	0.122	0.098
Disasters reflect divine will	0.710	-0.059	-0.032	0.043
Existence of heaven and hell	0.763	-0.011	-0.042	0.054
president's divine command	0.393	0.034	0.227	0.031
No gratitude to god will have consequences	0.248	-0.022	-0.021	0.452
Effort is more important than help from god	-0.404	0.104	0.133	0.061
The god protect worshiper	0.329	-0.066	-0.026	0.440
Burning paper money is wasteful	0.134	0.072	-0.019	-0.461
Soul exists after the body dies	0.579	0.166	0.072	-0.104
Reincarnation	0.294	0.180	0.423	-0.091
Wandering Soul	0.335	0.206	0.074	0.301
A soul can possess another body	0.526	0.218	0.063	0.036
Male heir to worship ancestors is important	-0.110	0.054	0.005	0.711
Failure to worship ancestors anger the ancestors	0.010	-0.001	-0.012	0.759
Timely ancestor worship will result in protection	0.008	-0.065	0.015	0.817
Yuan is determined by one's past life	-0.019	0.029	0.821	-0.021
Failed marriage is caused by unpaid debts in the past life	-0.006	-0.094	0.895	0.012
Parents have a duty to care for their children	-0.052	-0.106	0.850	0.079
Relatives and friends are people with whom one established yuan in a past life	-0.048	0.026	0.854	-0.056
Chi Gong can cure disease	0.044	0.745	-0.063	-0.055
Chi flows in the body	-0.022	0.906	-0.059	-0.078
Exercising chi can strengthen the chi	-0.022	0.920	-0.067	-0.045
A strong chi guards against evil	-0.059	0.644	0.010	0.196
A strong chi in the ground benefits plants	-0.002	0.644	0.117	0.108
Variance explained	13.6	13.1	13.0	10.3

Table 3 Results for regression Analysis on religious attitudes

	God and soul	chi	yuan	ancestor
Sex	0.097***	0.002	0.104***	0.047**
Year of Birth	-0.043*	0.024	-0.022	-0.061**
Education	0.110***	-0.017	0.195***	0.249***
Hakka	0.016	-0.009	0.002	0.012
Mainlander	-0.013	0.111***	-0.065**	-0.059**
aborigine	-0.023	-0.036*	-0.030	-0.001
Folk religion	-0.172***	-0.058*	-0.189***	-0.159***
Ordinary Buddhist	-0.144***	-0.104***	-0.130***	-0.130***
Coverted Buddhist	-0.139***	-0.129***	-0.149***	-0.074***
Taoist	-0.161***	-0.095***	-0.152***	-0.125***
Catholics	-0.070***	0.063**	0.020	0.013
Protestant	-0.142***	0.072***	0.142***	0.174***
I-kuan Tao	-0.123***	-0.071***	-0.095***	-0.068***
Yin-hsin	-0.269***	-0.235***	-0.237***	-0.111***
Dari	-0.226***	-0.159***	-0.148***	0.067***
Chih-hui	-0.242***	-0.217***	-0.214***	0.125***
Hai-ze tao	-0.437***	-0.251***	-0.288***	-0.174***
T'ien-ti	-0.304***	-0.251***	-0.190***	-0.066***
Wen-hua Yuan	-0.160***	-0.138***	-0.131***	-0.106***
Tao teh yuan	-0.163***	-0.115***	-0.119***	-0.103***
Soka	0.035	-0.051*	-0.191***	0.123***
Mahikari	-0.247***	-0.098***	-0.183***	-0.141***
Seicho-No-Ie	-0.093***	-0.061***	-0.066***	-0.061***
Rissho-Kose kai	-0.100***	-0.061**	-0.081***	-0.073***
Reiyu-kai	-0.056***	-0.048**	-0.039*	-0.061***
Unification	-0.289***	-0.187***	-0.013	-0.203***
Scientology	-0.012	-0.083***	-0.056**	0.089***
Anada Marga	-0.103***	-0.129***	-0.114***	0.051**
Buddhist Taoist	-0.096***	-0.099***	-0.091***	-0.063***
Fo-Guang	-0.101***	-0.105***	-0.095***	-0.059**
Dharma Drum	-0.047**	-0.051**	-0.037*	-0.012
Chung-tai	-0.056***	-0.047**	-0.055**	-0.014
Tzu Chi	-0.221***	-0.205***	-0.234***	-0.112***
Sample size	2731	2731	2731	2731
Explained variance	0.376***	0.289***	0.265***	0.318***

The results of regression analyses show that members of both new and traditional religions tended to believe in various explanations of 'chi', with the exception of Catholics and Protestants. However, while Christians rejected these ideas, members of Soka Association and Rissho-Kose kai did not believe in or disbelieve in 'chi' to a significant degree. The standard regression coefficient showed that T'ienti, Yin-Xin Zen Buddhist Association, Tzu Chi Merits Society, Chih-hui, and Hai-ze tao believed strongly in 'chi' but that folk religion and Taoism did not share as strong a belief. The degree to which these religions believed in 'chi' was related to their teachings and practices. T'ienti emphasized a kind of sitting meditation while Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist and Chih-hui advocated the use of physical skills (gong fa) as a practice. On the other hand, Sekai Mahikari believed in the importance of 'light', not 'chi'. Compared to Taoism and folk religion, Tzu Chi Merits Society had a stronger belief in 'chi'. Overall, although both new and traditional religions in Taiwan believed in 'chi', in terms of the degree of this belief, new religions tended to have a stronger belief.

The third factor is concerned with yuan, a kind of fated relationship. The regression analysis showed that, while Christians tended not to believe in yuan, followers of all other religions tended to hold this belief. Perhaps, yuan is a common belief among Taiwanese people or, perhaps, the customary belief in yuan has permeated the belief systems of Eastern religions. This is why the belief in yuan is common not only in folk religion but also in Taoism and Buddhism. Local religions in Taiwan also preserved this belief. Likewise, religious members of the Japanese organizations shared this belief. A further investigation is needed to address the question of whether the belief in yuan among members of these Japanese organizations came from Japanese traditional customs or the teachings of these Japanese new religious groups. With respect to the four new Buddhist groups, members of Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi Merits Society held this belief strongly, while members of Dharma Drum and Chung Tai Shang did not hold such strong a belief. These differences could be explained by the fact that Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi were larger organizations with more members and, thus, were more likely to preserve traditional beliefs and customs. It could also be due to the fact that the sample from Dharma Drum and Chung Tai Shan was too small to reveal the actual tendency. The standard regression coefficients of Dharma Drum and Chung Tai Shan were similar to those of other non-Christian religions.

This showed that followers of new Buddhist organizations had retained these beliefs. Besides, the fact that the belief in yuan is considered a traditional belief is indicated by the findings that well-educated respondents and Christians tended not to believe in yuan because both modern education and Christianity inhibit the belief in yuan.

In terms of ancestor worship, Christians, Soka Association, Dari Zong, Chih-hui, and Scientology tended to hold negative views about it. In contrast, folk religion, Taoism, ordinary Buddhism, Tzi Chi, Hai Tze Tao, Yin Hsin, Wen Hua Yuan, Tao-the yuan, Mahikari and Unification Church stressed the importance of ancestor worship. Fo-Guang, Seicho-No-Ie, Rissho-Kose kai, Reiyu-kai, Anada Marga, I-kuan Tao, and Buddhist Taoist stressed less, while Dharma Drum and Chung Tai have no significant differences from non-believers. These results indicated that different religious teachings influenced members' attitudes towards ancestor worship. Yet, it did not reveal any difference between new and traditional religions. Finally, education tended to discourage ancestor worshipping behaviors. The standard regression coefficient indicated that education had greater influence than religion.

At present, both new religions and new age groups emphasize the idea of the magnetic field as well as belief in the soul, transcendence and supernatural powers. In the questionnaires, there was a group of 10 questions which targeted these kinds of beliefs. A factor analysis was used to isolate three underlying factors – 1) the belief in the magnetic field, 2) the attempt to improve the magnetic field, and 3) the belief that science has proven the existence of the soul. These factors accounted for 21%, 13% and 14% of the changes in the dependent variables. The first factor included not only the belief in the magnetic field but also beliefs, such as the balance of yin and yang, karma and that one can increase one's energy through practice. Results showed that these beliefs correlated with one another. At present, these beliefs are very popular in Taiwan. The second factor – the attempt to improve the magnetic field – included the belief in the relationship between the magnetic field and crystals or Buddhist bracelets. The third factor - the belief that science has proven the existence of the soul – included the belief in supernatural powers and the idea that science has proven that Chi Gong is beneficial to the health.

With respect to the first factor, the regression analysis showed that all of the new religions and Buddhist groups believed in the magnetic field, and the balance of yin and yang and karma. Among the Buddhist groups, members of Dharma Drum and Chung Tai Shan did not hold these beliefs as strongly as members of other Buddhist groups. An interesting contrast was that members of folk religion tended not to hold these beliefs strongly and that Christians tended to reject these ideas. The fact that members of new religions and Buddhism had the tendency to believe in the magnetic field and related ideas was new and unique in Taiwan. The similarities between Buddhism and the new religions suggested important social meaning. Their similarities were not only because new religious were closely related to Buddhism but these findings also suggested that contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism are more mystical oriented or are easily affiliated with new mysticism. For this reason, new age ideas, like the magnetic field, were accepted by not only new religions but also ordinary Buddhism.

Table 4 The result of factor analysis of new mysticism

	New mysticism	Wearing crystals and buddist beads	Pseudo-science
Balance between yin and yang, 陰陽平衡調和	0.706	-0.007	0.042
Belief in karma and reincarnation and reincarnation 因果輪迴	0.554	0.013	-0.031
Belief in magnetic field field 個人是小磁場	0.732	0.056	0.028
Practice increase personal energy personal energy 修行增強能量	0.706	-0.001	0.126
Crystals affect personal magnetic field 戴水晶改善磁場	0.012	0.782	0.043
Wear beads to personal magnetic	0.015	0.792	-0.028
Science prove magnetic theory	0.454	-0.013	0.396
Science support chi-kung	0.288	0.060	0.470
Science can prove the existence of soul 科學證明靈魂存在	0.004	0.011	0.686
Science can prove special power 科學證明特異功能	0.096	-0.005	0.697
Variance explained	21.4%	12.5%	13.6%

Table 5 Belief in the magnetic field and related alternative religious attitudes

	New mysticism	Wearing crystals and Buddhist beads	Beliefs in pseudoscience
Sex	0.027	0.106***	0.028
Year of Birth	0.027	-0.067**	0.025
Education	-0.032	0.008	-0.051*
Hakka	-0.014	0.011	0.009
Mainlander	0.052*	0.018	0.009
Aborigine	-0.035*	-0.028	-0.043*
Folk religion	-0.045	-0.125***	-0.039
Ordinary Buddhist	-0.096***	-0.104***	-0.076**
Coverted Buddhist	-0.118***	-0.099***	-0.096***
Taoist	-0.091***	-0.101***	-0.049*
Catholics	0.059**	0.039	0.042
Protestant	0.128***	0.094***	0.069**
I-kuan Tao	-0.050**	-0.039*	-0.038*
Yin-hsin	-0.244***	-0.216***	-0.231***
Dari	-0.179***	-0.088***	-0.182***
Chih-hui	-0.232***	-0.058**	-0.241***
Hai-ze tao	-0.263***	-0.148***	-0.243***
T'ien-ti	-0.245***	-0.085***	-0.225***
Wen-hua Yuan	-0.119***	-0.045*	-0.094***
Tao the yuan	-0.123***	-0.064**	-0.109***
Soka	-0.198***	0.037	-0.097***
Mahikari	-0.109***	-0.065**	-0.112***
Seicho-No-Ie	-0.077***	-0.054**	-0.069***
Rissho-Kose kai	-0.058**	-0.070***	-0.049**
Reiyu-kai	-0.061***	-0.045*	-0.053**
Unification	-0.206***	-0.217***	-0.243***
Scientology	-0.057**	-0.009	-0.128***
Anada Marga	-0.158***	-0.101***	-0.135***
Buddhist Taoist	-0.067***	-0.076***	-0.050**
Fo-Guang	-0.113***	-0.117***	-0.097***
Dharma Drum	-0.048**	-0.034	-0.041*
Chung-tai	-0.044**	-0.046*	-0.037*
Tzu Chi	-0.203***	-0.149***	-0.153***
Sample size	2649	2649	2649
Explained variance	0.326***	0.148***	0.277***

With respect to the second factor – the attempt to improve one’s magnetic field by wearing crystals and Buddhist bracelet – the results clearly indicated that Christians and followers of Soka Association tended not to hold these beliefs. On the other hand, members of folk religion, Taoism, T’ienti, Hai Tze Tao, Yin Hsin, Fo Guang Shan, Tze Chi, and ordinary Buddhism tended to share these beliefs more. On this measure, there seemed to be no significant difference between new religions and other religions, except Christianity and Soka Association.

The questions of whether science has proven the existence of the soul, the health benefits of Chi Gong and the working of supernatural power are, indeed, dependent on objective facts. However, many people still believe that science has validated these hypotheses. Christians tended not to maintain that these ideas were proven by science. They believed that the soul exists regardless of scientific findings. In contrast, other religious members tended to believe that science has proven these ideas. Members of new religions and new age organizations as well as astrologists and believers of occultism often used the incomplete scientific reports from the mass media to support these ideas. Many members of different Buddhist organizations believed that science has validated those ideas.

It is noteworthy to mention that respondents with high-levels of education tended to hold ideas concerning the magnetic field and the belief that science has proven the existence of the soul. While modern education places strong emphasis on secular humanism – which is concerned with rational knowledge – it leads people to become more accepting about ideas, like the magnetic field and the idea that science has proven the existence of the soul. The proposal of these new age ideas and new religious knowledge were not closely related to traditional religious thoughts, i.e., Taoism and folk religion. Thus, these ideas were more accessible to people who were well-educated and who held non-Christian religious beliefs.

A question that the media and ordinary people frequently asked about new religions was why most members of new religions had a high level of education. Because new religious thoughts consisted of many mysterious and supernatural happenings, it is commonly believed that well-educated people tend to be more rational and knowledgeable and, thus, mysterious beliefs would not appeal to them. However, many new religions targeted well-educated people for recruitment. These religions had not only ideas about the supernatural but also other ideas that

appealed to people with higher levels of education. First, we will examine whether or not members of new religions tended to be well-educated. In the two surveys, people who graduated from senior high schools or universities made up a greater proportion of new religions' members, compared to people with lower levels of education. Religions that had a greater proportion of university graduates included Unification Church, Ananda Marga, Sekai Mahikari, Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist Association, T'ienti Chiao and Chung Tai. More than 40% of the respondents had a university degree or above. Religions that had a greater proportion of senior high school graduates included Unification Church, Sekai mahikari, Scientology, Ananda Marga, Chih Hui , Tao The Yuan and Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist Association. About 90% of the respondents from these religions had graduated from senior high school. Conversely, religions that had lower proportions of senior high and university graduates included folk religion, Taoism and, Tzu Chi Merits Society. Less than 20% of the respondents had graduated from a university or above; and less than 30% of them had graduated from high school. On the other hand, members of the new Buddhist organizations – Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi, and Fa Ku Shan, and Chung Tai Shan – tended to have higher levels of education than members of ordinary Buddhist organizations, folk religion and, Taoism. The percentage of well-educated members in the new Buddhist organizations was similar to that of Christianity and other new religions.

Among the new religions, members of Hai Tze Tao and Wen Hua Yuan tended to have lower levels of education. In our study, the data for 1999 and 2000 surveys were combined for analyses. In 2000, after researchers sought the cooperation from the new religious organizations, they obtained the completed questionnaires from their members. Because of this research method, the respondents selected may have had higher levels of education. However, the findings may be reflective of the actual situation. This is indicated by the fact that the sample from new religions also consisted of respondents with low levels of education. In brief, even in a situation in which the educational level of the sample could be over-estimated, we would still be able to determine that many new religions' members, indeed, had high levels of education, or that there was a greater proportion of well-educated members in new religions. If we look at the results of the regression analyses, after we controlled variables like sex and age, the regressive coefficients of the following religions – all members of all new religious groups with Hai-ze Tao,

Wen Hua Yuan and Reiyu Kai as exceptions, have significantly higher average of education than non-religious believers. On the other hand, the believers of folk religion, Buddhism, Taoism, I-kuan Tao, and even Fo-guang have significantly lower educational attainments. In other words, if we examine the overall education levels of the members, members of new religions still had higher levels of education than members of other religions.

With respect to special religious experiences, close to one fourth of respondents experienced *deja-vu*, in which people visited a place that seemed familiar to them and yet they had never been there before. About a quarter of the respondents reported that they seemed to have received messages in dreams from far away relatives. Even though *deja-vu* and other ‘seemingly true’ experiences were not necessarily real, having such experiences revealed the respondents’ acceptance of the mysterious. In addition, about 10% of respondents experienced seeing their past or future life, gods, spirits possess another body and ghosts. About 3% of respondents saw gods and spirits possess their own body. The validity of these experiences were maintained by the respondents but could not be proved by solid evidence; however, these experiences could greatly influence personal religious beliefs. Different religious had different beliefs and opinions about these experiences, which also were reflected in their teachings.

Table 6 The result of factor analysis of mystical experiences

	Meet god and ghost	Mystical senses
Deja-yu	-0.003	0.569
Received messages from relatives far away in dreams	0.057	0.484
Saw or dreamed in the past or the next life	0.011	0.570
Saw the appearance of the gods	0.585	-0.119
Saw ghost	0.531	0.136
Possessed by god	0.461	0.114
Possessed by spirit	0.463	-0.029
Saw others possessed by spirit	0.446	0.084
Variance explained	15.6%	11.8%

Table 7 Regressive analysis of mysterious experience

	Meet god and ghost	Mystical senses	Belief in efficacy
Sex	0.058**	0.007	0.044
Year of Birth	0.056**	0.187***	-0.073***
Education	-0.098***	-0.049*	0.127***
Hakka	-0.012	-0.005	0.029
Mainlander	-0.001	-0.019	-0.078**
aborigine	0.016	0.034	0.001
Folk religion	0.024	0.019	-0.184***
Ordinary Buddhist	0.043	0.027	-0.125***
Coverted Buddhist	0.021	0.048*	-0.126***
Taoist	0.091***	0.073**	-0.153***
Catholics	-0.012	-0.013	-0.090***
Protestant	0.022	0.013	-0.149***
I-kuan Tao	0.066**	0.033	-0.086***
Yin-hsin	0.064**	0.085***	-0.289***
Dari	0.182***	0.296***	-0.194***
Chih-hui	0.128***	0.151***	-0.144***
Hai-ze tao	0.268***	0.182***	-0.349***
T'ien-ti	0.059**	0.065**	-0.287***
Wen-hua Yuan	0.024	0.008	-0.182***
Tao-teh yuan	0.158***	0.115***	-0.156***
Soka	0.003	0.029	-0.037
Mahikari	0.183***	0.095***	-0.157***
Seicho-No-Ie	0.056**	0.078***	-0.098***
Rissho-Kose kai	0.002	0.008	-0.040*
Reiyu-kai	0.002	0.014	-0.025
Unification	0.130***	0.125***	-0.330***
Scientology	0.021	0.098***	-0.039*
Anada Marga	0.041*	0.048**	-0.167***
Buddhist Taoist	0.068***	0.061**	-0.135***
Fo-Guang	0.066**	0.071***	-0.107***
Dharma Drum	0.058**	0.065***	-0.036*
Chung-tai	0.034	0.027	-0.052**
Tzu Chi	0.082**	0.120***	-0.191***
Sample size	2667	2667	2604
Explained variance	0.145***	0.167***	0.285***

The results of the factor analyses showed that the eight kinds of mysterious, religious experiences could be combined into three factors – seeing gods and ghosts, having mystical and transcendental experiences and seeing spirits possess bodies. The first factor was concerned with gods possessing a body and seeing gods and ghosts. The second factor – transcendental and mystical experiences – included *deja-vu*, the experience of receiving messages in dreams from far away relatives, as well as seeing past or future lives. The third factor included spirits possessing one's own body or another person's body.

As a result, the believers of many new religious groups have more experiences to meet gods and ghosts than non-religious significantly. Those new religious groups are Hai-tse Tao, Dari Chung, Chih Hui Fa Men, Tao-teh Yuan, I-kuan Tao, Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist, T'ienti, and Japanese new religious groups such as Sekai Mahikari, Seicho-No-Ie, and Unification Church, Anada Marga, Fo Guang, Dharma Drum and Tzu Chi. On the other hand, the believers of all the traditional religions, except Taoism, do not have significantly more experience to meet gods and ghosts than non-religious people. Even though some members of Fo Guang Shan, Dharma Drum Shan and Tzu Chi had mystical experiences, they did not share the beliefs as strongly as members of the new religious groups.

Buddhism was considered to be a godless religion, and yet Buddhists did not completely disbelieve in gods and ghosts because of the influence of folk religion. However, the findings indicated that the experience of seeing gods and ghosts was uncommon not only among members of the four new Buddhist organizations but also those of ordinary Buddhism. Soka Association was basically a Japanese Buddhist organization. It was a Buddhist organization and, therefore, did not emphasize gods and ghosts. Christians believed in God, but their idea of God was different from the gods with which the questionnaires were concerned. Therefore, not many of the Christians had experienced seeing gods or ghosts.

Transcendental experiences are more or less unexplainable. Many new religions emphasized miraculous experiences, which were related to transcendental experiences. This was true not only in Taiwan but also in Japan, Europe and North America. The author could not find an adequate terminology to describe these experiences and, thus, adopted the new age terms, 'transcendental' and 'mystical' experiences. In our study, members of Deil Jong, the former Sung Chi

Li Xianxian Society tended to have more transcendental experiences. This religion characteristically focused on emitting light from bodies and dividing bodies. Members of Chih Hui and Hai Tze Tao were second to those of Deil Jong. Both religions emphasized gods and spirits in promoting their religions, and they often mentioned mysterious and unexplainable experiences. Furthermore, members of the four new Buddhist groups, except Chung Tai Shan, had mystical experiences. However, they did not hold these beliefs as strongly as other religious members. Because members of the four Buddhist organizations did not significantly believe in gods and spirits or spirits possessing bodies, their greater tendency to have transcendental experiences was a topic worth focusing on. The members of these Buddhist groups were similar in terms of their mystical experiences. This was, perhaps, because they were influenced by traditional, mysterious beliefs in Taiwan. They differed from Taoism in that Taoists tended to have experiences seeing gods or ghosts and spirits possessing bodies.

There is a set of questions in the questionnaire regarding people's beliefs in efficacy of gods and Buddha. These three questions form a common factor. The factor loadings of these three questions are between .56 and .65, and the variance explained is 37.8%. We assign the name of the factor to believe efficacy.

The result of multiple regression analysis shows that the members of the new religious groups believe efficacy of gods and Buddha more than the members of other religious groups. However, the believers of all religions, except three Japanese Nichiren Buddhist groups, i.e., Soka, Reiyu-kai, and Risso-kose Kai, believe efficacy of gods and Buddha more or less.

In sum, the members of the new religious groups tend to have more mystical experiences than the believers of the traditional religions. Almost the believers of all the traditional religions, except those of Taoism, show no significant difference from non-religious people. With regards to the beliefs with efficacy of gods and Buddha, the members of the new religious groups are stronger than other religious believers. In order to detecting the uniqueness of the new religious followers, we reorganized 28 religious groups into 13 categories: non-religious, folk religion, Buddhism and Taoism, Christianity, I-kuan Tao, New religions, Wen-hua Yuan and Tao-teh Yuan, Japanese Buddhism, Unification Church, Scientology, Anada Marga, New Buddhism.

Using new categories of the religious groups as a set of independent variables, we conduct multiple regression analysis again to show the uniqueness of new religious members in terms of all religious attitudes, beliefs, and mystical experiences. As showing in Table 8, the regression coefficients of the new religion category is much larger than the coefficients of other religion categories. The only exception is the effect on ancestor worship. Thus, we can conclude that the members of Taiwanese new religious groups tend to have stronger attitudes toward god and soul, chi, yuan, new mystical experiences, and efficacy of gods and Buddha.

Table 8 The results of regression analyses by re-classified the category of religious groups (the regression coefficients of sex, birth year, education, and ethnicity are not reported)

	God and soul	chi	yuan	Ancestor	New mysticism	Wearing crystals	Belief in pseudo-Discience	Meet god and ghost	Mystical sense	Belief in efficacy
Folk religion	-0.166	-0.057	-0.189	-0.150	-0.045	-0.121	-0.039	0.024	0.016	-0.178
Buddhism and Toism	-0.245	-0.182	-0.240	-0.188	-0.164	-0.168	-0.118	0.099	0.086	-0.232
Chritianity	-0.155	0.091	0.146	0.182	0.143	0.107	0.081	0.015	0.009	-0.170
I-kuan Tao	-0.122	-0.070	-0.098	-0.069	-0.050	-0.038	-0.037	0.067	0.033	-0.085
New religions	-0.628	-0.463	-0.452	-0.078	-0.487	-0.244	-0.466	0.309	0.333	-0.540
Wen-hua and Tao-teh	-0.227	-0.176	-0.180	-0.145	-0.171	-0.071	-0.142	0.131	0.084	-0.237
Japanese religions	-0.129	-0.117	-0.275	-0.004	-0.246	-0.026	-0.158	0.091	0.080	-0.128
Unification Church	-0.289	-0.188	-0.008	-0.200	-0.207	-0.219	-0.245	0.127	0.124	-0.329
Scientology	-0.011	-0.084	-0.054	0.090	-0.057	-0.010	-0.128	0.018	0.097	-0.038
Anada Marga	-0.101	-0.128	-0.111	0.055	-0.158	-0.100	-0.135	0.041	0.048	-0.166
New Buddhism	-0.120	-0.122	-0.113	-0.054	-0.126	-0.119	-0.108	0.094	0.097	-0.118
Tze chi	-0.220	-0.203	-0.238	-0.110	-0.204	-0.143	-0.151	0.084	0.118	-0.190

4. Behaviors of Members of New Religions

In examining behaviors of members of new religions, we selected two sets of behavioral variables. The first set was concerned with practices that were prescribed by religions, i.e. sitting meditation, calling ‘Amitabha’ or Buddha’s name aloud as an expression of devotion, praying, saying charms, reading religious texts, spiritual practices and the practice of ‘chi’. The second set of behavioral variables were related to occultism, including seeking services such as, geomancy, fortune telling, or An Tai Sui², and performing the ritual of lighting Kuang Ming Teng.³

(1) Religious Practices

Sitting meditation was emphasized by many new religions, although some traditional religions also prescribed such behavior. Our surveys revealed that Soka Association, Hai Tze Tao, Sekai Mahikari did not advocate sitting meditation. Likewise, very few members of folk religion, Taoism and Christianity practiced sitting meditation. Conversely, according to the teachings of Yin Hsin and T’ienti, sitting mediation was the key practice for development; thus, most of their members had such behaviors. In terms of Buddhism, members of Tzu Chi and traditional Buddhism did not practice sitting meditation as often as the other three new Buddhist organizations. Some members of Deil Jong, Chih Hui and Wen Hua Yuan practiced sitting meditation; however, this behavior was not very common and seemed to be unrelated to their religions. Nonetheless, these findings suggested that those new religions did not disapprove of the practice of sitting meditation. In addition, respondents who were more educated were more likely to practice sitting meditation.

Calling out ‘Amitabha’ or Buddha’s name was primarily a method of practice used by Buddhists. With the exception of Soka Association, all Buddhist organizations had this practice. Some members of folk religion, Taoism and Wen Hua Yuan employed this method of practice. It is noteworthy that Yin Hsin did not adopt this method. With respect to saying charms, only members of Buddhist

2One needs to appease the deity if one’s zodiac signs was in conflict with Tai Sui by performing rituals to seek his protection.

3This relates to lighting the luminary, by which good fortune is ensured in the coming year.

Table 9 Frequencies of religious practice behaviors of the members of various religious groups

	Sitting Meditation	Calling Out Buddha's Name	Saying Charms	Practicing Chi	Reading Religious Texts	Praying	Other Spiritual Practices	none
Non-religious	3	1	0	1	1	2	0	93
Folk religion	2	4	1	1	2	0	0	91
Ordinary Buddhist	6	10	2	2	8	2	0	82
Covert Buddhist	20	39	11	6	21	11	7	46
Taoist	4	6	2	0	3	0	1	86
Catholics	0	0	0	0	7	76	0	22
Protestant	1	0	0	1	44	77	5	12
I-kuan Tao	6	12	6	6	18	3	6	65
Yin-hsin	90	11	6	10	10	24	11	3
Dari	13	2	3	0	9	45	22	20
Chih-hui	17	0	0	25	6	8	85	0
Hai-ze tao	1	8	14	1	67	65	9	5
T'ien-ti	88	22	13	11	48	68	6	4
Wen-hua Yuan	13	13	3	0	27	47	13	27
Tao the yuan	35	3	16	13	45	3	10	16
Soka	0	4	0	1	94	2	1	4
Mahikari	3	3	0	0	3	35	68	9
Seicho-No-Ie	38	31	8	8	85	62	15	0
Rissho-Kose kai	0	70	0	0	78	33	0	0
Reiyu-kai	7	29	0	0	64	29	7	14
Unification	4	4	1	2	66	88	35	2
Scientology	2	2	2	2	5	2	43	55
Anada Marga	97	6	71	19	29	6	13	3
Buddhist Taoist	6	12	6	3	6	0	6	82
Fo-Guang	16	32	13	0	21	13	3	47
Dharma Drum	20	40	20	5	25	10	10	20
Chung-tai	33	44	33	11	44	11	0	33
Tzu Chi	15	29	12	4	21	7	8	55

organizations, T'ienti and Hai Tze Tao had such a practice. With respect to the practice of chi, members of Chung Tai Shan, Fo Guang Shan, T'ienti and Chih Hui employed this method. While the practice of chi was emphasized by Anada Marga and Chih Hui, the question of whether this practice was focused on the Buddhist organizations needs to be examined further.

In terms of reading religious texts, the results clearly indicated that members of folk religion, Taoism, Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist and Sekai Mahikari did not exhibit such behavior. Followers of folk religion did not use texts, but they worshipped gods and ancestors. Taoists were similar to members of folk religion. Only some Taoist priests read charms and carried out religious rituals. Ordinary followers did not usually read texts. Reading religious texts was a behavioral measure that allowed us to distinguish different religions. The R-square is as high as .4084. On the other hand, members who prayed and expressed their gratefulness or repentance included Christians and members of T'ienti, Hai Tze Tao, Yin Hsin Zen, Sekai Mahikari, Deil Jong and Wen Hua Yuan. These types of behaviors provided an effective measure for differentiating between religions. The regression coefficient of the dummy variable was as high as .459. Finally, members of Deil Jong and Wen Hua Yuan clearly had other kinds of spiritual practices.

The research findings allowed us to assess different kinds of religious behavior based on different religions. Our focus here was on new religions. Generally speaking, there were two important trends in new religions. First, new religions emphasized simplicity in terms of their practices. For instance, Sekai Mahikari only focused on praying and the manipulation of divine light; Soka Association on reading religious texts aloud; Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist on sitting meditation. Second, some new religions, like T'ienti and Hai Tze Tao, combined the teachings of Christianity with Buddhist practices. Finally, it is important to point out that education had an influence on five out of the seven types of behaviors – sitting meditation, calling out Buddha's name, saying charms, reading religious text and the practice of chi. In other words, education influenced all behavioral factors, except praying and other spiritual practices. After controlling the religious variables, education still had such influence. This showed that, regardless of religious affiliation, the higher the level of education people had, the more likely they were to exhibit the 'religious' behaviors. Sitting meditation was not required

by religions; reading religious text was not only because of religions; and wearing Buddhist bracelet did not always indicate a belief in Buddhism. However, because people with more education tended to have related 'religious' behaviors, they had a greater potential to accept religious beliefs, in particular, Buddhist and new religion's beliefs. This is because the behaviors in question tended to be associated these two kinds of religions.

(2) Ritual and Occult Behaviors

Over ninety percent of members of Soka Association, Buddhist Taoism, Taoism, folk religion, Seicho-No-Ie, Unification Church, Tzu Chi, Wen-hua Yuan, and Tao-the Yuan practice ritual to worship ancestors. While more than eighty percent of the members of ordinary Buddhism, Sekai Mahikari, Scientology, Yin-hsin Zen, Hai-tse Tao, T'ien-ti Chiao, and Fo-Guang worship ancestors too, at least seventy percent of the members of other religious groups have such ritual behaviour. In actual, only Christians were clearly less likely to have these practices. Ancestor worship was common among members of new and traditional religions. It is worth noting that this behavior was common even among Christians. Catholics allowed ancestor worship and organized ancestor worship activities. About 44% of Catholics worshipped ancestors, and about 38% of Protestants worshipped ancestors. It is obvious that the tradition of ancestor worship remained strong in the Taiwan. Furthermore, in terms of education, the higher the education people had, the less likely they would worship ancestors. Nonetheless, about 82% of the well-educated individuals, i.e. university graduates, worshiped ancestors.

In order to detect the influence of folk religion on the members of Buddhist and new religious groups, we examine whether the respondents worship the god of earth, matsu, and Kuangong. The findings showed that the chances of Christians, and members of Soka Association, Deil Jong, Chih Hui, Unification Church, Ananda Marga, Scientology, Yin-hsin Zen, and T'ien-ti Chiao worshipping the God of Earth, Matsu, and Kuan Gong were low. The aforementioned religions, except Christianity, were new religions. These findings were meaningful. We could see that new religions tended to depart further from traditional folk religion. However, the chances of members of Hai Tze Tao and Sekai Mahikari worshipping these divinities were relatively high. Hai Tze Tao was deeply influenced by folk religion. On the other hand, the question as to whether or not Mahikari's concerns

Table 10 Frequencies of ritual and occult behaviors of the members of various religious groups

	Ance- Wor-ship	Wor-ship the God of Earth	Seeking Geo-man- cy Ser- vices	Geo-Man- cy For Home	Geo- Man- cy For Office	Geo- Man- cy For Decease	Geo- Man- cy For Ancestral Tombs	Fortune Telling	An Tai Sui	Kuang Ming Teng	Safety Charm	Services for Fearful Infants
Non-religious	78	51	21	20	8	41	53	30	33	23	18	12
Folk religion	92	82	29	31	7	60	67	33	56	48	28	20
Ordinary Buddhist	89	82	30	30	7	57	65	39	50	45	30	20
Coverted Buddhist	84	70	20	24	11	51	58	46	44	48	29	10
Taoist	94	89	40	31	11	64	71	43	57	51	34	21
Catholics	44	11	22	22	4	11	7	20	4	4	7	4
Protestant	38	4	6	6	3	14	14	26	3	2	0	2
I-kuan Tao	94	94	24	21	0	59	68	38	50	50	44	32
Yin-hsin	87	32	24	25	4	34	45	52	23	10	7	1
Dari	76	15	17	21	4	34	43	37	3	3	1	1
Chih-hui	70	11	23	38	6	45	53	53	6	2	2	0
Hai-ze tao	87	86	17	28	11	34	47	43	50	85	54	28
T'ien-ti	86	45	29	38	9	38	51	48	11	16	10	2
Wen-hua	90	97	13	20	10	47	67	53	73	87	53	17
Tao- teh	90	77	39	26	13	39	65	52	48	38	39	13
Soka	97	2	4	6	0	16	25	20	1	1	1	1
Mahikari	88	68	26	24	9	44	65	65	44	18	21	0
Seicho-NoIe	92	62	15	8	0	62	62	46	31	15	23	0
Rissho-Kose kai	48	44	4	7	4	11	22	7	11	22	4	4
Reiyu-kai	71	57	7	7	0	36	36	21	21	14	14	14
Unification	91	25	28	33	5	59	64	27	14	9	8	2
Scientology	88	29	31	26	7	52	64	48	10	7	5	0
Anada Marga	68	26	23	26	6	35	42	42	16	10	3	6
Buddhist Taoist	97	100	41	47	9	53	76	53	53	44	35	32
Fo-Guang	84	87	39	42	8	58	68	47	61	55	29	21
Dharma Drum	75	70	25	30	0	30	70	50	25	30	20	10
Chung-tai	78	78	56	22	11	67	67	56	56	44	44	33
Tzu Chi	90	78	29	33	13	55	67	53	59	60	31	24

with curing disease through the manipulation of light tended not to inhibit other religious behaviors warranted further examination. Other religions, i.e., folk religion, Taoism, ordinary Buddhism as well as the new Buddhist organizations, had a high proportion of members who worshipped the aforementioned divinities, more than 70%. This indicated that not only were Buddhism, Taoism, and folk religion interwoven, but also members of new Buddhist organizations, indeed, maintained folk religious views and behaviors. Furthermore, 7% of Christians paid reverence to these popularly worshipped divinities. Taken together, new religions had general tendency to be removed from the influence from traditional folk religion, whereas traditional religions and new Buddhist organizations remained closely related to traditional folk religion. Higher levels of education significantly reduced these types of worshipping behaviors, albeit almost half of the people with university degrees worshipped these divinities.

Another group of questions was concerned with geomancy. This included questions about whether one had sought geomancy services in the past five years and whether one had sought geomancy services for the home, the office, the bones of deceased relatives and ancestral tombs. A limited number of respondents sought office geomancy services, and the variances of the dependent variables are too small to show the effects of religions, education, sex and age. The effects of the independent variables on people seeking specific kinds of geomancy services are also very limited. However, the probability of members of traditional religions – folk religion, Taoism, and ordinary Buddhism – seeking these services were relatively high. The probability of new Buddhist members seeking services was just as high, and it was not significantly higher than the chance of people without religions seeking these services. The chance for Christianity and Soka Association was significantly low. With respect to the influence of modern education, the chance of well-educated people seeking geomancy services for ancestral tombs and the bones of deceased relatives was low; however, education did not significantly affect the chance of people seeking geomancy services for the home or office.

With respect to fortune telling, the chance of members of traditional religions and new Buddhist organizations seeking services was relatively high; and yet, the chance of members of folk religious seeking these services was not particularly high. Christians and Soka members also maintain their disbelief in occultism. The

probability of them seeking fortune telling is significantly lower. According to their own report, over 50% of the members of Sekai Mahikari, Chung-tai, Tzu-chi, Buddhist Taoist, Yin-hsin Zen, Chih-hui, Wen-hua, Tao-the, and Dharma Drum have sought the service of fortune-telling. Close to 50% of the members of T'ien-ti, Fo-goung, Scientology claim that they have sought such services. In brief, the chance of people seeking fortune telling services from new and traditional religions, except Christianity and Soka Association, was relatively high.

Overall, the three popular religious behaviors in Taiwan – seeking An Tai Sui services, performing the ritual of Kuang Ming Teng, and wearing safety charms – were similarly related to different kinds of religions. The chance of members of traditional religions and new Buddhist organizations exhibiting these behaviors was relatively high. The findings for Chung Tai Shan and Fa Ku Shan were slightly different. The chance of their members engaging in some behaviors was lower. However, the probability of members of Tzu Chi, Fo Guang Shan, and ordinary Buddhism engaging in engaging in some of the aforementioned behaviors was relatively high. At least, An Tai Shui is not a Buddhist ritual. This indicated that, in Taiwan, Buddhism was influenced by traditional, customary beliefs in Chinese society. The chance of Christians and members of Soka Association engaging in these behaviors was significantly low. In fact, none of the Soka members exhibited these behaviors. Members of new religious organizations were unlikely to have these behaviors, except Hai Tze Tao and Wen Hua Yuan. Education was not shown to have significant effects on these behaviors. Overall, these popular, traditional behaviors were adopted by traditional religions. Hai Tze Tao and Wen Hua Yuan were closely related to traditional religions. This was indicated by the religious behaviors in question. These three kinds of behaviors were not only rituals, but they were significant in terms of their purpose – asking for safety from divinities of folk religion. The Kuang Ming Teng service was provided in both Buddhist and folk religion's temples. The fact that people carried out these practices in temples gave religious significance to such practices. Based on different religious teachings, some new religions, especially those that had new methods of practice, did not encourage members to perform these types of behaviors. On the other hand, other new religions allowed these behaviors, because of their close relationship with traditional religions. In other words, members' attitudes varied because of their religious affiliations.

Finally, very few members of new religions and Japanese religions sought shou-ching, i.e. the service for pacifying frighten infants. However, New the members of the new Buddhist groups tend to have quite similar possibility to seek such services as the traditional religious followers. In sum, the members of new religious group tend to seek less services such as an tai shui, lighting kuang ming teng and pacifying frighten infants, but they have very similar possibility to seek many other services of occultism.

5. Impermanence, uncertainty and new religious believers

In this study, we hypothesized that impermanence, uncertainty at a personal and social structural level and a personal sense of sorrow/happiness are important factors facilitating religious conversion. Thus, the study designed a set of questions that measured the sense of impermanence, uncertainty and sorrow/joy. Using factor analysis, two factors are found from the items regarding personal impermanence and uncertainty. Namely, these two factors are impermanence and sorrow/joy. The variance explained by these two factors is about 41%. Other two factors are extracted from the scale about sense of structural uncertainty. The first factor is related to social uncertainty, and the second one is related to political and economical uncertainty. The variance explained by these factors is 23%.

Using the probability to join religious group as dependent variable, the multinomial logistic regression analysis shows that impermanence, sorrow/joy, social and political-economical uncertainty are not related to the membership of the traditional religions and four new Buddhist groups. On the opposite, three or four factors are significantly related to the membership of the new religious groups, Japanese religious groups, Unification Church, Scientology, and Ananda Marga (Table 12). Thus, our hypothesis which supposes impermanence and uncertainty are important causes for people to join new religious groups are supported by the evidence from survey.

Taken together, the sense of uncertainty and impermanence are significantly related to participation in new religions. Furthermore, sense of uncertainty and impermanence are found to be related the membership of new religion differently. In terms of odds ratio, the odds ratios of impermanence and political-economical uncertainty are smaller than 1, on the other hand, the odds ratios of sorrow/joy

and social uncertainty are all larger than 1. These consistent results imply that the different social psychological factors affect people's participation into new religious groups differently. In actual, when people feel impermanence and political economical uncertainty, they tend to participate into new religious groups more actively. But if people feel more sorrow than joy in their life and social uncertainty, they join the new religious groups significantly less.

Table 11-1 Result of factor analysis of the measurement of personal uncertainty and sense of impermanence

	Impermanence	Sorrow/joy
Accidents happen anytime; 人常說天有不測風雲，常擔心突遭不幸	0.522	0.045
Feel verylonly	0.655	-0.060
Feel many things are uncertain	0.738	-0.021
feel personal future is uncertain 覺得自己未來並不確定	0.459	0.199
More sorrow less joy in life	-0.007	0.676
Lots of unfortune in life	0.063	0.609
The end life is only vanity 相信人生刊頭總是空虛一場	-0.076	0.600
Variance explained	0.210	0.196

Table 11-2 Result of factor analysis of sense of structural uncertainty

	social uncertainty	Political-economical uncertainty
Economic situation is unstable	0.124	0.438
Gov't policy is often changing	0.263	0.413
Social security is deteriorating	0.462	0.154
Social values constantly changing	0.422	0.183
Variance explained	0.119	0.105

After analyzing the data of Taiwan Social Change Survey of 1999 and New Religious Believers Survey, we find that the religious attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the members of the new religious groups are significantly different from the members of traditional religions in Taiwan. In actual, the members of

the new religious groups believe “god and soul”, “chi”, and “yuan” more strongly than the traditional religious followers, although there is no difference for ancestor worship between the new and traditional religious groups. In addition, the members of new religious groups also believe more strongly in new mysticism, the efficacy for wearing crystals and Buddhist beads, and pseudoscience of extraordinary phenomena. They also have more mystical experiences in terms of meeting god and ghost, mystical sense, and beliefs in efficacy. Finally, their senses of uncertainty, impermanence, sorrow/joy are also different from the members of traditional religions. Then, the further question of this study is whether the attendance of new religious groups reinforcing their religious attitudes and beliefs in mysticism or their religious attitude and beliefs lead them to join the new religious groups.

Table 12 Differences of sense of uncertainty and impermanence among various religious groups (the result of multiple logistic analysis)

	Folk religion	Buddhism and Taoism	Christianity	I-kuan Tao	New religion	Wen-hua & Tao-teh
Education	0.646***	0.746***	0.916	0.668	1.186	1.165
Impermanence	0.825	1.143	0.788	1.702	0.657*	0.618
Sorrow/joy	1.242	0.943	1.524	0.497*	1.590*	1.651
Social certainty	2.916	1.983	1.081	1.418	40.425***	38.191**
Political-economical certainty	0.314	0.443	0.751	1.039	0.039***	0.024**
	Japanese Buddhism	Unification Church	Scientology	Anada Marga	New Buddhism	Tze-chi
	1.416***	2.216***	1.226	2.010**	1.059	1.010
Impermanence	0.471***	0.421*	0.995	0.276**	0.760	1.023
Sorrow/joy	3.919***	1.835	11.098**	4.248**	0.787	0.983
Social certainty	77***	341***	2079***	28426***	4.929	2.793
Political-economical certainty	0.014***	0.003***	0.001***	0.000***	0.244	0.376

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Fortunately, in the survey questionnaire, there is a question asking the respondents the time length they have participated the religious groups. If their

attitudes and beliefs change substantially after they join the new religious groups, then the time length should be related to the strength of the religious attitudes and beliefs. As shown in Table 13, the time length is significantly related to the new religious believers' attitudes and beliefs

When we calculate simple regression coefficients using time length of conversion as regressor and various attitudes and beliefs as dependent variable, then we find that all the standardized regression coefficients are significant. Furthermore, the coefficients are still significant even we control respondents' background variables such as sex, birth year, ethnicity, and education. Finally, after we add categories of religions as regressors in the equations, the attitudes toward god and spirit, new mysticism, pseudoscience, mystical senses, and efficacy still significantly are affected by the time length of conversion. The net effects of time length of conversion on various religious attitudes show the influence of new religions.

With regards to religious practices, the study figures out that while over eighty percents of the believers of traditional religions such as folk religion, Taoist, unconverted Buddhist, and Buddhist Taoist do not engage any kind religious practice, most of the followers of new religions do engage various religious practices such as meditation, pray, reading scriptures. All these religious practices were learned after the respondents joined the new religious groups. Thus, religious practice behaviours were affected by religious groups and not the opposite. In other words, it is unlikely that people engaged religious practice first and then they participated into new religious groups.

The causal relation between sense of impermanence and uncertainty and attitudes and beliefs of the members of the new religious groups are not clear since the survey data are cross-sectional. Again, we use the time length of conversion as a variable to test the causality. As shown in Table 14, in the simple regression analysis, the indicators of impermanence and political-economical uncertainty are negatively related to the time variable significantly. On the other hand, senses of sorrow/joy and social uncertainty are positively related to the time variable. However, after we control background variables and religious categories, in the multiple regression analysis, only impermanence and sense of sorrow/joy are related to the time variable significantly. The results imply that the new religious

groups reinforce their members' impermanence and reduce their members' sense of sorrow over joy. Unfortunately, we still can not detect the members' social psychological situation before their conversion to the new religions. The causal relation might be detect and examined by using case history study in the future.

Table 13 Correlation between time lengths of conversion and religious attitudes

	God and spirit	chi	yuan	New mysti-cism	Wearing crys-tals	Belief in pseudo-science	Meet god & ghost	Mysti-cal sense	Belief in effi- cacy
Beta(1)	-.285***	-.260***	-.086***	-.323***	-.121***	-.349***	.169***	.298***	-.237***
Beta(2)	-.365***	-.280***	-.213***	-.345***	-.097***	-.352***	-.317***	.233***	.289***
Beta(3)	-.097***	-.033	-.029	-.069*	-.024	-.085**	.043	.090**	-.083**

Beta(1) is simple regression coefficient

Beta(2) is regression coefficients calculated from multiple regression analysis including sex, age, education and time length of conversion as regressors.

Beta(3) is regression coefficients calculated from multiple regression analysis including sex, age, education, time length of conversion as regressor and categories of religious groups as regressors.

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Table 14 Correlation between time length of conversion and sense of uncertainty and impermanence

	impermanence	Sorrow/joy	Social uncertainty	Politico-economic uncertainty	Sample size
Beta(1)	-.139***	.106***	-.121***	.096***	2371
Beta(2)	-.074***	.001	-.136***	-.100***	2388
Beta(3)	-.147***	.080***	-.062	-.062	2305

Beta(1) is simple regression coefficient

Beta(2) is regression coefficients calculated from multiple regression analysis including sex, age, education and time length of conversion as regressors.

Beta(3) is regression coefficients calculated from multiple regression analysis including sex, age, education, time length of conversion as regressor and categories of religious groups as regressors.

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Appendix

Introduction of the New Religious Groups

The present study gathered data from the members of eight new religions with the help of the religious organizations. The following will briefly introduce these eight religions. The four new Buddhist groups identified in the research on *Social Change in Taiwan* (1999) will not be elaborated upon because they are considerably well-known in Taiwan.

T'ienti (The Lord of the Universe Church): T'ienti was founded by Lee Yu-chieh, who was a Master in the T'iente religious group. According to T'ienti, human beings could practice and develop into gods. When human beings developed into become a true self, he or she would be a 'god in the mortal world'. This religion adopted T'iente's 'twenty words of truth' as its fundamentals – loyalty, forgiveness, incorruptibility, insight, virtue, rectitude, justice, trustworthiness, forbearance, fairness, philanthropy, filial piety, benevolence, compassion, awareness, moderation and fidelity, frugality, truthfulness, propriety and harmony. Religious members needed to live by these words genuinely and earnestly. In addition, T'ienti was particularly concerned about nuclear warfare. Members often gathered at ceremonies and prayed to the Lord for human beings to be spared from nuclear wars. Another concern of the T'ienti was the Unification of China; this focus also came from a T'iente religious organization. Members of this religion practiced a kind of traditional Chinese sitting meditation. It emphasized not only healing one's body and lengthening one's life but also forming a kind of union or oneness, with the universe. In the mid-1980s, T'ienti established itself in Taiwan. There were about 17 branches and 31 halls in Taiwan.

Soka Association: Soka of Taiwan was legally founded in 1994. Before its establishment, the Chin-Shuan Cultural-Educational Foundation was established in 1988. In 1990, the Taiwan Nichiren Shoshu was founded. The development of Soka had different stages. Because of pressure from the government, Soka underwent many changes. Soka originated in Japan and belonged to the Nichiren Shoshu religious organization. People in Taiwan were involved in this organization in the early 1960s. However, the Taiwanese government forced this organization to dissolve and it, subsequently, cut off contact with the Japanese groups for 27

years. After martial law was lifted in 1987, Soka resumed its public activities. Soka belonged to the Nichiren Shoshu group in Japan, which believed in the religion that was set up by the High Priest Nichen Abe. Mainly, they realized Saddharmapundarika Sutra is the essential of SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA and that Saddharmapundarika Sutra had the ability to lead people to become Buddha. The content of the religious practices consisted of the three secret methods created by Nichen Abe – respecting the high priest and the altar and following the guidelines and areas of focus of the religion. In other words, religious members followed Nichen Abe, chanted Lotus Sutra and participated in altar rituals. This religious organization was divided into eight levels. There were one headquarter, four urban centers and twelve district branches. Each district had two or three main offices, each of which had two or three branches. There were four groups in each district, and each group had four to five subgroups, which were consisted of four to five people. In Taiwan, there were around twelve meeting centers, two cultural centres and sixteen lecture halls. There were more than 30 thousands members in Taiwan.

Hai Tze Tao: This religion was founded in Taipei in 1984. At the beginning, the religious gatherings were held at the home of the founder, Lin Ji Xiong. In 1987, the gathering moved to Yong Kang Street, in which part of Taipei? and the palace of Hsuan Chi was established, which was named Husan Chi Tsung Kung. In 1990, the main branch of Tian Zhen Hai-Tze Tao was founded. Hai Tze Tao believed in the heavenly father, Husan Husan Sheng Jen, who was the creator of human beings. Lin claimed to be the eldest son of Husan Husan Sheng Jen. Lin's son and daughter were the 'masters of the sun and the moon'. The son was named master Yuan Zhi, while the daughter was master Yuan Hui. In 1984, the masters of the sun and the moon delivered a message from heavens and bestowed their father the title of the Chief Master. Hai Tze Tao could have originated in an older religion, I-kuan Tao. Like, I-kuan Tao, Hai Tze Tao stressed that a life cycle of the world had reached its end and the Tao of this religion needed be passed to a new master. The latter religion (Hai Tze) believed that the heavenly father sent a goddess, Wu Ji, to create I-kuan Tao and save all sentient beings with mercy. However, the founder of I-kuan Tao passed away before the mission was accomplished. Thus, the heavenly father had his own son descend to save all beings. Hai Tze Tao also claimed to be able cure disease by directing one's

energy by the consciousness. This religion received Buddhist teachings with the method of Planchette⁴ and retained the teachings from Gui Yuan classics. Hai Tze Tao had four public gathering halls and thirty family halls. It is reported that a few thousands members frequently participated in religious gatherings, but the members claimed that there were more than ten thousands members. Hai Tze Tao had close correspondence with religious organizations in Japan and Korea.

Sekai Mahikari (Divine Light Organization): Around 1986, the Japanese religion, Sekai Mahikari, arrived in Taiwan. Followers of Mahikari set up a few Bodhimandalas in Taipei city. In the next four or five years, it established some shrines in Tai Chung. Around 1994, it had spread to Feng Lin in Hua Lian County. At that time, there were priests from Japan promoting the religion in Kao Hsung City. In 1996, Sekai Mahikari Foundation was established in Taiwan. In terms of religious beliefs, Mahikari held a belief in god. For this religion, the world consisted of three realms –god, human beings and spirits. The three realms were interconnected and a god ruled over these realms. Moreover, Mahikari believed that there were three kinds of cells – spiritual body, astral body and physical body. The spiritual cells consisted of soul and the main soul. These spiritual cells were located in the pineal gland. The resentment part of the soul sought revenge, and it blinded the soul and caused illness in people. The use of divine light could purify the spiritual cells. For these reasons, holy healers of Mahikari helped to cleanse human bodies and, thus, cured disease. Holy healers were members who had been trained to connect with god and manipulate light for purification and trained to use their palms to cleanse other people. For these reasons, many members have had the experience of being cured. The Mahikaris had a large Bodhimandala in Tai Chung and a middle-sized Bodhimandala in Taipei. Also, five small Bodhimandalas were located in T'ien Mu, Ping dong, Sha Lu, Bing-dong, Gao Xiong and Feng Lin. There were around 1000 followers of Mahikari in Taiwan.

Yin Hsin Zen Buddhist Association: Originally, this religious group was called Yin Hsin Zen Buddhism. Later it officially changed its name to Taiwan Zen Buddhist Association. Yin Hsin was founded by Huang Ming-liang who advocated

⁴Chinese Planchette involved a sand table on which an invoked spirit is supposed to spell out a message.

that a person could become a Buddha within a single lifetime. Huang retreated to the mountain to practice Tao in 1980, according to Huang. At the end of the retreat, he discovered a secret way of practicing and fully understood the way of self practice, how to come in contact with one's spiritual nature and, thus, become a Buddha. In 1983, Huang began to teach the 'Yin Hsin' way of Zen. In 1988, Huang established the 'Research Centre for Chinese Zen Method, which was renamed the 'Research Centre for Chinese Zen Yin Hsin' and was also referred to as the Chinese Zen Buddhist Association. In 1993, the Taiwan Yin Hsin Foundation was established. It developed rapidly in the 1990s and branches were established in different areas of Taiwan. Broadly speaking, the Yin Hsin Zen Method was a combination of Zen Buddhism and Chi Gong. Members began with practiced sitting meditation before they learned headstand, pranayama and 'Shou Chiao', which was a kind of meditation which directed a person's focus to particular organs. The religious teachings of Yin Hsin stressed not only pointing towards one's heart and becoming a Buddha in one's lifetime but also not to produce writing. Before the incident in 1996,⁵ the number of member was reported to be over 100 000 members. After the incident in 1996, the number dropped to a few thousand. However, the number of members has risen again in recent years. The Taiwan Zen Buddhist Association was officially established in 2000. At that point, there were 27 meeting centers for the practice of Zen and one Zen meditation room.

Dari Zong: In 1998, Sung Chi Li, the leader of the Xian Xiang Society, officially founded a new religion, the "Chinese Dari Zong Buddhist Society". The original name of the founder, Sung Chi Li was 'Sung Gan Lin'. In the end of 1980, Sung advocated ideas, like the union of human and nature and the universal light, in Gao Xiong and Chu Dong township in Hsinchu County. Sung sold pictures that showed photographs in which he demonstrated not only the art of glowing and emitting light beams from his body but also the art of dividing himself into different bodies. In 1990, the Academy of the Union of Humans and Nature was established and it began to recruit members in Taipei. In 1991, Sung established the 'Xian Xiang Society', which was short for China Sung Chi Li Xian Xiang Society. The main ideas were related to the existence of 'glowing universe forms'

⁵The leader of a new religion, Sung Chi Li, was put on trial for fraud. Sung was later released due to insufficient evidence.

and ‘original self forms’. The former referred to the form of entire universe, while the latter referred to the form of individual selves, which was also referred to as ‘the small universe’. The ‘original self forms’ were produced by the glowing universe forms. These two forms united with physical bodies. Accordingly, Sung was the chief master and the actualization of the union of the three bodies. In fact, the glowing form and glowing body of Sung was considered the highest of all beings. Thus, members believed that Sung was the highest being – the sun (Da-ri) and the light – and that he was greater than Buddha in his past life. Moreover, Sung demonstrated supernatural abilities including freezing the body, dividing himself, glowing and having paranormal vision. After the Sung Chi Li incident in 1996,⁶ Sung further developed his religious teaching and claimed to possess the ubiquitous, supernatural power. He also argued that not only he had the ability to see paranormal apparitions but also that some other religious members, especially children, had these abilities. In terms of the size of the religion, there were only a few hundred members that belonged to the two Societies that established by Sung. However, the actual number of members was estimated to be much higher, but it could not be determined at present.

Chih Hui Door to Enlightenment: In 1990s, this religion was established and was called the Institute of Chih Hui Fa Men. In 1994, the China Research Center for Reiki was established and proclaimed as the ‘Chih Hui Fa Men Door to Enlightenment’. This group was founded by Pan Tian Sheng, a former Christian. Pan participated in the religion, I-kuan Tao, for 20 years. In 1986, he claimed to have an important discovery during his spiritual practice, in which he comprehended the truth about the universe and where the meaning of life lay. He, subsequently, founded the Institute of Chih Hui Fa Men. Pan combined the ‘the theory of spirit’, ‘the physical practice’ (gong fa) and ‘the efficacy of prediction.’ This religion emphasized the importance of spiritual practice – the practice of the physical body, psychological self and soul – which ultimately, led to liberation. A soul consisted of the main soul, the psychological soul and the living soul. The main soul controlled the function of the whole body; the psychological soul involved the faculties of thinking and memory; and the living soul controlled the beating of the heart. Accordingly, the spiritual practice was the practice of the

⁶See footnote 2.

three souls, which could increase a person's energy. Conceptually, the realm of the divine consisted the greatest degree of energy or spiritual light, while ghosts had 'yin' or dark energy. To be connected with god was to attain the realm of gods and Buddha through practice. This religion also had concepts such as, coming in contact with one's spiritual nature, the eyes of wisdom and the respiratory circuit of chi. The actual practice consisted of the Ten Main Forms, Wu Chi Boxing Techniques, Ling Dong (a kind of Chi Gong) and Natural Inward Focus Method.

Wen Hua Yuan: In 1962, Cai Wen Yu, a practitioner of Chinese Planchette⁷ established the hall of benevolence with other practitioners in Gao Xiong City. In 1963, the hall was given the title the Wen Hua Yuan. Members were considered to be students of the Institute, while the chief master was the head of the Institute. In 1968, the main branch was built in Gao Xiong. In 1982, and the Yuan Hua altar was set up in Da Shu Village, Gao Xiong County, where the South Sea branch was subsequently established. The Wen Lou Institute was founded in Gao Xiong City. In 1989, Huang De Sheng established San Ching Temple and San Ching Charity. In 1991, Wen Hua Yuan and San Ching temple founded a Planchette hall together. In 1992, it was 'upgraded' into San Ching Cultural Palace. In 1997, the Institute of San Ching was founded. The Wen Hua Yuan basically employed Planchette to encourage people to do good and kind deeds. According to the teachings of Wen Hua, people should reflect on their actions and learn how to carry out appropriate actions without relying on god's help, but in situations in which people must asked for the gods' help, they need to use the proper methods. Furthermore, this religion emphasized the importance of educating people with propriety and justice. It encouraged people to develop in order to effectively service the society and help other people. The actual practice was mainly concerned with bringing the messages from heaven and awakening all beings with the use of Planchette. This religion published books concerning the conduct of the gods, the holiness of the religion, self-development, helping the poor and serving all beings. In terms of goals, it emphasized the existing moral conduct and culture of the Chinese, a stable society and defence of world peace, and liberation from the cycle of life and death to ultimately attain Nirvana.

⁷See footnote 1.